

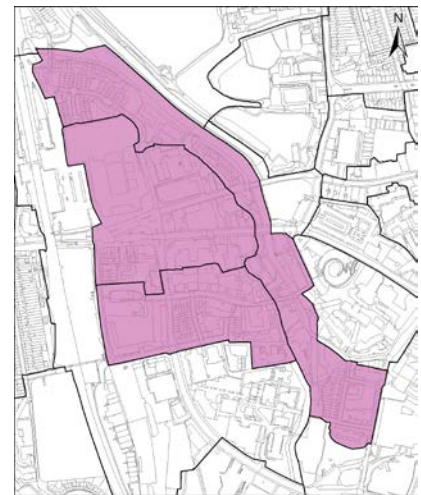
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 6:  
WESTERN SUBURB- FACTORIES AND OFFICES**

**The HUCA is located within broad character Zone B: The Western Suburb.**

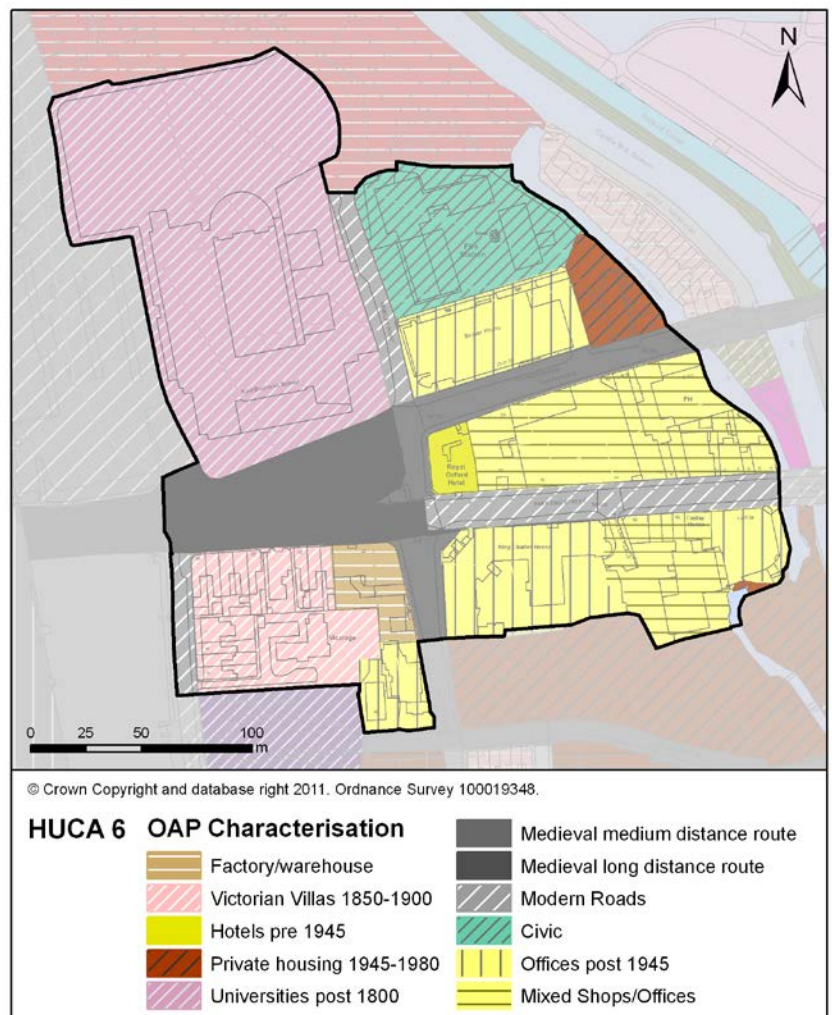
*The broad character zone comprises of medieval suburb of St Thomas and related development south of the castle combined with development on the former site of the medieval Rewley Abbey to the north. It forms part of Osney Island defined by the River Thames to the west and the Castle Mill Stream to the east.*

**Summary characteristics**

- Dominant period: late 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Designations: Rewley Abbey Scheduled Ancient Monument (County No. 80). Three Grade II listings.
- Archaeological Interest: Includes part of the site of medieval Rewley Abbey. Potential for medieval and later settlement along the approach to the abbey down Hollybush Row and Hythe Bridge Street. The line of the Civil War Royalist defences crosses through the character area.
- Character: Mixed modern commercial, civic, educational with mixed 19<sup>th</sup> century residential and commercial/retail properties.
- Spaces: St Frideswide’s square is a large public space dominated by the busy road junction, the wide pavement in front of the Said Business School, bus stops, signage and pedestrian crossings. Green space is largely confined to the rear of properties with limited formal tree planting in the square and in front of the Business School.
- Road morphology: Linear east-west streets orientated on river crossing and St Frideswides Square traffic island.
- Plot morphology: Large irregular plots for Said Business School, various offices, garages and the fire station. Also medium sized regular domestic plots. The historic post-medieval



St Thomas' and the Western Suburb (Zone B)



**Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.**

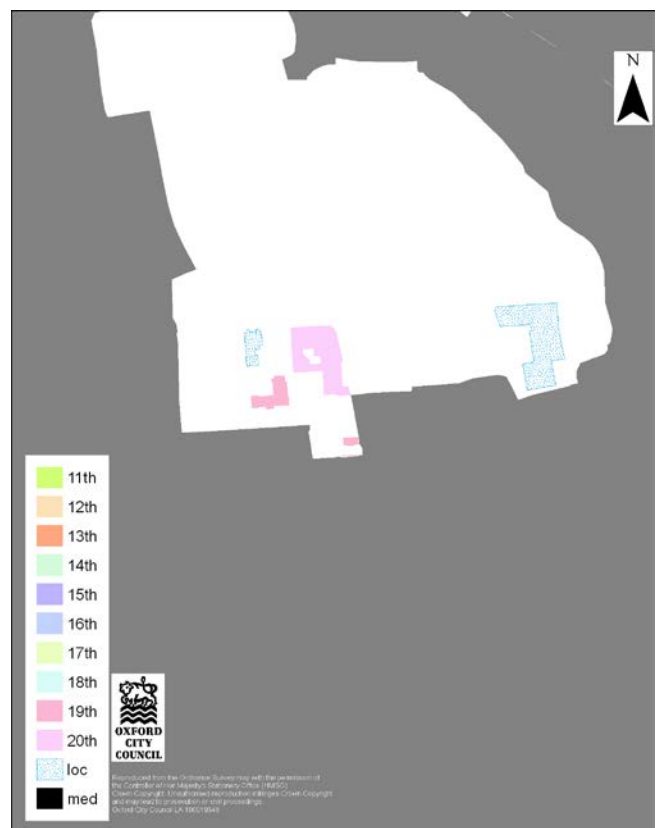
tenement boundaries have largely been lost.

- The natural topography comprises a central outcrop of Northmoor First Terrace gravel at a height of around 57m OD on the west bank of the river surrounded by the low lying alluvial floodplain.
- Survival of townscape elements:
  - Medieval routeways- Rewley Road, Hythe Bridge Street and Hollybush Row.
  - Cantay House former 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse, Park End Street.
  - 19<sup>th</sup> century former Boatmans Chapel and School house (St Nicholas's School) now a restaurant, Hythe Bridge Street.
  - 3-5 Hythe Bridge Street, early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick warehouse, former ice factory, now a Comedy Club.
  - 23 Park End Street, former Hotel designed in 1888.
  - Early 20<sup>th</sup> century – Frank Cooper's Marmalade Factory (The Jam Factory, St Fridewide Square).
  - Hartwell's Garage, 1930s Art Deco Garage, Park End Street.
  - Former King's Motors, 1930s garage with neo-classical design.

## Description

This character area is comprised of commercial, educational and civic buildings located on the northern edge of the medieval suburb of St Thomas and the historic approach to Rewley Abbey. Buildings fronting onto Frideswide's Square include the distinctive modern design of the three storey Said Business School and the 1935 Neo-Georgian Royal Oxford Hotel. To the south of the square there is a coherent group of brick and stone buildings dating to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, comprising of the four storey 1902 Marmalade factory with adjacent early 20<sup>th</sup> century mixed townhouses and shops, including the former 1888 Castle Hotel. A further coherent group of early 20<sup>th</sup> century three storey brick town houses is located on the eastern Becket Street frontage.

The south side of Park End Street has a near continuous frontage of three storey brick fronted modern offices and the converted 19<sup>th</sup> brick warehouse of Cantay House, now offices. The northern side has a continuous frontage of three storey mixed shops and flats and the distinctive white former Art Deco Hartwell's garage now containing shop units. Hythe Bridge Street contains the northern frontage of the Hartwell's garage and a mix of shops and offices, with a early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick former warehouse (now a comedy club) set back from the street frontage. The north side of Hythe Bridge Street comprises of a large modern three storey office block of Beaver House, a 20<sup>th</sup> century three storey rank of shops and a Victorian school house now used as a restaurant. Further to the



Listed buildings by date of earliest identified

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north is the city's 20<sup>th</sup> century Fire Station. Tree planting is limited to formal rows of semi mature trees outside the Said Business School and station, with a small number of larger mature trees in the rear gardens of the Vicarage and townhouses south of St Frideswides Square.

### **Historical value- means of connecting with the past**

Oseney or Osney Island is believed to have been formed in the late Saxon period as a result of artificial channelling of the River Thames in order to create the channel now known as Castle Mill Stream. The word 'Osney' is first mentioned in 1004 and is thought to be a personal name meaning 'Osa's Island' combining the name Osa or Osna with 'ey' the Old English word for an island. Alternatively the name may derive from the ancient British word for river - 'ouse'. Documentary evidence suggests that it is likely a small settlement or manor likely existed here in the Late Saxon period. An estate at Oseney was devised by Archbishop Alfric of Canterbury (d. 1005) to St. Alban's Abbey. The first firm evidence of settled activity occurs in the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the foundation of Osney Abbey and the subsequent development of the suburb at St Thomas's, located to the south and southeast. The Augustinian Osney Abbey was founded by Robert D'Oilly from his manor at South Osney. Roger D'Ivri was the other main landowner in Osney, his estate later known as North Osney, formed part of the foundation of Rewley Abbey in 1281 (located under the current Said Business School).

Rewley Abbey was founded as a college (Studium) for the Cistercian Order. In the medieval period Hythe Bridge Street and Rewley Road provided access to the precinct and grounds of the Abbey which was located on reclaimed land within a series of water channels. The ruins of the abbey and its gardens, although largely robbed of materials, survived until the end of the post medieval period. A section of the northern precinct wall and a 15<sup>th</sup> century stone doorway still survive to the north of this character area.

Throughout the post-medieval period much of the character area was open land used for meadows or gardening, as it lay away from the main thoroughfares of the suburb. The creation of the Botley Causeway in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and subsequent creation of the New Road/Park End Street in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century encouraged new development. The arrival of the Oxford canal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and subsequently the railways to the west of Oxford in 1850 encouraged hotel and commercial development in the area. The Great Western Railway Company arriving opened a station on the site of the modern station in 1852. A second adjacent line was opened up by the Buckinghamshire Railway in 1851, later becoming London and North Western Railway. The LNWR station was located on the site of the Said Business School and was removed to the Quainton Railway Museum when the school was built in 2001.

An increased density of settlement is recorded on historic maps from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This character area saw primarily industrial development along the new road into the city and notable structures include the 1903 Marmalade Factory and the former Archer, Cowley and Co office, built 1894-1909 at Cantay House. Two surviving 1930s structures on Park End Street, the former King's Motors building and the former Hartwell's Garage, are remnants of the time when this was 'the Street of wheels' during the motor car boom of the 1930s. Notable buildings demolished since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century include the Eagle Brewery on the south side of Park End Street.

The character area presents opportunities to understand the industrial and commercial development of the west end of Oxford in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including the influence of the railway on hotel and warehouse development and of the impact 1930's car industry on garage infrastructure.



**St Frideswide's Square looking east.**



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### **Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence**

This character area may preserve further remains relating to Rewley Abbey and ribbon settlement along the Hythe Bridge Street and Hollybush Road. The Urban Archaeological Database records twenty nine archaeological events recorded within this character area. The main focus of excavation since the 1960s has been Rewley Abbey. The Investigations have recorded evidence of previous land use for hay meadows and cultivation adjacent to the river. The abbey was then constructed on raised ground in several phases beginning with the construction of the precinct wall, moat and access road, this was followed by extensions to the west and east. Excavations between 1986-1994 recorded evidence of the abbey church and the cloister which was located on it's northern side. A possible chapel, later converted into a brewhouse, is recorded to the west of the church. This building survived until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A number of burials associated with the abbey were recorded and other discoveries included a former outbuilding, a barn, garden soils and a fishpond.

Elsewhere in the character area excavations at the former Eagle Brewery on Park End Street recorded domestic activity from the 13<sup>th</sup> century with later evidence of three medieval houses and a large ditch, thought to represent a property boundary for the estate of Roger of Cumnor. The former LNWR train station was also the of investigation and recording prior to I being dismantled and relocated to Quainton Railway Centre, Buckinghamshire.

### **Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation**

Whilst individual buildings have notable aesthetic qualities the overall aesthetic value is diminished by the road junction and disparate building styles, the exception being the southern frontage of St Frideswide's Square which retains a cohesion of style and materials. The built character comprises a mix of distinctive early modern factory, hotel, warehouse and shop frontages three or more stories high, interspersed with a variety of functional modern office and shop structures and the architecturally distinctive Said Business School. Development on the Park End Street frontage is largely 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century in date including the Jam Factory and the pre 1945 garage at 14-16 Park End Street. Modern development on Hythe Bridge Street is dominated by the distinctive glass and steel Beaver House and the stone and glass Said Business School. The principal open spaces are the wide streets, the traffic island/bus stops at St Frideswides Square. There are no notable green spaces. Small arrangements of formally planted young trees are located within the St Fridewides Square traffic island and outside the Said Business School. Miscellaneous street furniture has a high profile as St Fridewides is a busy road intersection and crossing point. The Said Business School incorporates a large garden to the rear covering much of the Rewley Abbey site however this is excluded from public view by a substantial stone wall.



**The Jam Factory from Holybush Row.**

### **Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory**

The character area contains a busy thoroughfare that visitors and residents experience as the route to and from the city railway station. The area acts as an important gateway to the centre of Oxford for those arriving by train and by road from the west. The area has some communal value in terms of collective experiences of public service provision, educational and entertainment facilities and the provision of community space, notably in relation to the Jam Factory office/cafe complex.

