

# OXFORD HERITAGE ASSET REGISTER

## INTRODUCING THE OXFORD HERITAGE ASSET REGISTER

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ENGLISH HERITAGE



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## INTRODUCTION

Oxford City Council are preparing a register of locally important heritage assets located outside designated conservation areas to inform planning decisions in the city. The register will be compiled by local residents in collaboration with the council officers and other stakeholders.

Residents will prepare character statements that highlight the key features of the local historic environment of each area, which will then be used to identify the heritage assets for the register. The character statements will also provide a more general evidence base that identifies the value of

the city's historic environment as seen by its community. Candidate heritage assets will be assessed by a review panel against locally established criteria. These will be used to assess the significance of heritage assets and to ensure that they merit consideration during planning.

Initially the heritage assets register will cover four trial areas of the city (shown on the proposed study map, including East Oxford (St Clement's, St Mary's and Iffley Fields Wards) Summertown district centre and environs, West Oxford (including parts of Carfax and Jericho and Osney Wards) and Blackbird Leys (Please see the map showing the locations of the four study areas). The Council hope to have prepared a list of candidate heritage assets for East Oxford as a pilot study by late Spring 2012. At a later stage it is hoped that this register can be expanded to cover other areas of the city.



*Detail of the Cantay Depository, Park End Street*



*Buildings forming the south side of Frideswide's Square*

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## Background

Oxford's historic core, ancient village centres and Victorian suburbs contribute to its status as an internationally recognised historic city. The nationally significant status of these areas is reflected in their designation as conservation areas, the high proportion of listed buildings and a focus of scheduled ancient monuments and registered parks and gardens.

The city also includes residential areas, public parks and district centres with historic buildings and open spaces that have an identity and character that are valued locally and that are locally significant for their historic, architectural, artistic or archaeological interest. For these features to be given appropriate consideration by planners and others their significance needs to be identified and understood at an early stage.

### What are heritage assets?

The term 'heritage asset' has been introduced to describe valued components of the historic environment which can include buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes that have been positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions (DCLG, 2010).

This description suggests a wide range of landscape or townscape elements might qualify as heritage assets. They include the nationally and locally designated heritage assets of Scheduled Monuments (archaeological sites), Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields, which are protected by law and are selected by English Heritage according to criteria that ensure they are of national significance. Conservation Areas are designated as heritage assets by the City Council but are also protected by law and selected according to nationally determined criteria.

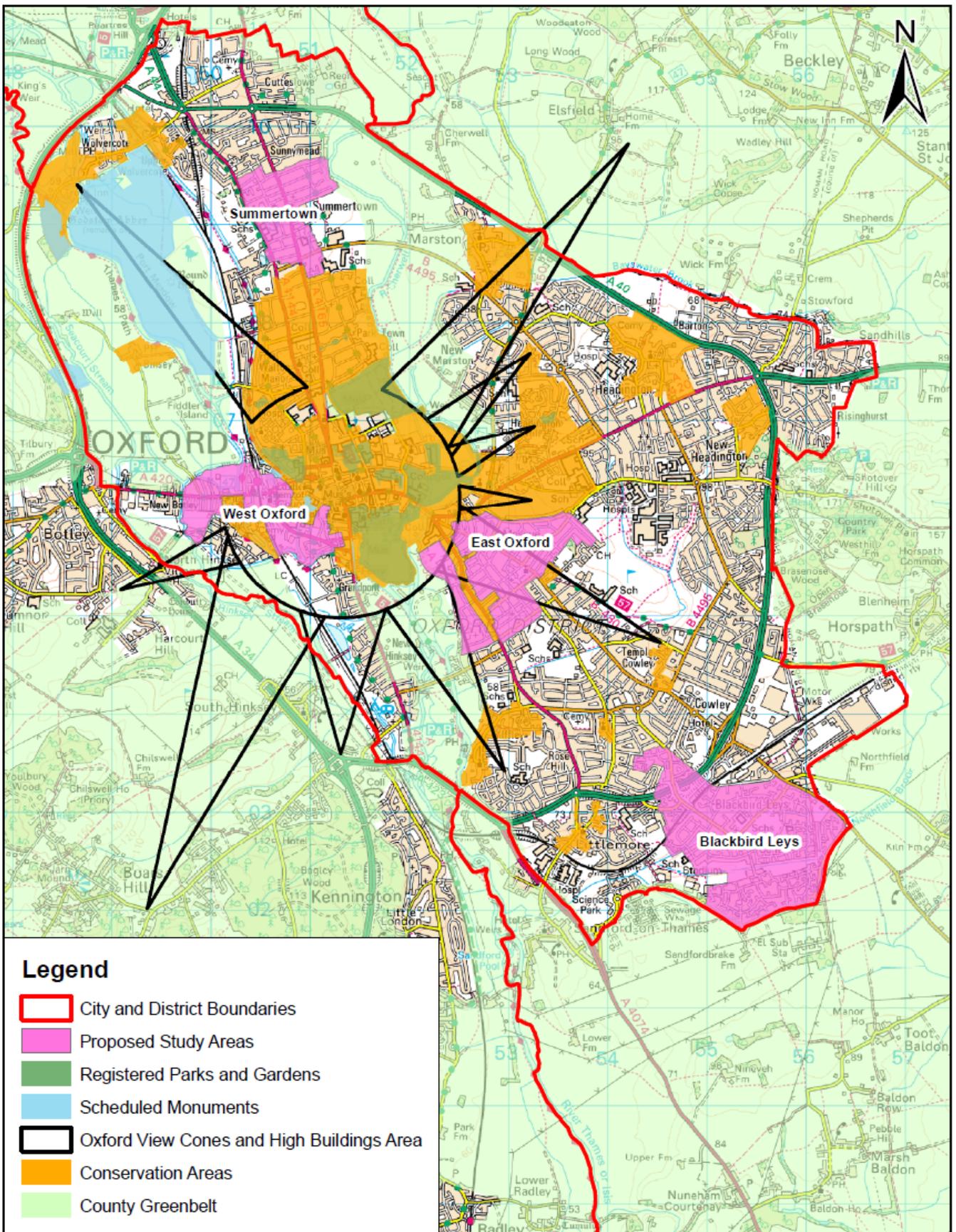


*Oxford contains areas and buildings that might not meet the national criteria for statutory designations but are still valued locally for their historic interest.*



*The familiar image of Oxford's nationally significant heritage assets.*

The City Council has a number of existing planning policies that identify and manage locally valued and significant features of the historic environment within planning and the Council's other decision-making. These locally designated heritage assets include view cones and a high buildings control zone, protected by Policy HE.10 of the adopted Local Plan. The Local Plan also includes policies for the management of Buildings of Local Interest (Policy HE.6) and Important Parks and Gardens (HE.8). However, the Council has not previously adopted an official list or register of these assets.



**Oxford Heritage Asset Register:  
Proposed Study Map**

Scale: 1:50,000

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Ordnance Survey 100019348.

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In addition to these existing local designations the government's policy makes it possible to consider other potential local designations, such as Areas of Historic Townscape Value or Areas of High Archaeological Potential, where these would provide a means of recognising the local value and significance of such features.

The Oxford Heritage Asset Register would provide a list of buildings, parks and gardens and archaeological sites of local interest but could include other valued components of the historic environment.

### **How will the register be used?**

The planning system requires decision makers to consider the impact that proposed changes would have on the significance of a heritage asset and to weigh these against the potential public benefit that the changes would deliver.

The heritage assets register will help in this process by providing awareness of valued components of the historic environment and by identifying features that contribute to their significance. Planners will use this information to seek to conserve the significance of individual heritage assets and their contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the local historic environment.

The register will be publicly available and, we hope, it will be used by residents and businesses wanting to understand both the history of their local area and the characteristic or distinctive features that make up its 'sense of place'.

As a part of the City Council's Historic Environment Record, we would expect potential developers to use the register to consider how their proposals can help to conserve and enhance local character, integrate with and make use of local heritage assets and avoid having negative impacts on them or their settings. Where property has been identified on the heritage asset register, early consultation would always be recommended where proposals for development are being considered.

The inclusion of property on the heritage asset register would not result in any additional legal requirements for property owners.



*Millham Ford School Field, has been preserved as public open space after redevelopment of the school. It provides a dramatic view to the city centre, but also has value for local biodiversity.*

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## **Contributing to the register?**

Community participation has been identified as key to the successful preparation of the heritage assets register. It will be needed to identify the components of the historic environment that are both valued locally and have significant local historic interest. Opportunities for local people to be involved are described below and illustrated in the project process diagram at the end of the document.

A steering group of representatives of local communities, local historical and amenity groups and businesses will make key decisions about the scope of the register and the criteria for judging the significance of candidate assets.

Local people are invited to join the working groups surveying their areas, researching their local history, preparing character statements and identifying candidates for the heritage asset register. We hope this will be both an opportunity for residents and businesses to share their knowledge of the area and a chance to explore and learn more about our neighbourhoods. The working groups' reports will be used to facilitate wider public participation through consultation events.

As a final stage, a community review panel will judge the candidate heritage assets for inclusion on the register. Their recommendations for the composition of the register will be given to the City Council to consider for adoption.

The Council will facilitate the steering group and working groups, provide expertise in historic environment characterisation, computerised mapping, creation of databases and development of an interactive website for the register.

As well as a tool for planners and developers, the completed register will provide a resource for local people to explore, learn about and enjoy their neighbourhoods.

## **When is this planned?**

By April 2012 we hope to have completed the pilot study of East Oxford. Public consultation on the draft list of heritage asset candidates is expected in April and May 2012.

Based on this model we then hope to proceed with the studies in West Oxford, Summertown and Blackbird Leys between April 2012 and July 2013.

## **If you want to be involved**

If you are interested in the Heritage Asset Register project, would like to participate as a member of either the steering or working groups or be a member of the register's review panel, or just want to find out more please contact the Project Officer Robert Lloyd-Sweet at [rlloyd-sweet@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:rlloyd-sweet@oxford.gov.uk).

## **Sources**

Department for Communities and Local Government, Planning Policy Statement 5 (PPS5): Planning for the historic environment (Published March 2010)

English Heritage PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment: Historic Environment Planning Practice Guidance (Published March 2010)

English Heritage, Good Practice Guide for Local Listing: Identifying and Managing Significant Local Heritage Assets - Draft for Consultation (Published March 2011)

