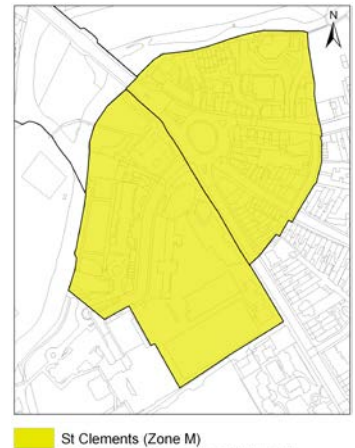


**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 44:
ST CLEMENTS - ST HILDAS COLLEGE AND MAGDALEN SCHOOL**

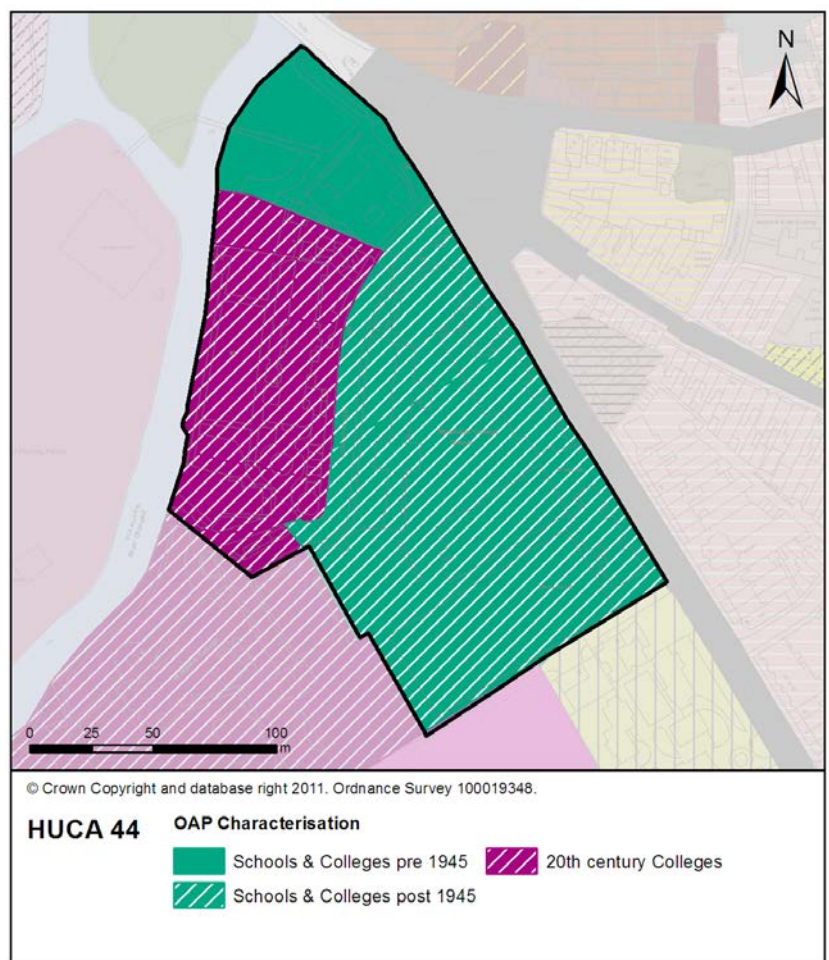
The HUCA is located within broad character Zone M: St Clements

The broad character zone is comprised of part of the historic suburb of St Clements. The zone encompasses the junction of arterial roads from Cowley, Iffley and Headington which meet at The Plain, leading to the crossing over the River Cherwell at Magdalen Bridge.



Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: 19th- 20th century
- Designations: Five Grade II listings. Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Interest: The site lies close to the historic river crossing and a recorded burial of Viking type. There is significant potential for Saxon, Viking and medieval activity orientated on the crossing and a medieval mill located south of the crossing. activity.
- Character: 19th-20th century college and school buildings. Also former 18th century town house and gardens facing the river.
- Open Spaces: Wide lawns along the river frontage, large surfaced school yard and car park.
- Road morphology: Single angular Victorian access cul-de-sac.
- Plot morphology: Large regular and irregular plots established through the 18th-20th centuries.
- The natural topography is primarily Weymouth member mudstone rising from a height of 56m OD on the east bank of the River Cherwell to 59m OD.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - 18th century mansion- Cowley House
 - Garden Building at St Hilda's (recently listed).



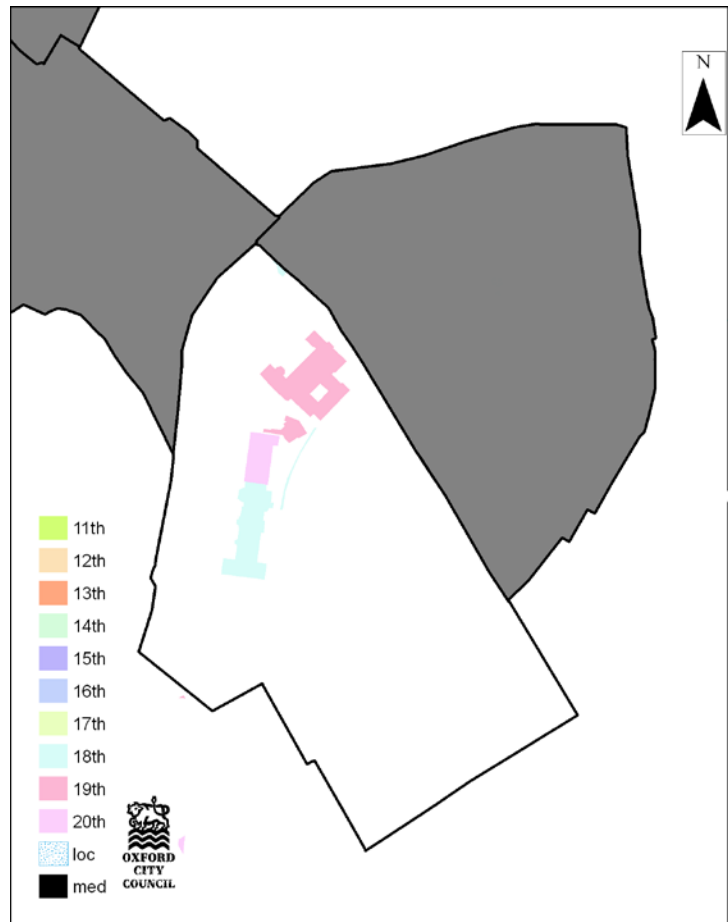
Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

Description

The St Hilda's College character area is comprised of a coherent group of 18th-20th century buildings located in spacious grounds. The area is dominated by two institutions, St Hilda's College which was founded in the late 19th century and Magdalen College School, an ancient school associated with the late medieval college. The urban morphology comprises of a series of large regular and irregular plots, adapted town houses and purpose built institutional structures. St Hilda's College is located along Cowley Place, with a large linear early 20th century range orientated on the four storey brick 18th century Cowley House with associated lawns next to the River Cherwell. St Hilda's College has expanded in a linear fashion along Cowley Place with a series of buildings added in the 20th century and the campus extends beyond the study area to the south.

Magdalen College School is comprised of a three storey brick 19th century town house on Cowley Place and an series of modern school buildings between Cowley Place and Iffley Road arranged around a large triangular tarmac playground with adjacent car park. The school buildings are set back from the Iffley Road and Cowley Place frontage with railings and a lawn with semi-mature trees providing a buffer.

The school and college grounds along the river retain a number of notable mature and semi-mature trees.



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

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

The character area lies within an area of early-modern expansion of St Clement's on land that was historically located within Cowley Parish, which maintained a mill on the Cherwell. According to the Victoria County History, the Temple Mill stood just below Magdalen Bridge. It was held by the Templars until the end of the 15th century when it passed to St Frideswide's Priory, but by 1512 it was derelict. A second mill, Boy Mill, was located further to the south close to Milham Ford during the medieval period, and may have been known as Lewin's mill in 1086. From c1143 it was held by the convent at Godstow. After 1358 it was held by St Frideswide's Priory, but it had ceased to operate by the early 16th century.

The area near the crossing was referred to as 'Bruggeset' in the early 11th century it has been suggested that the settlement of St Clements may have originated as a Danish garrison or 'bridge settlement'. By the 12th century the small settlement had been granted its own chapel by St Frideswide's Priory. The later medieval settlement gained status by being outside the jurisdiction of the City and thus enjoyed fewer commercial restrictions. St Clements was a key strategic position in the Civil War from which access into the city could be controlled and was therefore substantially defended with a bank and ditch and at least one emplacement or 'star work'. Part of St Clements

was cleared during the Civil War creating a 'no-mans land' between the Royalist and Parliamentary lines. However the suburb rapidly re-established itself in the late 17th century.

St. Hilda's College was founded in 1893 as an Oxford hall for women. Magdalen School was founded as part of the nearby college on the opposite bank of the Cherwell in the 15th century. It originally occupied a site within the college, then in the 19th century a site located between the college and Long Wall Street. It extended to its present site in the 1894. In the 1920s the college took over the main school building next to Longwall Street, which became the New Library, and the Cowley Place site was subsequently expanded.

The character area allows for the appreciation of evolution of Victorian educational thinking with the creation of a more spacious and sanitary site for the medieval college school and the establishment of a late Victorian college for women.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The character area has good potential to preserve Late Saxon, Viking, medieval and post medieval remains, including evidence for Civil War activity. Eleven archaeological events are recorded in the character area on the Urban Archaeological Database. Previous investigations have recorded Roman and Saxon and medieval, 13th century pits and later small gravel quarries within the character area. An investigation in 1958 at Magdalen College school recorded part of the Civil War defences.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

The visual character of the area is dominated by the brick Georgian and Victorian town houses with their generous lawns located next to the river. The area provides an important green space next to the river crossing thus enhancing the setting of the river and its meadows. The college and school are enclosed by low walls and railings however the riverside grounds can be viewed from Magdalen Bridge. Cowley Place is a wide tree-lined street lined with impressive Georgian and Victorian mansions to the west and a sympathetic irregular modern brick built school building to the east. The overall building density within the area is low with large areas of lawn, play ground and car park and a wide access road.

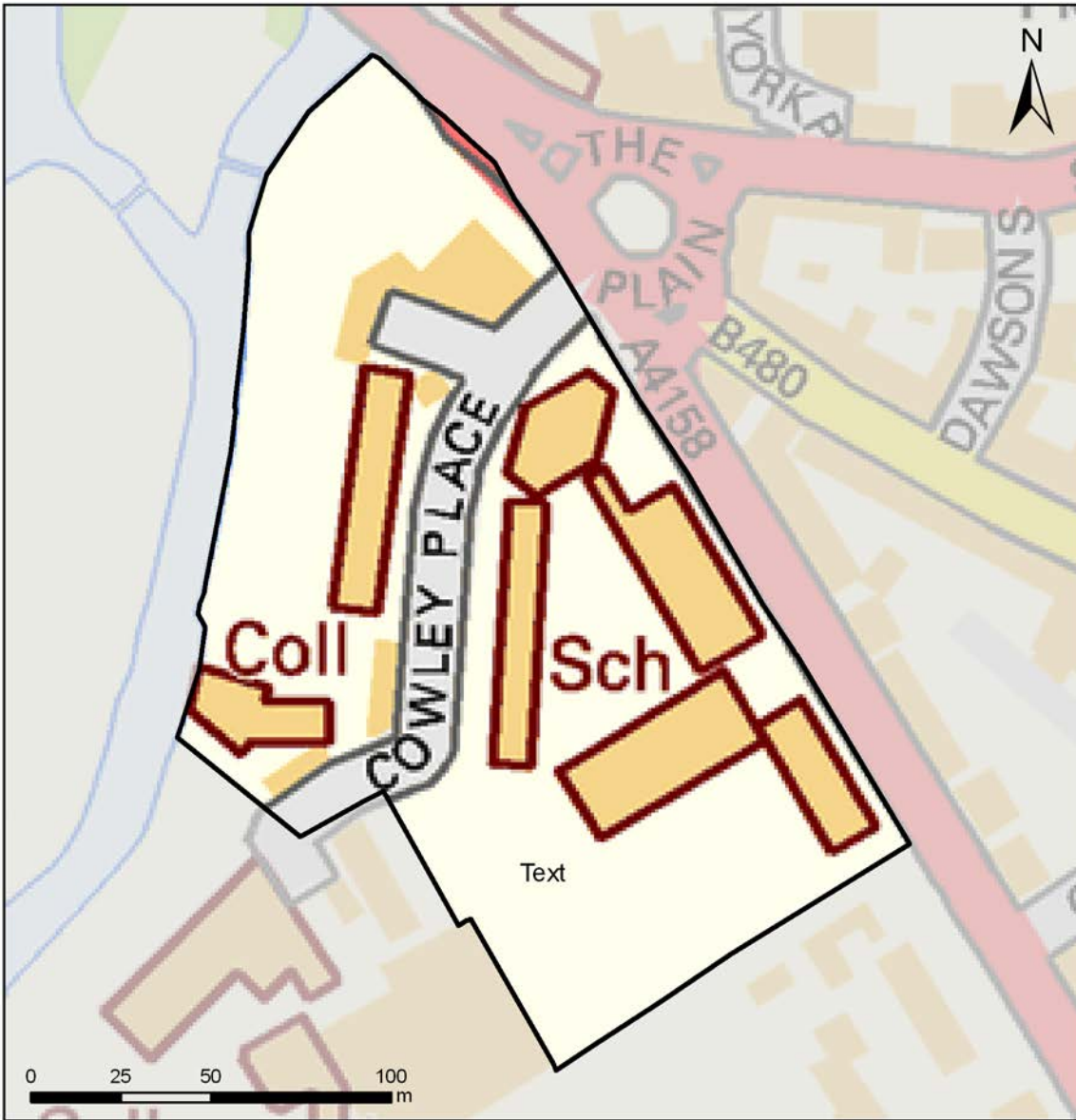


Cowley Place looking west.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The college and school are major Oxford institutions and have clear community value, especially Magdalen College School which has educated numerous generations of Oxford children stretching back to the later middle ages. There is limited public access and Cowley Place is a cul-de-sac mostly used for parking or access.

Version: 19/2/2012



© Crown Copyright and database right 2011. Ordnance Survey 100019348.

HUCA 44 Orientation map