

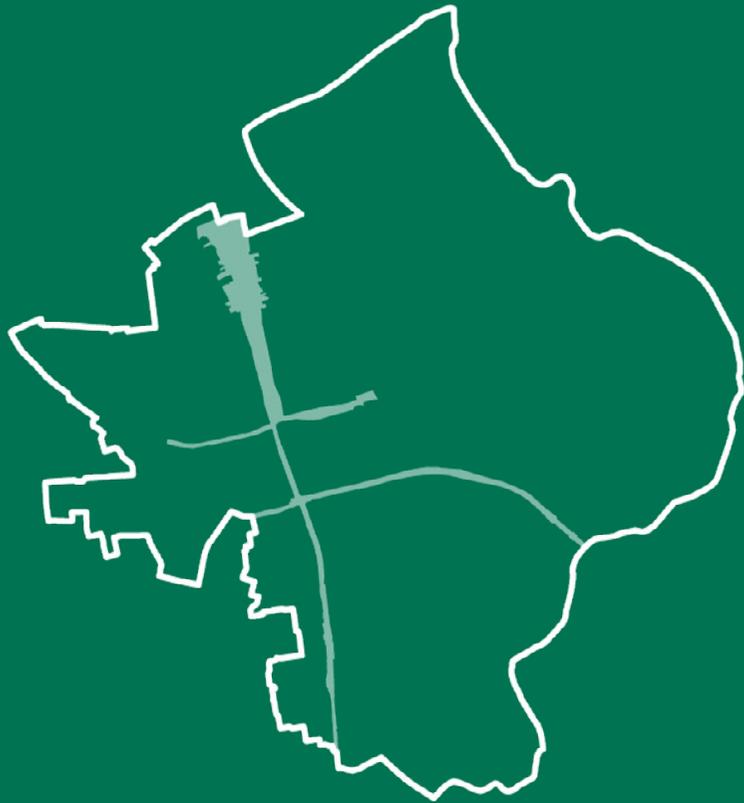
# Character Zone Assessment 1

## Principal Streets

Oxford Central (City & University) Conservation Area

### Zone includes:

- From the north, St Giles' – Magdalen Street – Cornmarket Street
- From the east, the High Street and Broad Street
- To the south, St Aldate's
- To the west, Queen Street and George Street



## Principal Streets Character Zone Oxford Central (City & University) Conservation Area

The Conservation Area Appraisal divides the Conservation Area into nine character zones. This chapter contains a detailed analysis of one of these: the Principal Streets Character Zone. It can be used to understand the history, character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area, and to inform planning application and development proposals.

This Conservation Area Appraisal aims to promote and support developments that are in keeping with, or enhance, the character of the Central (City & University) Conservation Area. This section is concerned with the reasons for designation, defining the qualities that make up its special interest, character and appearance. It is not possible to describe every facet of the area that contributes positively to its character. The omission of any reference to a particular building, feature, space or positive contributor should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest. Additional positive contributors will be identified through the development management process.

### Contents

1.1	An overview of character and special interest
1.2	A brief history
1.3	An analysis of character (considering use, street and townscape, green space, buildings, roofscape, landmarks and views, movement and activity, archaeology)
1.4	Further useful information

### Icons

Throughout, icons direct you to relevant sections of the Conservation Area Appraisal and links to other relevant documents.

-  relevant layers of the conservation area map / GIS mapping
-  relevant character themes in the appraisal
-  relevant sections in the appraisal
-  suggestions for further reading
-  information relevant for planning
-  sources of further information

### Maps

The maps below are extracts from the Conservation Area mapping set, which consists of layers of useful information ranging from archaeology and historic maps to green space, listed buildings and street materials. Please note that maps may not show the full extent of listed buildings and do not show curtilage-listed structures. If you are unsure if your building is listed check the National Heritage List for England and seek the advice of the City Council's Urban Design and Heritage Team.

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## 1.1 Overview of character and significance

This character zone comprises the principal streets of the city centre, which have formed the historic backbone of Oxford for over a thousand years, and include some of the most famed and beautiful streetscapes in the country.

The following aspects of the zone are of considerable historical, architectural, townscape or social significance and contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area:

- These streets developed into the principal cross streets of the Saxon burh by the late ninth or early tenth centuries, spreading from the central crossroads at Carfax to link the river crossings to the south and west with the routes to the north and west.
- Broad Street and George Street emerged as key routes just outside the city walls. Broad Street also developed important ceremonial and institutional functions, encapsulated in its generous shape and grand architectural expression.
- The principal streets have been the public, ceremonial, educational and retail core of Oxford for centuries.
- These uses create characteristic and picturesque architectural variety: narrow commercial and domestic buildings that correspond in scale to the medieval plot divisions, frequently in painted render and with active frontages, which contrast with larger, more architecturally imposing and mostly impermeable institutional buildings made of ashlar stone.
- The High Street in particular has long been famed and admired for its exceptional architectural and townscape beauty. Sir Nikolaus Pevsner concluded: 'The High Street is one of the world's great streets. It has everything.'
- Character changes correspond closely to the line of Oxford's former medieval walls. Beyond the line of the walls there was less pressure on space, allowing development on a more generous scale and occupying larger plots.

The principal aspects of the zone that harm character and appearance are:

- Intensive use, as these streets form the commercial, transport and visitor backbone of Oxford.
- Saturation of pedestrians and vehicles in pinch locations, which is degrading their character.
- Pollution, traffic and overcrowding detracts from the appreciation of their architecture and outstanding townscape.
- Changing commercial pressures are leading to a loss of independent retail, undermining Oxford's individual character.
- The loss of ground floor retail use, particularly where units are converted to alternative uses by colleges results in a loss of active frontage which undermines the vitality of the city's historic commercial core.

Opportunities for enhancement are:

- Removal of insensitive signage and reinstatement of historic shop fronts.
- Rationalisation of street furniture and signage.
- Reinstatement of historic street surfaces.
- Building on the successes of the Broad Meadow and Broad Street projects, a permanent removal of parking and the creation of a wider pedestrian area with seating and planting in the highway, creating a new public space for people to enjoy.
- Improving awareness and interpretation of the Martyr's Cross on Broad Street by improving its setting within the road surface.



### Notes for use:

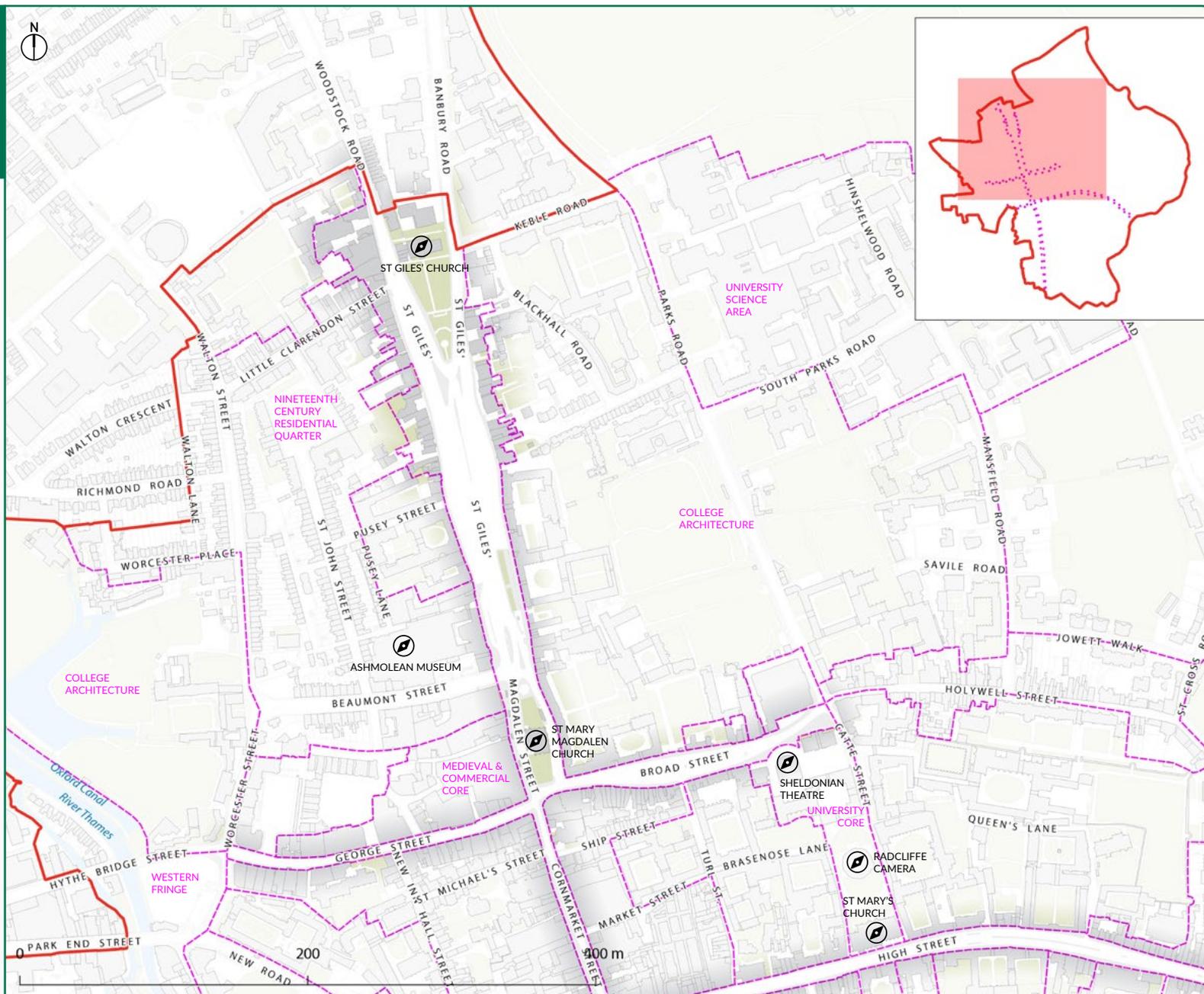
This character zone is confined to the streets and façades that enclose them. See adjoining character zones for the plot and buildings behind them (refer to character zone map).

# Overview

## Principal Streets

### Key

-  Oxford Central Conservation Area boundary
-  Neighbouring character zones
-  Reference point

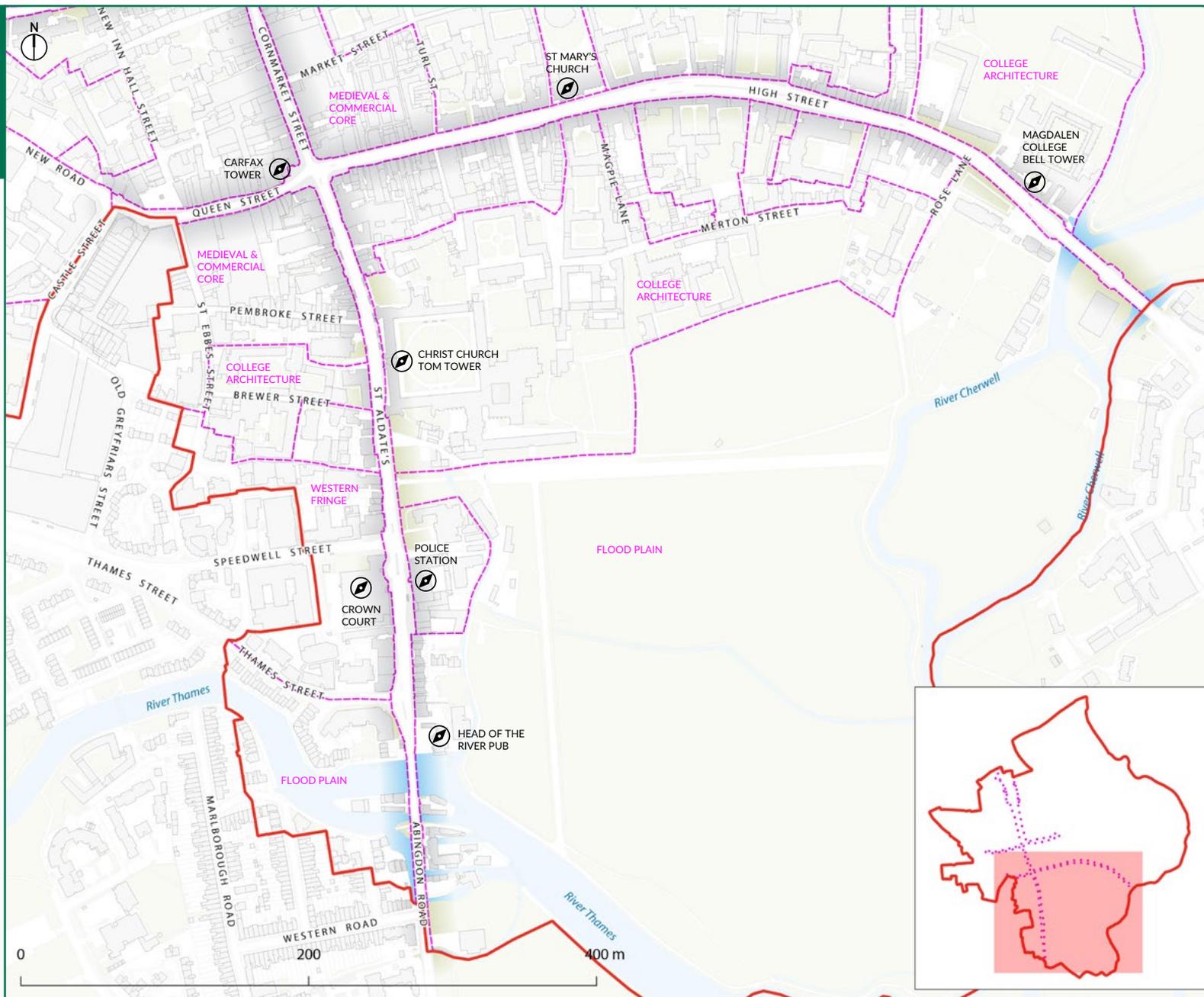


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## 1.2 History

Most of these streets in this character zone have Saxon origins, and have been the key commercial and transportation routes of the city ever since.

### 1.2.1 Saxon burh

- The core thoroughfares of this character zone formed the heart of the Saxon burh, by the late ninth or early tenth centuries. They link the river crossings to the south and east with the routes to the north and west.
- Markets spread along the four axes from the crossroads at Carfax. This has been the focus of commercial and retail activity ever since. The markets included butter at Carfax, corn on the Cornmarket, meat at the western end of the High Street, dairy on Queen Street (later meat) and fish on St Aldate's (then called Fish Street).
- Ongoing retail and commercial use is an important part of the character of these streets.

### 1.2.2 Middle Ages and expansion beyond the walls

- Wealth generated from the cloth and leather industries and trade was at a peak in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, leading to suburban expansion beyond the city walls.
- Broad Street and George Street are examples of medieval expansion beyond the walls, on the site of the northern defensive ditch; the distinctive bulbous shape of Broad Street is a result of the forward extension of the line of the town wall to create an expanded graveyard for St Michael at the Northgate.
- Broad Street was well established by the thirteenth century, when it was home to a horse market and known as Horsemonger's Street.

### 1.2.3 Institutional occupation

- The character of the principal streets to the north, south and east of the commercial heart was altered from the c. 1300 onwards, by the growth of the University and colleges when narrow commercial and domestic medieval plots were combined to create these large institutional sites. The juxtaposition of these large sites and narrow plots creates a distinctive townscape, but further loss of the narrow medieval plots would cause harm by reducing the ability to understand the city's medieval past.
- The impressive University buildings clustered around the east end of Broad Street (the earliest of which date from the 1660s) create an attractive juxtaposition with the terraced townhouses (now shops) at the western end of the street.
- St Giles' became a popular place for the city's elites to live in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, enabling them to occupy large residences on more spacious plots than in the city centre.

### 1.2.4 Commercial renewal

- There has been much renewal of the commercial core on Magdalen Street, Cornmarket Street, Queen Street, George Street and St Aldate's over the past 200 years, reflecting changing demands for city centre shopping use during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and pressure for stores with larger footprints to accommodate national chains.
- In the Post-War period, the process of redevelopment has resulted in relatively few examples of high-quality architecture, and has significantly reduced the number of buildings representing Oxford's mercantile history up to the mid-twentieth century.
- More recently, pedestrianisation of Cornmarket Street and partial pedestrianisation of Queen Street was introduced to sustain the vitality of the retail core, effectively creating new public spaces.

## 1.3 Character

### 1.3.1 Use and access



Saxon and medieval streets; Historic urban characterisation



Theme 1: contrasts and complexity

Theme 2: university

Theme 8: commerce and retail

Theme 9: civic administration

Theme 11: living

There is a strong continuity of retail and commercial use in the city centre, although the long-term trend has been for expansion of college and University use at the expense of private residential and commercial activity:

- The central area focused on Carfax provides the highest concentration of retail usage. This includes Cornmarket Street, Queen Street, George Street and West Magdalen Street (although this is now extended further beyond Queen Street with the redeveloped Westgate Centre). This is historically significant because these streets have been the commercial hub of Oxford since the foundation of the Saxon burh over a thousand years ago.
- Travelling further from Carfax along High Street, St Aldate's, St Giles' and Broad Street, retail is increasingly diluted by institutional use, especially once beyond the line of the former city walls. Mostly these institutions are the colleges, but Broad Street has a unique character because of the University buildings at the east end (Sheldonian Theatre, Clarendon Building and Weston Library), and St Aldate's has a distinctively civic aspect in the form of the Town Hall and the Post Office (and further south, the Law Courts, Police Station and County Council offices).



Cornmarket Street is a hub of commercial activity at the city's centre



There is a wider mixture of commercial, retail and institutional use along St Giles'

### 1.3.2 Streets and townscape

Comprising the principal streets of the Saxon burh, this zone contains some of finest streetscape in the country:

#### Topography



Saxon and medieval streets; Historic urban characterisation



Theme 23: topography and geology

- Topography shapes the character and appearance of the two streets rising up from the floodplain: the eastern end of High Street, and St Aldate's.
- Other streets are largely level, though Cornmarket Street has a noticeable change in level at the northern end which corresponds with the former city wall. This is an important feature.

#### Street pattern



Saxon and medieval streets; medieval plot boundaries



Theme 18: street layout of the Saxon burh

Theme 10: defence

Theme 12: archaeology

Theme 22: views of the conservation area

- With the exception of Broad Street and George Street, the streets of this character zone have been the principal thoroughfares of the settlement for over a thousand years. They are therefore of great historical interest for preserving its Saxon and medieval plan.
- The difference between the density and order of the walled medieval town settlement and the space beyond the walls is still discernible in the shape and width of streets. This is most obvious north of the line of the walls, in St Giles', with its broad and gently widening form, and in Broad Street, with its generous width and distinctive bulbous form.
- The lower part of St Aldate's was widened by clearances in the early twentieth century, so its character is not as historic.
- Much of the acclaimed townscape of High Street is due to its gentle curve towards Magdalen Bridge, which constantly reveals new views and buildings (see Section 13.3.7 Landmarks p. 15).

#### Public space



Theme 19: public space

Central Oxford has few formal public spaces, but this character zone contains significant places for markets and public gathering, some historic and others recently reinforced by pedestrianisation:

- St Giles', unusual in Oxford because of its generous width, and home to the annual St Giles' Fair for over 200 years. The War Memorial at the north end is an important focus during Remembrance Day services, while the Martyrs' Memorial at the south end is a popular place for people to gather and sit.
- Broad Street, a place shaped and used for assembly since its creation as a horse market, later by virtue of its proximity to University buildings, and now because it is semi-pedestrianised. Redevelopment of the Weston Library has transformed public use and the enjoyment of the eastern end, by creating south-facing steps where people can sit and linger.
- Carfax, modest in scale but of great historical and communal significance as the centre point of Oxford for over a thousand years.
- Queen Street and Cornmarket Street, historically thoroughfares but now pedestrianised with informal opportunities to stop, rest and meet.



The generous width of Broad Street reflects its location outside the city walls and provides space for assembly

### Plots and building line



Medieval plot boundaries; Building lines and gaps



Theme 20: medieval plots

- The zone contains a high concentration of surviving medieval tenement plots, which are characteristically narrow and long. They are historically significant evidence of the nature of the medieval town, and how it extended in suburbs beyond the city walls.
- Much larger plots were later created for educational, civic, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century retail use by amalgamating medieval plots. The contrast and mixture express the historical evolution of the city and gives the city centre its very distinctive character. Loss of these narrow plots would cause harm by reducing the ability to understand the city's medieval past.
- Alleys and entrance ways such as Wheatsheaf Yard are historically important where they survive; many of these are ancient and illustrate how back plots were accessed and used.
- The building line is predominantly at the back of pavement, creating enclosed streetscapes, but variety in the way buildings relate to the street is essential to the zone's character and appearance, creating a picturesque texture and expressing historical property uses. For example, buildings can be set back and step forward, or have façades slightly angled to the street, or stand in detached plots (e.g. at the north end of St Giles'), or be set back behind collegiate boundary railings and walls (e.g. on the High Street and Broad Street).

### Pavements and street materials



Street materials



Theme 14: materials

- The majority of street surfaces in this zone are new and in most cases this is not detrimental to its character. Shared and pedestrian surfaces in Queen Street and Cornmarket Street are not wearing well, and mismatched patch repairs are unattractive.

- The stretches of old paving that remain are often located in front of colleges, such as St John's, The Queen's College, Christ Church and Magdalen.
- There are also some surviving riverstone cobbles in Broad Street, at risk from inappropriate tarmac repairs.
- The Martyrs' Cross marks the possible site at the western end of Broad Street where the Oxford martyrs were burned at the stake by Queen Mary I (in 1555-56). It is a historically significant piece of nineteenth-century street surfacing, made of contrasting stone setts exposed amongst the tarmac, but is presently in poor condition, and its significance is not readily apparent to passers by.



Medieval plots on St. Giles' (OCC)

### Street furniture

- The spine of St Giles' is defined by tall and handsome streetlights, and at its southern end there are Victorian ironwork railings to subterranean public lavatories. These all contribute essential texture to its character.
- There are surviving Dean and Son gas lamp standards, now converted to electricity, on the west side of St Giles', which are of historic interest.
- Other historic street furniture includes K6 red telephone boxes (several of which are listed) and cast-iron manhole covers manufactured by local business such as Lucy & Co.
- With the exception of Cornmarket Street and recent temporary installations on Broad Street, there are few dedicated places for people to sit along these streets.
- Proliferation of street furniture such as litter bins, bollards and information boards can clutter space on already narrow pavements and detract from the streetscape, particularly where their designs lack uniformity or quality.

### 1.3.3 Green space



Public access to green spaces



Theme 25: green space

- By its very nature, this character zone has little green space, but overhanging trees and glimpses over walls and through gateways into quads and gardens provide welcome contrast and incident. This is a defining and much enjoyed aspect of the conservation area's character and appearance.
- Uniquely in the city centre, St Giles' / Magdalen Street form a green thoroughfare. There are green pockets at either end (St Giles' churchyard and memorial garden to the north, and the churchyard of St Mary Magdalen to the south, which are connected by a fine avenue of mature plane trees, forming an attractive vista. This precious environment is historically significant, and aesthetically and ecologically valuable.



Mature plane trees along St Giles' form a green thoroughfare into the city, punctuated by tall and handsome streetlights



Green pockets, such as St Giles' churchyard, provide welcome areas to sit in an otherwise hard urban streetscape

### 1.3.4 Buildings



Designations; Historic urban characterisation



Theme 1: contrasts and complexity

Theme 14: materials

Theme 15: architectural details

#### Quality, variety and materials

- Two overarching characteristics of the buildings in this zone combine to create a streetscape of national and in places international architectural quality and importance:
  - the sheer number and concentration of historically and architecturally significant buildings (see number of listed buildings and positively contributing buildings)
  - the delightful variety and contrast, most particularly between narrow domestic frontages and grand institutional façades, which is quintessentially the character of Oxford city centre.
- The variety and contrast in types of building in this zones is reflected in the materials: predominant use of painted plaster for domestic use and ashlar (Headington, Clipsham and Bath stone) for institutions.
- The 'coral rag' stone used for St Michael at the Northgate tower and is notable as the first type of stone to be used in the town. It is also found in St George's Tower and parts of the town wall at New College.
- In the core retail area, commercial redevelopment in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty first centuries introduced a wider variety of materials including red and buff brick (particularly prevalent along George Street). Plots were often combined to create wider frontages (e.g. William Baker House on the corner of Broad Street and Cornmarket, 1915).

#### Shopfronts and other details

- There are some fine historic shopfronts, for example on the High Street, the west side of St Giles' and Broad Street, and these enhance the appearance of the area. Modern shopfronts are more prolific, and overall the number, form, materials and lighting of these fascias and signage detracts from the historic character and appearance of the zone, especially on Cornmarket Street, Queen Street, the northern end of St Aldate's and the western end of the High Street.

- Surviving historic architectural details, such as handsome cast ironwork on Nos. 5-9 Magdalen Street, create a rich streetscape, which is an important element of the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area.
- There is generally a good survival of historic windows, with very few replacement uPVC windows, which also contributes to the quality of the streetscape.

### 1.3.5 Positive contributors



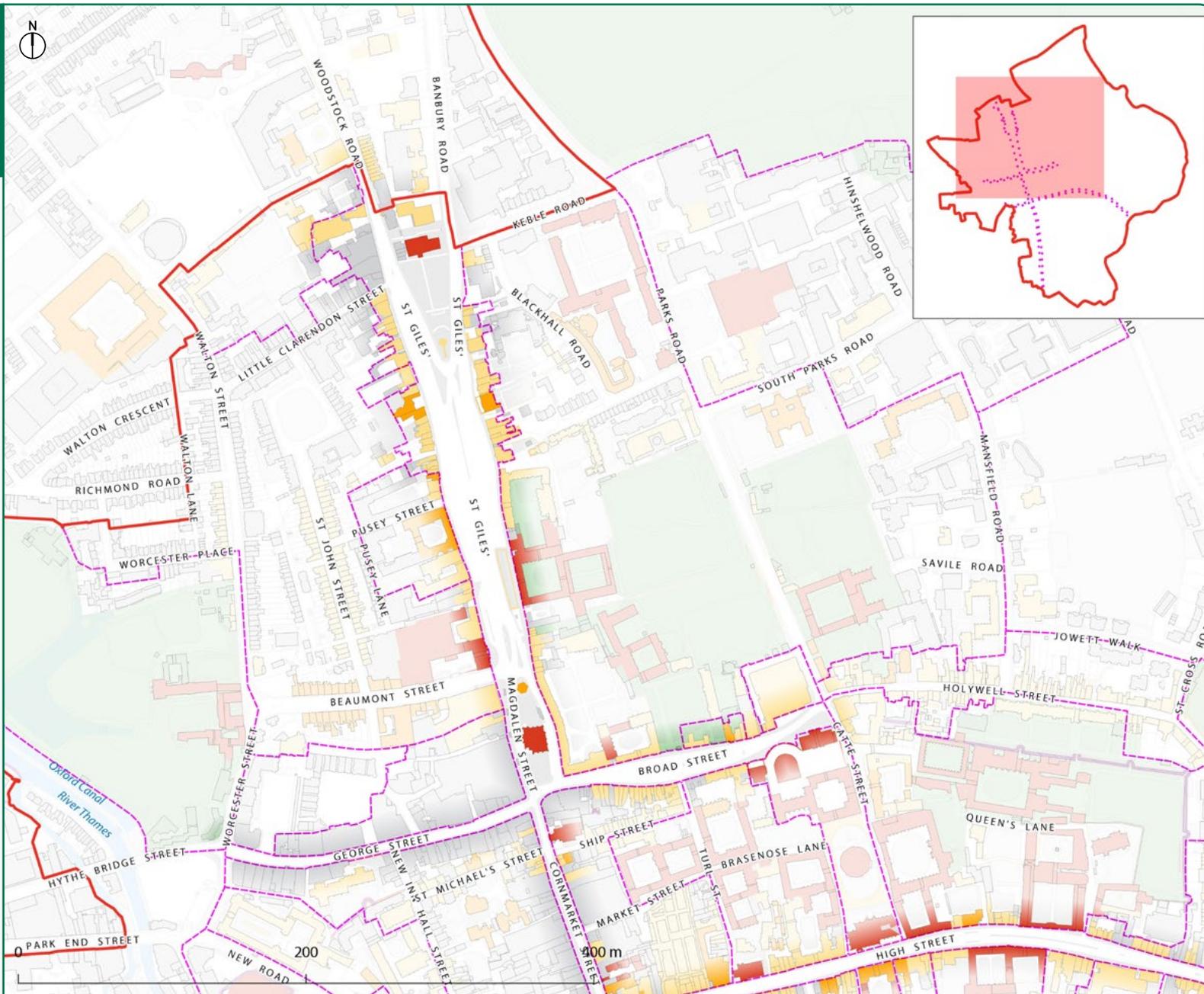
Positive contributors

- A very high proportion of the unlisted buildings within this zone make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the streets and the conservation area, because of their age, use, materials and details.
- Amongst these are good examples of post-war architecture that intelligently relate their context by maintaining a consistent scale, conserving the medieval plot rhythm or using vertical emphasis in detailing to reflect it, and providing carefully detailed frontages that reflect the architectural intricacy and materials of the older buildings.
- The character of the Principal Streets is predominantly influenced by the buildings that align them but also by other key features within the streetscene such as shopfronts and signage, street surfaces, street furniture and street trees which are all considered to be positive contributors.
- There are a number of historic and traditional shopfronts within the area and some historic and attractive signage. As often the closest physical features at eye level, these make a significant and positive contribution to the character of these streets.
- Historic and traditional street surfaces such as York stone paving, granite setts, river cobbles and Staffordshire blue pavers make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, providing an attractive setting to adjacent buildings and the highway and often providing a visual reference to the history of the area.
- There is a high concentration of good quality, historic street furniture along the principal streets including cast iron railings, light columns, red telephone kiosks and post boxes. Together, these historic features help create a cohesive and visually rich environment.

# Designations Principal Streets

### Key

- Oxford Central Conservation Area boundary
- Grade I listed
- Grade II\* listed
- Grade II listed
- Scheduled monument
- Registered parks and gardens

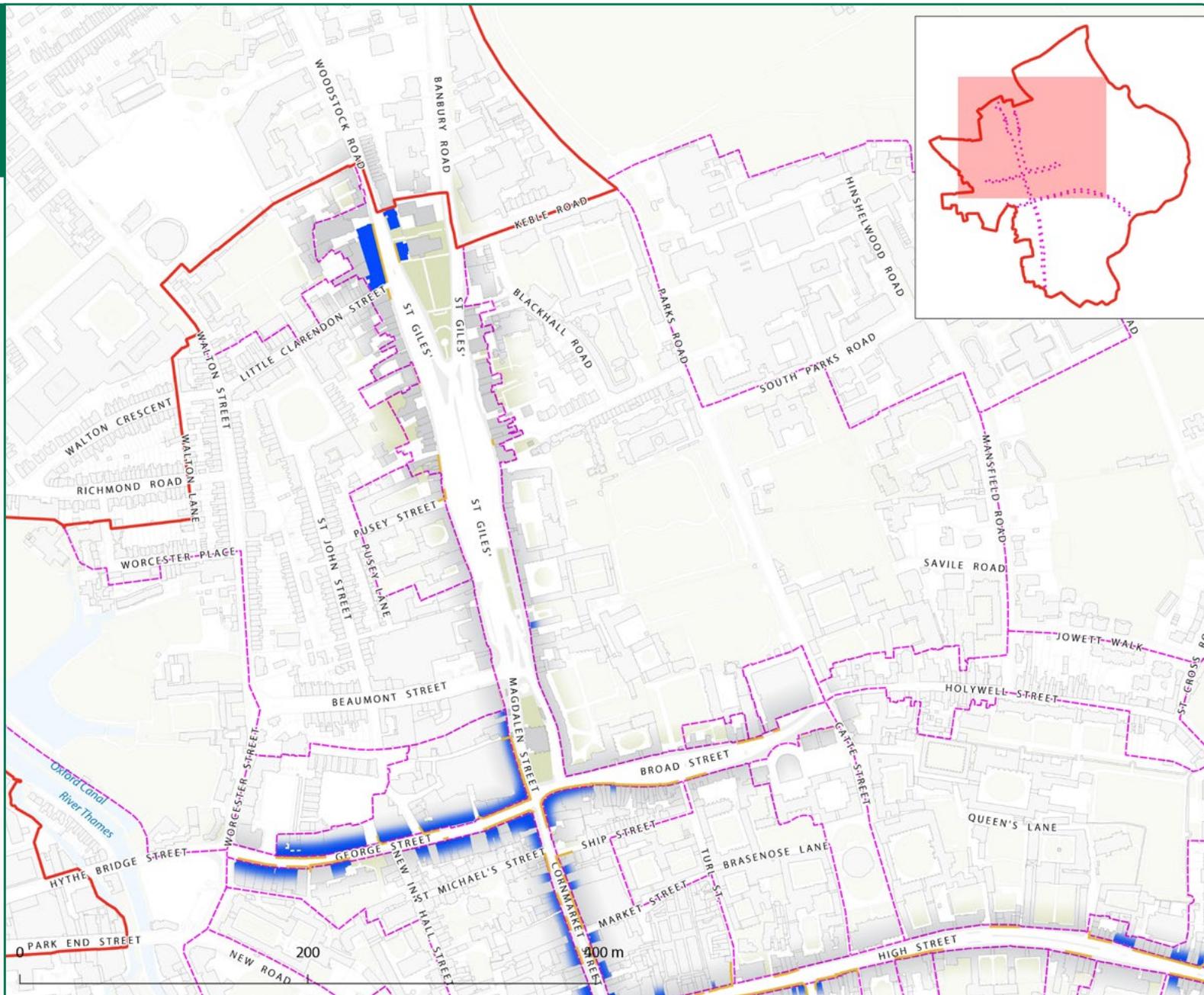


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### Positive contributors Principal Streets

#### Key

-  Oxford Central Conservation Area boundary
-  Positive contributors (non-designated)
-  Attractive shopfront

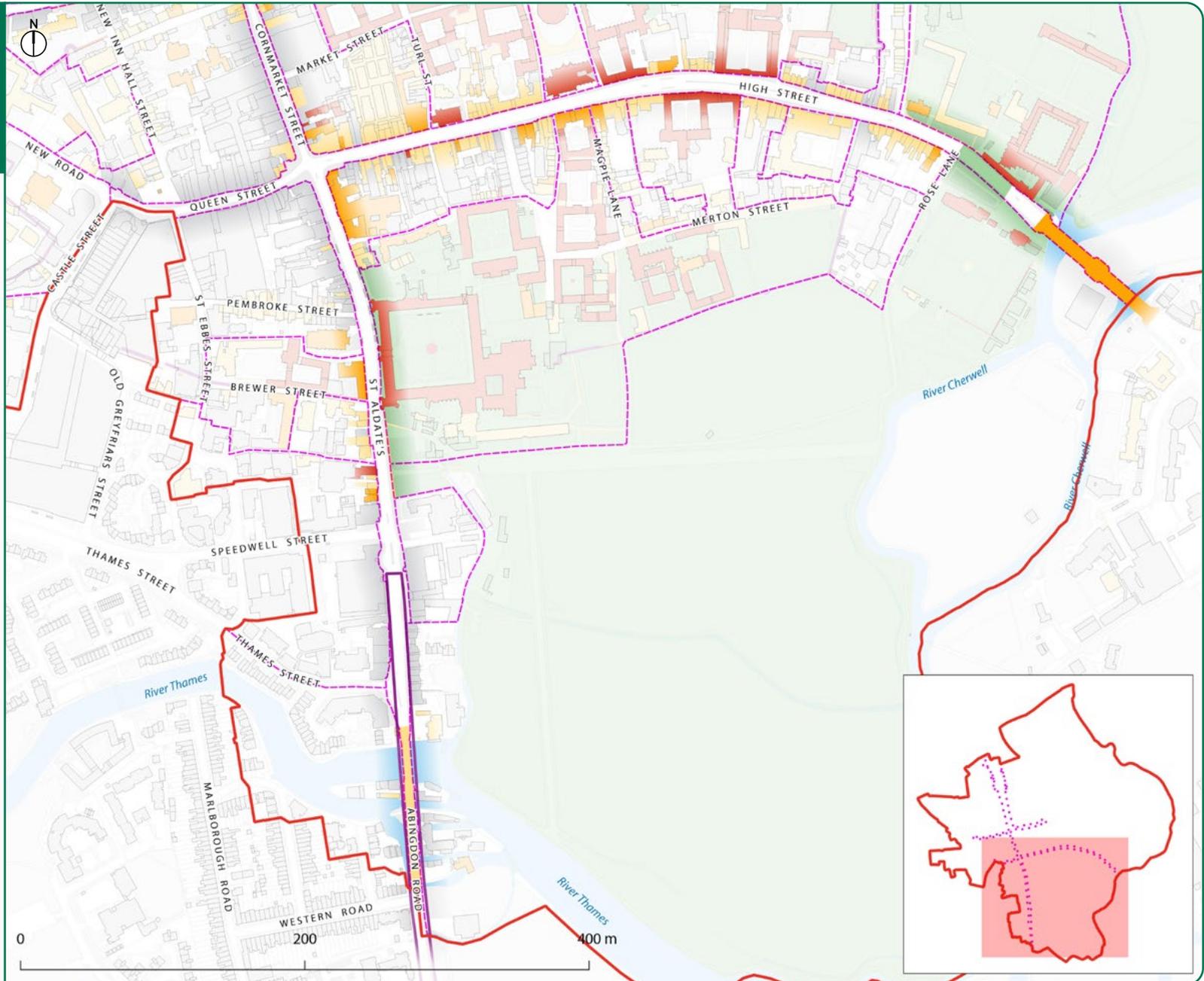


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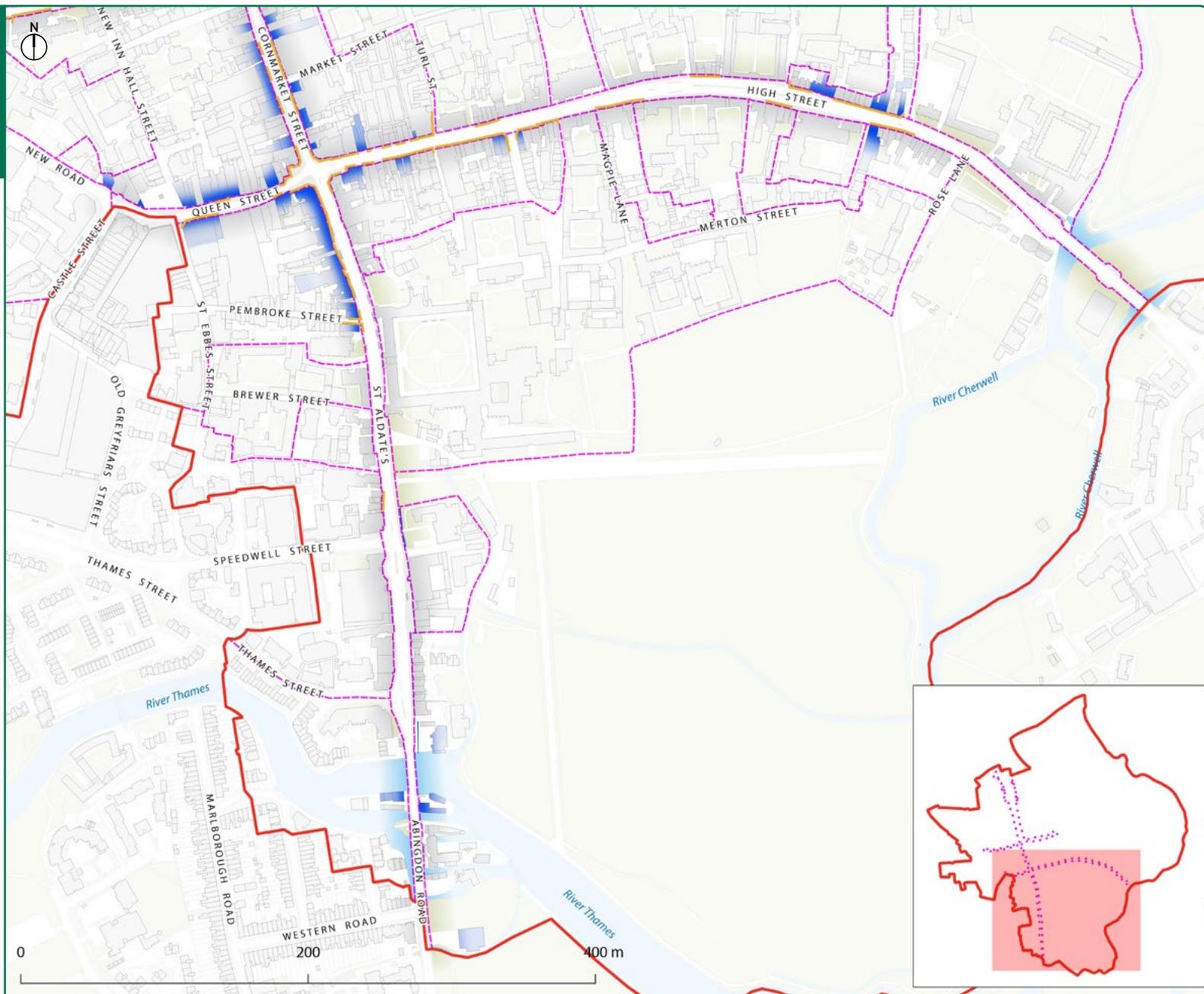


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### Positive contributors Principal Streets

#### Key

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-  Positive contributors (non-designated)
-  Attractive shopfront



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- Street trees play a significant role in creating visual interest when viewed in the streetscene. Some trees provide an element of 'surprise and delight' such as those on the High Street that pop out as your view unfolds. Others lean over into the street and help frame a view. Street trees provide a dynamic and ever changing landscape, creating a sense of place and reinforcing the unique character of the area.

### 1.3.6 Roofscape



#### Roofscape



#### Theme 21: roofscape, skyline and landmarks

- The roofscape of this character zone has more variety than most, reflecting the passage from the commercial and institutional hub of the city to the beginnings of its suburbs. It is of fundamental importance to the character and appearance of the conservation area because of its richness, quality and relatively few recent changes:

#### Building heights

- The variations in building heights are fundamental to the character of the streets because they reflect the pattern of historical development and function. The seventeenth-century rubble stone and timber framed barn (now belonging to St John's College) on the east side of St Giles' is only a single storey high and indicates the historically rural character of this area outside the city walls. In contrast, late-nineteenth-century and twentieth-century retail premises on Cornmarket Street, Magdalen Street and Queen Street can be up to four storeys in height (rising to four storeys with attics at the corner of George Street and Magdalen Street), demonstrating the pressure on space in the city centre.
- Buildings of five storeys or higher (other than landmark spires and towers) are extremely rare in the conservation area because of the successive tall buildings policies that have been in place since the 1960s, which have sought to protect the city's significant skyline and the settings of its internationally important architecture on which tall buildings can have an adverse impact

#### Roofscape and skyline

- Roofscape is extremely varied and this is fundamental to the townscape qualities of the streets and the wider views of the conservation area.
- This variety arises from plot widths, building heights, roof forms (pitched, gabled, parapets, pediments etc.), chimney stacks and architectural ornamentation (e.g. finials and turrets).
- Because of the building heights and roofscape, the skyline in this zone is varied. It is richest on the High Street, Broad Street and the top of St Aldate's because of the wealth of institutional and religious architecture, but throughout the zone the skyline is vital to its character and appearance.
- The Gormley statue 'Another Time' on the roof of Exeter College's Thomas Wood Building on Broad Street is an attractive recent addition to the roofscape and skyline of this street.



The High Street, showing a sample of the many building heights and roof forms along the principal streets

## Roofscape

### Principal Streets

#### Key

 Oxford Central Conservation Area boundary

#### Building heights

-  0m
-  5m
-  10m
-  15m
-  20m

 Flat roofs

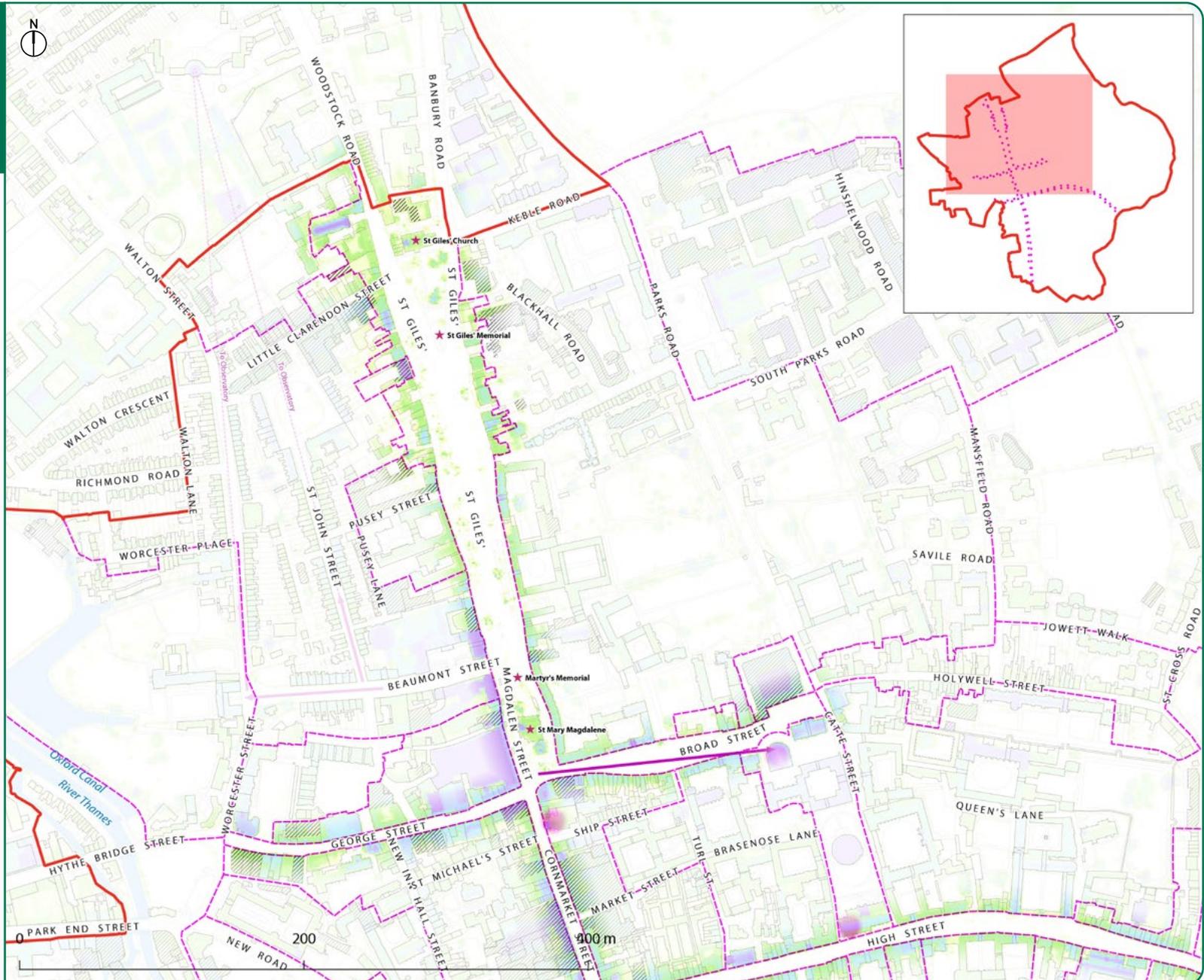
 Elevated panorama

 Designed public view

 Focal point

 Landmarks

Source: Building height data based on environment agency lidar DTM and DSM 2m



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# Roofscape Principal Streets

### Key

Oxford Central Conservation Area boundary

### Building heights

0m

5m

10m

15m

20m

Flat roofs

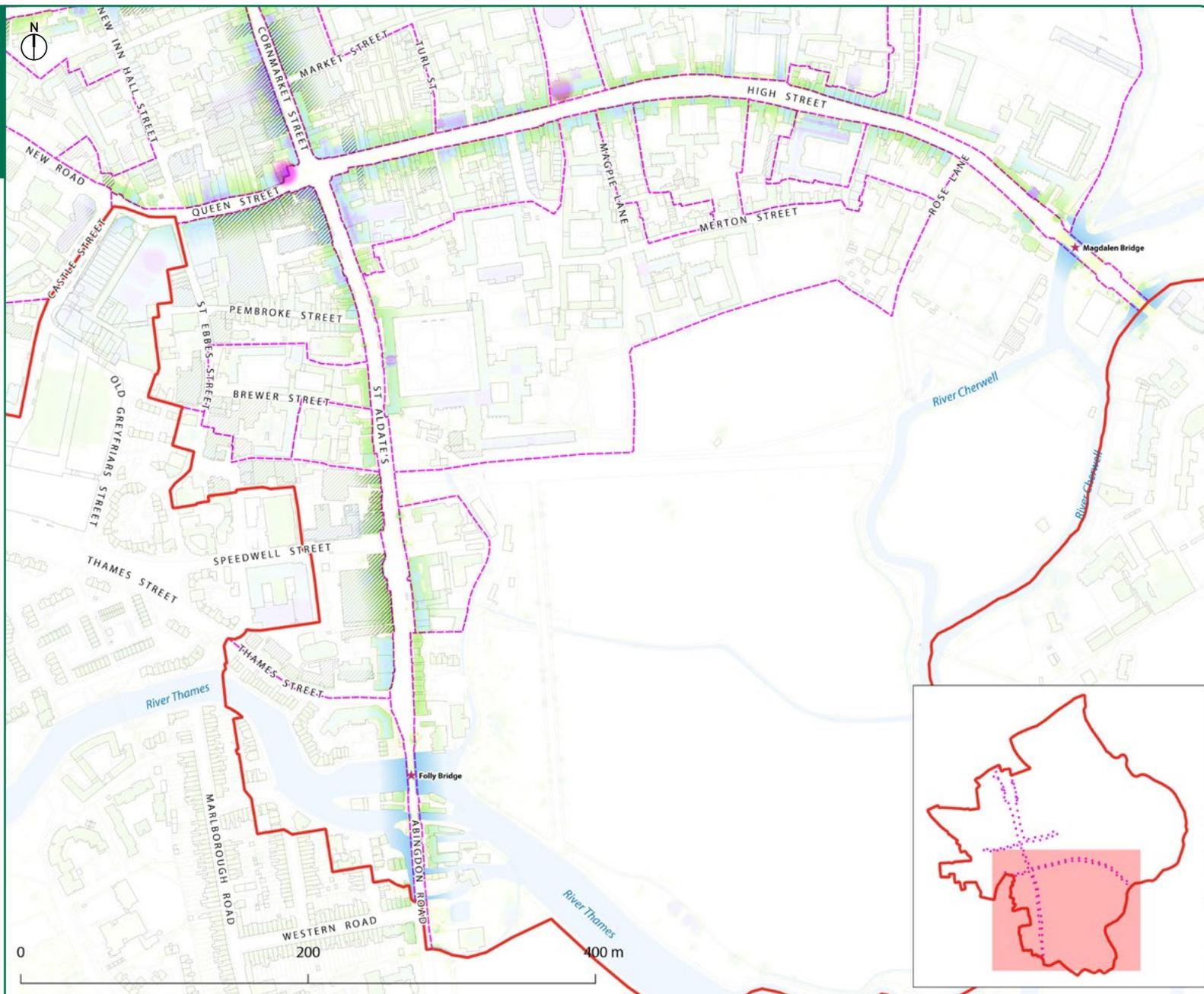
Elevated panorama

Designed public view

Focal point

Landmarks

Source: Building height data based on environment agency lidar DTM and DSM 2m



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### 1.3.7 Landmarks



#### Roofscape



Theme 21: roofscape, skyline and landmarks

Theme 22: views in the conservation area

Theme 27: setting of the conservation area

- Several of Oxford's most famous architectural landmarks punctuate these streets, making a defining contribution to its world-famous townscape. The zone is exceptionally rich in both designed and glimpsed views of these landmarks, which are fundamental to the experience of its character and appearance:

#### Landmarks with the zone

- Magdalen College bell tower, High Street.
- Entrance cupola and statue, The Queen's College, High Street.
- University Church of St Mary the Virgin, High Street.
- Former All Saints' Church (now Lincoln College library), Turl Street.
- Carfax Tower, Carfax.
- HSBC Bank, Cornmarket Street.
- Lloyds Bank, Cornmarket Street and High Street.
- Saxon tower of the church of St Michael at the Northgate, Cornmarket Street.
- 26-28 Cornmarket Street (3 storey timber framed building on the corner with Ship Street)
- Former Debenhams Building, Magdalen Street.
- Church of St Mary Magdalen, Magdalen Street.
- Martyrs' Memorial, Magdalen Street.
- St Giles' Church, St Giles'.
- St Giles' War memorial, St Giles'.
- Tom Tower, Christ Church, St Aldate's.
- Town Hall, St Aldate's.
- Sheldonian Theatre, Broad Street.
- Gloucester Green, George Street.

#### Landmarks outside the zone

- Exeter College Chapel, Turl Street.
- Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, New Inn Hall Street.
- Westgate Centre, Queen Street.

### 1.3.8 Views

#### Public viewing panorama

- Carfax Tower, the tower of St Mary's Church and the tower of St Michael at the Northgate all provide 360-degree panoramas, from which the viewer can experience and appreciate the historical form and architectural character of central Oxford, and its relationship to its landscape setting and suburbs.

#### Designed views

- The University created views of the new Sheldonian Theatre by demolishing houses in the middle of Broad Street in 1667.

#### Vistas to focal points

- For example, Tom Tower is the focal point of the north-south axis of Oxford, clearly visible for the length of Cornmarket Street and St Aldate's, while the vista between St Giles' War Memorial and the Martyrs' Memorial along St Giles' creates a distinctive townscape.

#### Unfolding views

- The curving topography of the High Street creates a continuous sequence of unfolding views of streetscape and landmarks such as All Saints Church and the University Church. This is one of the finest and most thrilling townscape experiences in Europe.
- Glimpsed views: of landmarks, for example, from Broad Street southwards down Turl Street to the spire of All Saints Church, or the Radcliffe Camera from the High Street; charming glimpses down alleys and side streets and into colleges, especially along the High Street.

### 1.3.9 Movement and activity



#### Theme 26: tranquillity and sound

As the streets comprising this character zone still constitute the main movement routes to Oxford city centre, as well as the core streets of the commercial heart itself, they are characterised by high levels of activity. While this adds to the vitality of the city, it can also be harmful to the conservation area's character and appearance.

#### Traffic

- The river crossings of Magdalen Bridge and Folly Bridge act as pinch points, making travel into the city centre slow and difficult, especially for people travelling from the east and south.
- Vehicular congestion has been successfully reduced along parts of the Principal Streets through the introduction of bus gates, replacing large numbers of cars with smaller numbers of buses and taxis. Overwhelmingly, this has had a positive effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area. However, in some locations buses and coaches do have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area:
  - in the narrow Magdalen Street East, where the succession of buses and coaches overwhelms the space and harms the setting of the buildings, including the Grade I listed Church of St Mary Magdalen
  - outside the Taylor Institution on St Giles', where there are on-street coach pick-up and drop-off points that are in near-constant use during peak times
  - outside Christ Church in St Aldate's and Queen's College on the High Street, where principal bus stops harm the settings of these exceptional Grade I listed buildings.
- Congregated groups of food delivery service scooters are also a problem in some locations, such as Carfax, where they detract from the setting of this important landmark and other surrounding listed buildings.
- Highways engineering, signage and other paraphernalia has a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area in some locations. For example, at the junction of St Giles' and Magdalen Street, the highways design creates alien geometry and traffic islands, hemming in the Grade II\* listed Martyr's Memorial.



Designed view eastwards along Broad Street towards the Clarendon Building and Sheldonian Theatre



Vista south down St Aldate's towards the focal point of Tom Tower

- On-street parking is extensive in St Giles but the impact is lessened by the great width of the street and the screening provided by the plane trees.
- By contrast to St Giles, Broad Street is smaller and there is no screening. Parking here is harmful to its character and appearance, and to important views of the Sheldonian Theatre, and it would be beneficial to these if the temporary parking restrictions in place as part of the Broad Street project were made permanent.

### Cycling

- These streets are important cycling routes across the city; bicycles make up nearly half of all vehicles travelling over Magdalen Bridge.
- Cycling is permitted on Cornmarket and Queen Street only between 6pm and 10am due to the volume of pedestrians and to reduce conflict between users.
- The demand for cycle parking is very high due to the number of cyclists. However, large, untidy racks can detract from the public realm and from the settings of architectural landmarks, as can hire cycles and scooters.

### Pedestrians

- Pedestrian activity is most intense near the city centre.
- Cornmarket Street is pedestrianised. Broad Street and Queen Street are also partially pedestrianised. As well as removing the appearance, noise and pollution of vehicles, pedestrianisation is in keeping with the historic market functions of these areas.
- Where streets are not pedestrianised some pavements get heavily very congested, for example at the west end of the High Street and in Magdalen Street. This is harmful to the experience of the conservation area.
- On St Giles', the width of the street and the range of traffic movements can make crossing the space as a pedestrian, away from the designated crossing points, difficult.

### 1.3.10 Archaeology



Theme 12: archaeology



Oxford Archaeological Action Plan further detail and guidance

- This character zone comprises the historic main thoroughfares of the city, most dating back to the Saxon burh and crossing the medieval fortifications.
- The lower section of St Aldate's by Folly Bridge incorporates a section of the Grandpont beneath the modern road surface, a rare survival of the Norman causeway over the Thames floodplain which may have even earlier origins.
- Although there are localised impacts from modern road building and extensive buried service routes throughout this zone, the below-ground archaeological potential of the zone is considered to be variable to high. There remains potential for the buried remains of earlier street surfaces, the medieval town gates, the medieval central kennel drain, cellars and post-medieval conduits to be preserved within islands of undisturbed ground between service runs.



Section through Castle Street with multiple road surfaces from the saxon period (Tom Hassell and Oxford Archaeology)

## 1.4 Useful documents and further guidance



Refer to the following Historic Urban Character Assessments on the Oxford City Council website for detailed accounts of the character zone. The key plan shows their boundaries.

- HUCA 10 Thames Crossing: Colleges and University.
- HUCA 15 City Centre and Commercial Core: Pembroke Street and St Aldate's.
- HUCA 16 City Centre and Commercial Core: Queen Street and Bonn Square.
- HUCA 18 City Centre and Commercial Core: Cornmarket.
- HUCA 19 City Centre and Commercial Core: The High Street, Townhouses and Market.
- HUCA 21 Former Northern City Ditch: Broad Street.
- HUCA 26 St Giles': The Street and Islands.
- HUCA 27 St Giles': Western Frontage Commercial.
- HUCA 28 St Giles': Ashmolean Museum and Colleges.
- HUCA 29 St Giles': Townhouses.
- HUCA 30 St Giles': St John's College Expansion.
- HUCA 31 St Giles': Medieval Colleges.
- HUCA 32 The Eastern Colleges: Turl Street Colleges.
- HUCA 33 The Eastern Colleges: University Buildings.
- HUCA 34 The Eastern Colleges: South of the High Street.
- HUCA 35 The Eastern Colleges: Broad Walk.
- HUCA 36 The Eastern Colleges: Former Eastgate.
- HUCA 37 The Eastern Colleges: North of the High Street.
- HUCA 41 The Eastern Suburb: Magdalen College.
- HUCA 42 The Eastern Suburb: Botanic Garden.



### Other useful documents include:

*Oxford Heritage Walks Book 1: On foot from Oxford Castle to St Giles'*, Malcolm Graham 2013

*Oxford Heritage Walks Book 2: On foot from Broad Street*, Malcolm Graham 2014

*Oxford Heritage Walks Book 3: On foot from Catte Street to Parson's Pleasure*, Malcolm Graham 2015

*The Broad Street Plan*, Kim Wilkie, 2004

