

Nominate a Heritage Asset

**The River Thames and Towpath from Osney Brdige to Four Streams Junction
(Sheepwash Channel Junction)**



1. **WHAT IS IT?** Is it one of the following?

Tick

Nominate a Heritage Asset

a building or group of buildings	
a monument or site (an area of archaeological remains or a structure other than a building)	
a place (e.g. a street, park, garden or natural space)	y
a landscape (an area defined by visual features or character, e.g. a city centre, village, suburb or field system)	

2. WHY IS IT INTERESTING? Is it interesting in any of the following ways?	Tick / Rank
Historic interest – a well documented association with a person, event, episode of history, or local industry	y
Archaeological interest – firm evidence of potential to reveal more about the human past through further study	y
Architectural interest – an example of an architectural style, a building of particular use, a technique of building, or use of materials	
Artistic interest – It includes artistic endeavour to communicate meaning or use of design (including landscape design) to enhance appearance	
<p>What is it about the asset that provides this interest?</p> <p>Historic interest: This stretch of the river forms a part of the inland waterway network that developed in the late 18th century connecting with the Sheepwash Channel and Oxford Canal. However, it has an older history as part of the navigable waterway of the River Thames, which was an important transport network throughout the Middle Ages and possibly into the region's prehistory (historically the River Thames was navigable as far as Cricklade 40 kilometres to the west). Osney Bridge was referred to as Hythe Bridge when it was constructed in the Middle Ages, suggesting the area was already being used for wharves or hythes. The riverside was again used for wharves in the 19th century, when land at Abbey Road was developed for a timber yard next to the Thames, which was later the builder's yard for Kingerlee.</p> <p>Archaeological interest: The straight course of this section of the river suggests it was engineered to improve its navigation but potentially also its use as a source of waterpower for the Osney Abbey mill. This would suggest at least some of the improvement was undertaken during the Middle Ages (engineering of rivers is a commonly seen feature of medieval monastic sties). This suggests that the river is a feature of archaeological interest, whilst its banks should preserve evidence of the works undertaken to create this channel and of the riverside activity that appears to have taken place here since the Middle Ages.</p>	

3. WHY IS IT LOCALLY VALUED? Is the interest of the asset valued locally for any of the following reasons?	Tick / Rank
Association: It connects us to people and events that shaped the identity or character of the area	y
Illustration: It illustrates an aspect of the area's past that makes an important contribution to its identity or character	y
Evidence: It is an important resource for understanding and learning about the area's history	y
Aesthetics: It makes an important contribution to the positive look of the area either by design or fortuitously	y
Communal: It is important to the identity, cohesion, spiritual life or memory of all or part of the community	y
<p>How is the asset locally valued as heritage?</p> <p>Association: The river channel has an important association with the history of West Oxford as a focus of transport connections that connected the city to its rural hinterlands as well as to more distant markets.</p> <p>Illustration: The river and tow path illustrate the importance of the waterways as industrial transport routes that enabled the development of West Oxford as an industrial suburb to the city, including the development of a regionally notable brewing industry. During the late 18th century this became part of the first inland waterway between London and the manufactories of Birmingham and the West Midlands with connections beyond to Liverpool and Manchester,</p>	

Nominate a Heritage Asset

making Oxford an important inland port.

Evidence: The potential survival of archaeological remains relating to the engineering and use of the river channel would provide significant information on the nature of water engineering in medieval and early post-medieval Oxford as well as the potential involvement to f the monastic institutions or the town's corporation.

Aesthetics and Communal value: The river channel is now an important element of the local landscape, providing an escape from the urban surroundings for many local residents and workers, with attractive green surroundings and views over the water to the allotments or the uniform Victorian housing on Abbey Road. the view from the northern end of the channel is often reproduced by photographers and is particularly attractive in the late afternoon in autumn when low-angled sunlight floods across the water at the large pool formed by the junction with the Sheepwash Channel.

4. WHAT MAKES ITS LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE SPECIAL? Do any of the following features make the heritage significance of the asset stand out above the surrounding environment?	Tick
Age ... Is it particularly old, or of a date that is significant to the local area?	y
Rarity ... Is it unusual in the area or a rare survival of something that was once common?	
Integrity ... Is it largely complete or in a near to original condition?	
Group value ... Is it part of a group that have a close historic, aesthetic or communal association?	
Oxford's identity ... Is it important to the identity or character of the city or a particular part of it?	y
Other ... Is there another way you think it has special local value?	
How does this contribute to its value?	
<p>Age: The channel appears to have been created in the Middle Ages as part of the reengineering the River Thames cutting through Osney Island to power the Abbey Mill and possibly to improve the navigation of the river. As such it provides n early element of the landscape, forming a part of the landscape of monasteries that developed around medieval Oxford and pre-dating the development of the suburb.</p> <p>Oxford's identity: The river forms part of the character of West oxford as the focus of the city's early industries and transport connections. It also contributes to the identity of Oxford as the city set amidst the many streams of the Thames and Cherwell Rivers that has inspired artists, writers and poets since the 17th century.</p>	