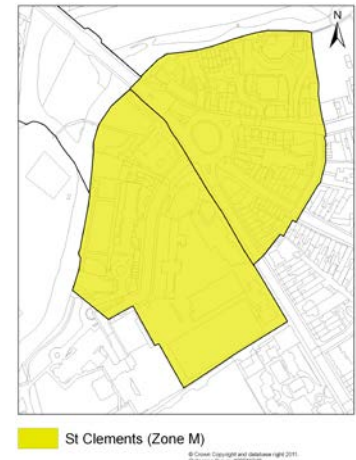


**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 43:
ST CLEMENTS – COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL**

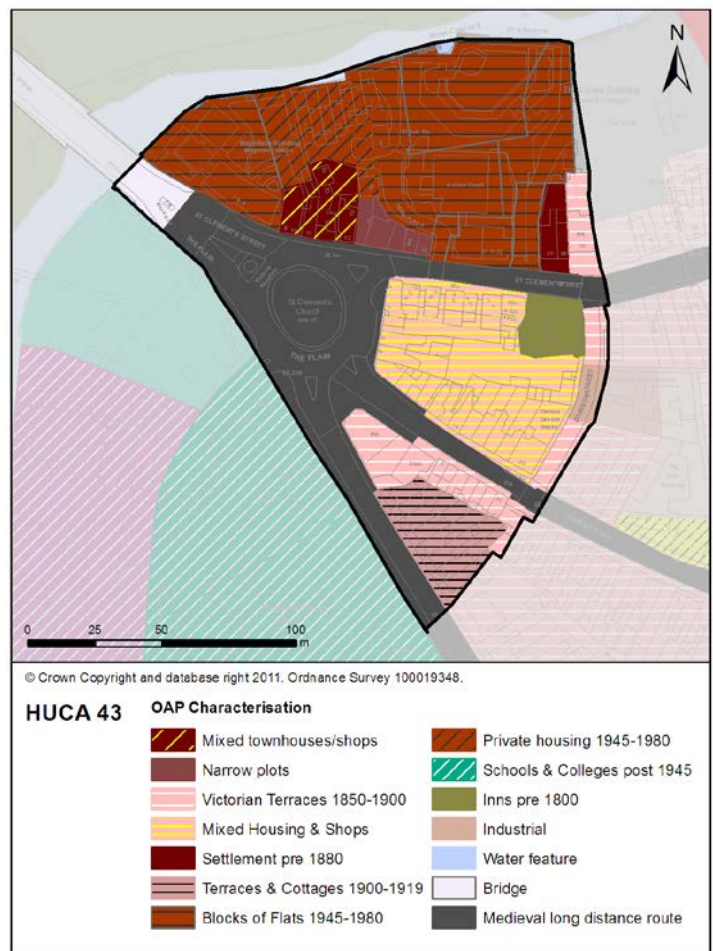
The HUCA is located within broad character Zone M: St Clements

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: One Grade II*, eight Grade II listings. Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Interest: Potential for Late Saxon, Viking, medieval and post-medieval settlement activity. Includes the former site of a medieval church and it's cemetery. The area was enclosed by the Royalist defensive line during the Civil War.
- Character: Victorian/Edwardian terraces, modern student accommodation blocks, shops and private and social housing.
- Spaces: Large triangular traffic junction with central grassed roundabout, small lawns and courtyards behind large student accommodation blocks.
- Road morphology: intersection of four major roads, two Late Saxon or medieval routes (Cowley Road and St Clements) and a post-medieval route (Iffley Road, constructed in the 1770s).
- Plot morphology: Contains a small area of long post-medieval plots and some small narrow 19th century plots with some 20th century large irregular plots for student blocks.
- The natural topography of the area is primarily Weymouth member mudstone rising from a height of 56m OD on the banks of the river to 61m OD in the east.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - The 19th century Victoria fountain/ water trough.
 - The Florey Building, a student accommodation block, is a notable example of 20th century modernist architecture.



- o Surviving historic buildings including the Old Black Horse, a 17th century Coaching Inn, the Georgian Half Moon pub and the Victorian Cape of Good Hope.

Description

The area comprises part of the medieval detached suburb of St Clements formed by the junction of arterial roads from Cowley, Iffley and Headington at the Plain, leading to the crossing over the River Cherwell at Magdalen Bridge.

The focus on this area is The Plain, formerly occupied by St Clement's Church, now a grassed traffic island with an additional focal point provided by a covered Victorian drinking fountain located to the west. The church was demolished in the 19th century when much of the area was redeveloped. The Plain is lined to the north and east by continuous frontages of three storey shops.

The road junction is formed by the meeting of the old medieval routes to London and Bartlemas Leper Hospital and Bullingdon Green with the later addition of the post-medieval Iffley Road, through what was originally Cowley parish.

Successive phases of improvements from the late 18th century have resulted in a built form that is mixed in character with three storey Georgian and Victorian shop fronted town houses and pubs, mixed brick and stuccoed finishing and large modernist student brick and concrete accommodation blocks.

Two large college residential blocks are located between the Plain and the Cherwell to the north. Magdalen College's Waynflete Building, the lower part of which is a shopping rank, and The Queen's College's Florey Building are notable modernist 1960s constructions.

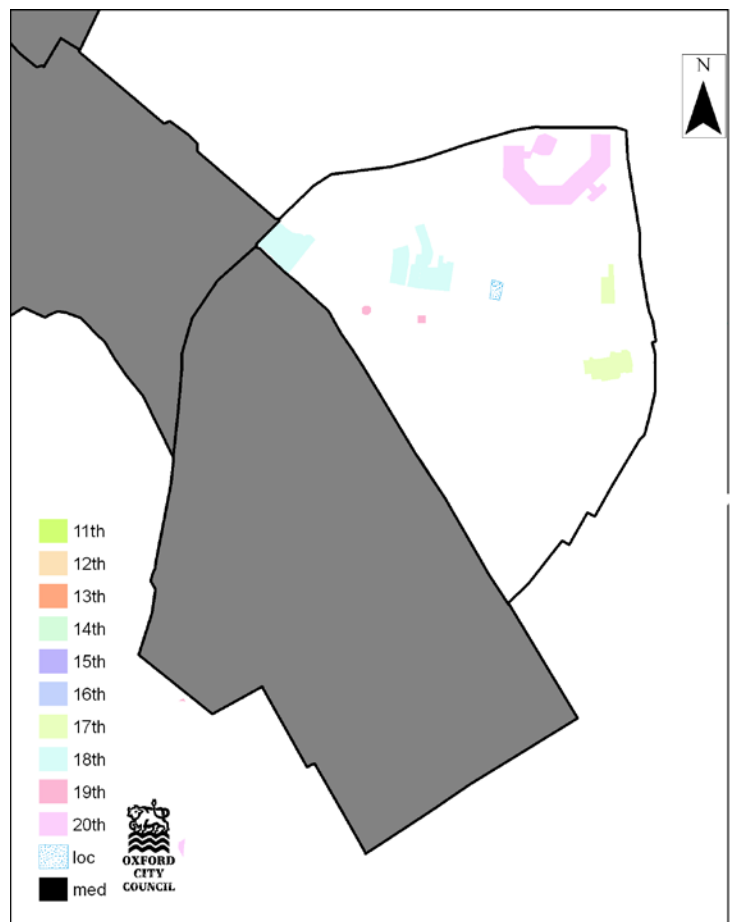
Small private car parks and areas of lawn are located behind street frontages. There are a number of mature and semi-mature trees on the central roundabout and located behind the street frontages.

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

Referred to as Bruggeset (bridge settlement) in the early 11th century it has been suggested that the settlement at St Clement's originated as a Danish garrison. By the 12th century the small settlement had been granted its own chapel by St Frideswide's Priory. Subsequently the suburb gained status by being located just outside the jurisdiction of the city and thus enjoyed fewer commercial restrictions. St Clements was a key



Georgian and Victorian buildings fronting the Plain.



strategic position in the Civil War from which access into the city could be controlled. During the Siege of Oxford some of the houses further to east of the character area were cleared to make the bridgehead more defensible. The suburb was substantially defended with a bank and ditch and at least one emplacement or 'star work'.

In the 18th century turnpike gates were located across the access to Magdalen Bridge and in the late 18th century the area saw substantial demolition and re-ordering as a result of the complete rebuilding of Magdalen Bridge. St Clements was also an area of Oxford that attracted rows of low status terraced housing in the 19th century, often infilling narrow plots to the rear of frontage properties. These have now mostly been demolished. The surviving Victoria fountain was financed in 1899 and stands on the site of the former toll house demolished in 1874. The fountain was restored by the Oxford Preservation Trust in 2009.

The character area is illustrative of Georgian and Victorian improvements to the city and the commercial character of the suburb.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The character area has potential for Late Saxon, Viking, medieval and post-medieval settlement remains including burials belonging to the medieval and post-medieval churchyard of St Clements. The area is of additional interest because it would have attracted the commercial and craft activity of those wishing to remain outside the control of the University in the medieval and post medieval period. The area may also preserve remains from the Civil War period. The Urban Archaeological Database records twenty-five archaeological events in this character area. Previous investigations have recovered medieval pottery and evidence for a 12th-13th century plot boundary and also burials associated with the former church.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

The character area includes small terraces of Georgian and Victorian shop fronted town houses and the restored Victoria drinking fountain which is an attractive centrepiece structure. The Plain offers an open expanse with views along arterial roads and over Magdalen Bridge. Views are partly broken up by the volume of traffic and street furniture. Views over Magdalen Bridge towards the city centre are enhanced by trees and the river corridor.

The Florey Building (1968-71) designed by James Stirling is located to the rear of the street frontage on the bank of the Cherwell and has been listed for its architecture, characteristic of the Modern Movement.



The Plain- Waynefleete building to the left and Victoria Fountain centre-right.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

Although dominated by the road junction the Character Area has communal value as a focal point in area of mixed residential and commercial use and access onto the Cowley Road which is a busy and culturally vibrant arterial road, encompassing small shops cafes, bars, cinema and music venues, churches, mosques and meeting halls. The area forms part of the route of the Cowley Road Carnival which has taken place since 2001 and has its origins in a local carnival tradition established in the 1980s. The Plain roundabout is also used as a space for impromptu communal gatherings, protests and May Day revelry with Magdalen Bridge being a traditional location for May Day celebrations. The Victorian fountain provides an attractive focal point.

