

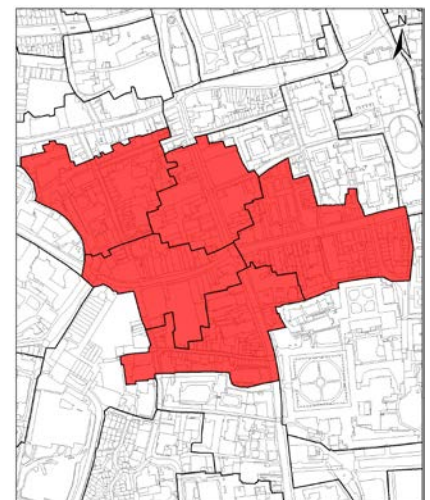
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 19:
CITY CENTRE COMMERCIAL- THE HIGH - TOWN HOUSES AND MARKET**

The HUCA is located within broad character Zone E: City centre and commercial core.

The broad character zone consists of the central historic core around Carfax crossroads linking the main axial north-south and south-west Late Saxon streets. The zone forms a coherent central area in the city where the roads, lanes and tenements broadly reflect a history of medieval to modern commercial activity.

Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: 17th-18th century.
- Designations: Five Grade I, ten Grade II*; forty-four Grade II listings; Central Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Potential: Potential for complex urban archaeology relating to Saxon, medieval and post-medieval settlement and commercial activity. The area is notable for the survival of medieval and post-medieval town houses.
- Character: Mixed townhouses and shops with strong Georgian character. The buildings include medieval and post-medieval town houses, inns located down narrow alleys and the 18th century covered market with access passages onto the High Street.
- Spaces: The building density is high with limited open space. A number of pubs have small outside yards with tables and there is a small public space with seating in front of the former All Saints Church. Outbuildings have largely in-filled the back yards of tenements south of the High Street.
- Road morphology: The High Street is a straight thoroughfare, with narrow side streets at right angles forming part of the Late Saxon town grid. Alfred Street may be a Norman addition. The wide high sided King Edward Street was inserted in 1873. The area contains distinctive narrow alleys leading to historic inns.
- Plot morphology: Good survival of medieval long rectilinear plots.
- The underlying geology comprises the ridge of the Summertown-Radley 2nd Gravel Terrace rising from a height of 62m OD at its eastern end to Carfax at 68m OD in the west.



City Centre and Commercial Core (Zone E)

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HUCA 19 OAP Characterisation			
	Townhouses		Mixed Shops/Offices
	Mixed townhouses/shops		Offices post 1945
	Narrow plots		Banks pre 1945
	Victorian Townhouses		Inns pre 1800
	Mixed Housing & Shops		Leisure
	Church post 1800		Medieval long distance route
	Civic		Lane
	20th century Colleges		Back lane
	Indoor market		Square or Place
	Modern shopping centre		

Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

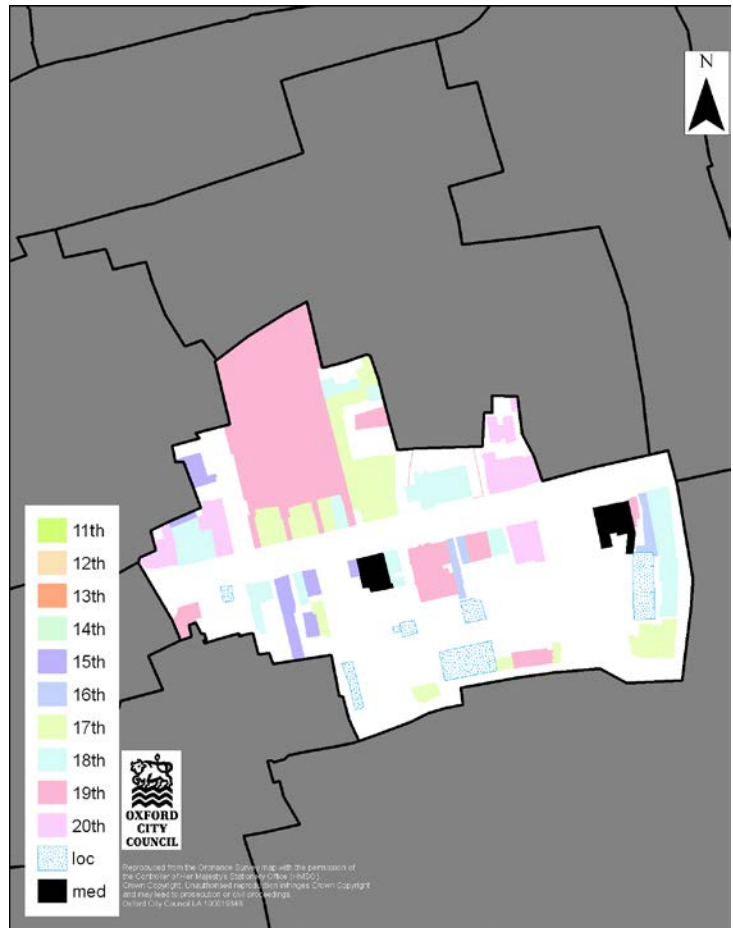
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - Saxon to medieval street plan.
 - Survival of historic tenement yards south of the High Street
 - Medieval tenement plot boundaries.
 - Former All Saints Church, 18th century with medieval origins (now the library of Lincoln College)
 - Multiple notable medieval-20th century listed buildings.
 - Unlisted former Gymnasium and former Print Works. 6 Alfred Street (19th century)
 - Unlisted brick townhouse, No 4 Alfred Street (early 19th century)
 - Unlisted former warehouse, 11 Wheatsheaf Yard (19th century)
 - Unlisted house and shop, 137 High Street (18th century)
 - Former 17th century real tennis court, Oriel Street
 - 18th century indoor market.

Description

The High Street is a distinctive and attractive character area, comprising of a wide street with pavements, the width of the street partially encroached upon by a generous southern pavement. The building frontages are dense and almost continuous, punctuated by lanes and alleys. The street contains largely four storey shop fronted townhouses, All Saints Church (now Lincoln College library) and the 18th century covered market, which is linked to the High Street via short covered passages. The southern frontage retains narrow alleys leading to historic inns and now largely in-filled back yards.

The area is notable for the survival of medieval tenement plots and medieval/post-medieval townhouses on a High Street that is dominated further to the east by monumental college buildings. To the north of the High Street the plot morphology has been significantly altered with the insertion of the 18th century Covered Market. The southern frontage is notable for its well preserved tenement pattern.

To the South of High Street is Alfred Street, the smallest Oxford Street open to traffic which is paved with modern cobbles and King Edward Street, a wide and carefully detailed Victorian Street inserted into the medieval block pattern, comprising of four storey terraces of brick and stone shops and offices.



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

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

The High Street runs along the crest of the 2nd gravel terrace forming an east-west route across the terrace between the Rivers Thames and Cherwell. The antiquity of this route is unclear and an earlier east-west route way over the gravel terrace, located slightly to the south, has been proposed. The line of the High Street was certainly established by the time a defended Saxon burh was laid out at Oxford in the late 9th or early 10th century. The burh comprised of a grid of streets centred on the crossroads at Carfax which would have been the commercial focus of the town. After the initial shock of the Norman Conquest the town appears to have recovered quickly. The Norman period saw major investment in religious buildings and infrastructure projects including the construction of a stone causeway across the river crossing and floodplain (The Grandpont). By the 12th century a central drain had been constructed along the High Street known as the Kennel. Despite the disruption of the Conquest and the later conflicts of the Anarchy in the 12th century the town appears to have done well with trade in cloth and leather goods driving economic growth in the 12th and early 13th centuries. The tenement pattern evolved in this period with subdivision of Late Saxon and Norman plots, especially along the desirable street frontages associated with the weekly market. This extended along the streets leading off the central crossroads at Carfax (the name either deriving from the French 'quatre-face' or a corruption of the Latin 'quadrifurcus' both meaning four forks or crossroads). These tenements can be plotted with some confidence from 13th century records (notably the 1279 Hundred Rolls). The medieval tenement boundaries are well preserved within this character area.

In the late 13th century and 14th century the cloth economy faltered and other factors such as restricted navigation along the Thames and the arrival of the Black Death in 1349 impacted heavily on the town. The deflation of land prices presented an opportunity to the fledgling halls and colleges of the University, who were able to expand, especially away from the desirable central market locations in the eastern and northern parts of the town. This expansion altered the balance of power and led to increasing friction between 'town and gown'. The presence of the weekly street market in this character area appears to have protected it from collegiate colonisation and it retains its commercial character to this day. The area contained a number of academic halls, buildings that also may have periodically shared other functions as inns and shops, often sub let and with commercial concerns located in undercrofts or in subdivided ground floor locations. A notable surviving example is the former Tackley's Inn on the High Street, now the University Book Shop. Another notable survival is 126 High Street, a 15th-16th century townhouse originally jettied with a single gable to the street.

The 18th century saw a significant redevelopment and re-fronting work along the High Street with the end of the weekly street market (this area was associated with the butchers shambles) and its replacement with the Indoor Market at 13-17 High Street. Subsequent centuries have seen further re-fronting and rebuilding, leaving a rich and diverse collection of buildings.

Other notable monuments in the area include the site of the former 12th century Church of St Edward on Alfred Street and All Saints Church,



Yard by the Chequers Inn



Looking towards Carfax from the south.

which is of Late Saxon origin, was rebuilt in the 18th century and is now used as a library for Lincoln College.

The 1st edition OS Town Plans (1876) records six inns, two hotels and three pubs as well as a gymnasium, a bowling alley and a billiards room. By the late 20th century many of the inns and pubs have disappeared and the indoor market had been extended.

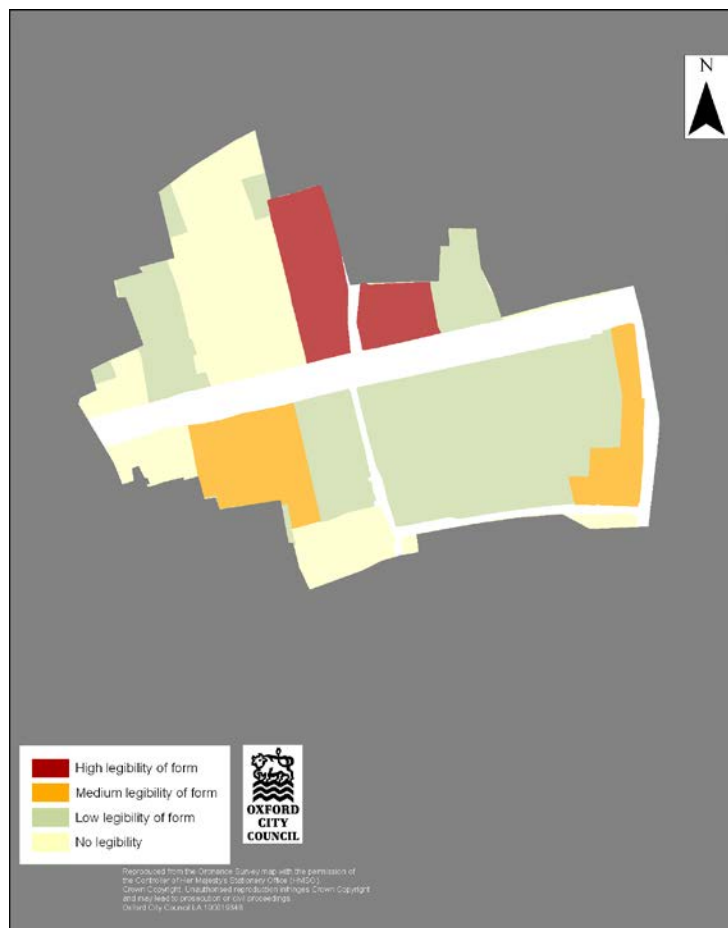
This character area retains the commercial character, tenement boundaries and narrow alleys of the medieval and post-medieval town and therefore has exceptional illustrative value. Tackley's Inn at 107 High Street is a rare survival of a 14th century academic hall. Such halls were once the dominant form of medieval student accommodation, only later eclipsed by college development. All Saints Church on the High Street, re-built 1701-10, was the first church to be built in Oxford since the 15th century and is an example of Baroque classical architecture reflecting a short period in the early 18th century when Roman and Renaissance classicism was applied to new buildings in a city otherwise associated with the continuation and revivalism of gothic styles. The indoor market is illustrative of 18th century civic improvements and retains a market tradition dating back to the medieval period.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

This character area has high potential for significant Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains subject to the impact of later basement and cellar construction. The Urban Archaeological Database records over ninety archaeological events in the character area. Previous investigations have recorded Late Saxon street surfaces and domestic occupation and evidence for medieval domestic, commercial and manufacturing activity. The most extensive evidence for Saxon domestic occupation on the High Street comes from archaeological investigations at All Saints Church where at least six phases of activity were identified between AD 880-1150 prior to the construction of the first church. The site produced evidence for Late Saxon grain storage and manufacturing activity, also for burials from the various phases of the later church providing information about the health and diet of an affluent central parish in the medieval period. Excavations at 113-119 High Street have also recorded evidence of domestic activity comprising three 10th-11th century cellar pits.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

The High Street has strong aesthetic appeal which has been recognised by numerous writers and poets. . It provides long views along a wide, slightly curved street bordered on both sides by a continuous line of tall Georgian and Victorian fronted townhouses. A rich diversity of medieval to Victorian commercial and residential structures survive within this area. The many notable buildings includes the 1901 Lloyds Bank on the corner of Cornmarket Street with its elaborate neo- Jacobean façade and



Assessment of medieval plot survival

the Mitre Inn, a 17th century coaching inn with medieval cellars. The high street also contains a number of mature trees which make a significant contribution to the street scene. An important component of this character area is the survival of narrow alleys to historic inns and small yards, a once common tenement pattern now largely lost in other parts of the town. The passage ways and shop units of the indoor market are also a distinctive and enjoyable feature. The character area also includes the comparatively quiet Blue Boar Street on the southern edge of the area affords a rare feeling of tranquillity in the city centre, the narrow enclosed street includes a small square with stone setts and tree cover.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The High Street, known locally as 'The High', forms part of the principal east-west axis of the town joining with the north-south access at Carfax. It therefore is well used by visitors and residents and is an important communal space, celebrated by writers and poets. The area has been of the centre of commercial and leisure activity in the town since the medieval period and retains several pubs, bars and restaurants, some within historic properties. The Covered Market is also an important communal asset, providing a unique space in the heart of the city.

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