

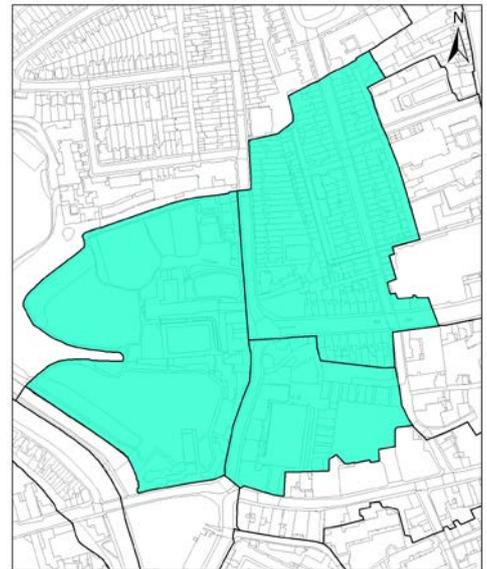
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 23:  
WORCESTER COLLEGE AND GLOUCESTER GREEN - WORCESTER COLLEGE**

The HUCA is located within broad character Zone F: Worcester Street and Broken Hayes.

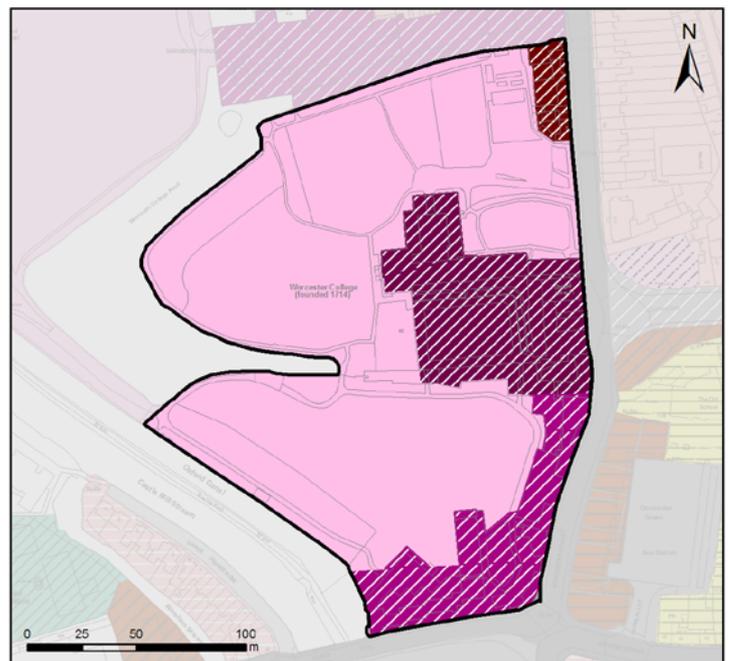
The broad character zone comprises of the north-western suburb located around the former medieval open space of Broken Hayes, the route to Walton Village along Worcester Street, the site of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Royal Beaumont Palace and former monastic Gloucester College. Now comprised of the bus station, market space and shops at Gloucester Green, early modern development on Beaumont Street and Worcester College.

**Summary characteristics**

- Dominant period: 16<sup>th</sup> century and 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- Designations: Five Grade I and five Grade II listings; Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden.
- Archaeological Potential: Potential for remains relating to the former Carmelite Friary, medieval occupation along Worcester Street, monastic medieval Gloucester College and post-medieval Worcester College. Exceptional survival of late-medieval fabric within the college.
- Character: medieval and post-medieval college, designed garden landscape.
- Spaces: Large enclosed designed open space including the Worcester College lake.
- Road morphology: medieval routes along former Stockwell (Worcester Street) and towards the river crossing at Hythe Bridge.
- Plot morphology: large mixed irregular and regular post medieval plots with regular quadrangle at the centre.
- The natural topography is primarily Northmoor first gravel terrace but includes a spur of the Summertown-Radley second gravel terrace rising from a height of 58m at the lake to 61m OD on Worcester Street.
- Survival of townscape elements:
  - Medieval and post-medieval listed college buildings.
  - Medieval street network.
  - Surviving medieval *Camerae* and gate from the monastic medieval college.



Worcester College and Gloucester Green (Zone F)  
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HUCA 23 OAP Characterisation  
 Townhouses (diagonal lines), Post Medieval Colleges (cross-hatch), 20th century Colleges (solid purple), Historic Parkland (solid pink)  
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**Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.**

- The college lake involves a reworking of an outlet from the Castle Mill Stream.
- Row of coursed rubble stone 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages on Walton Street notable for sunken walkway next to the road.
- 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> century designed landscapes.

## Description

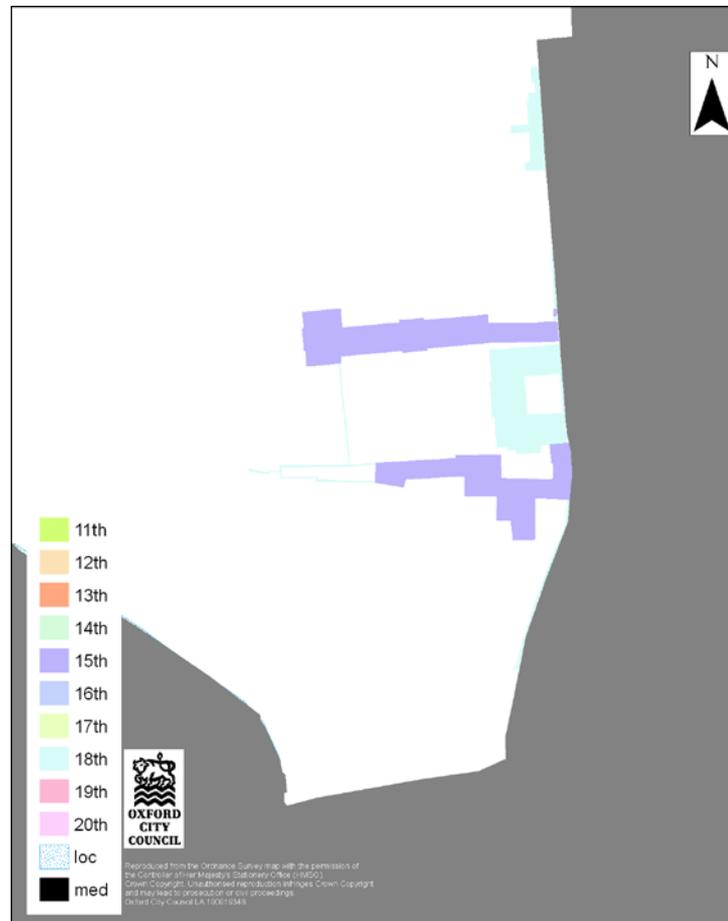
This character area encompasses the grounds of Worcester College. The college comprises of a coherent group of medieval, post-medieval and modern college buildings enclosed within a walled precinct and extensive landscaped grounds, located in the north-west suburb and bounded to the west by the Castle Mill Stream and the 18<sup>th</sup> century canal and to the east by Worcester Street and Walton Street .

Overall building density is low with buildings and precinct wall forming a continuous frontage along the eastern street. The college is comprised of medieval and 18<sup>th</sup> century two and four storey stone built ranges forming a central 'quadrangle', open to the west and with a monumental 18<sup>th</sup> century front range to the east. Smaller enclosed yards are located either side of the central quadrangle. The college also includes a row of 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages along Walton street, a tarmac car park, green houses, outbuildings and modern three and four storey accommodation blocks along the Worcester Street and Hythe Bridge Street frontage. The remaining area is a largely 19<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape of lawns and man-made tree-lined lake.

The built form of the college retains a strong unity of design between the medieval and post-medieval structures. The 18<sup>th</sup> century gateway-entrance range was subsequently used as a focal point for the laying out of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Regency style Beaumont Street to the east. The area is strongly influenced by the medieval urban topography; the main college quadrangle reflects the layout of the earlier monastic college and contains rare example of monastic college architecture in the form of surviving *Camerae*.

## Historical value- means of connecting with the past

A defended burh was established at Oxford by the early 10<sup>th</sup> century. The town subsequently expanded after the Norman Conquest, supported by the economic success of the wool, cloth and leather trades, which subsequently declined in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century. The character area lies on a route way leading from the western part of the burh and later walled town, past a possible landing place or 'hythe' at Hythe Bridge towards the settlement at Walton to the north. A Royal



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

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Palace known as 'The Kings Houses' and later the Royal Beaumont Palace was established on the eastern side of Stockwell (Worcester Street), north of the town, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Carmelite White Friars first arrived in Oxford in 1256 and initially settled on Stockwell, on a site adjacent to the Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem. In 1283 the Hospitallers granted their land to the Benedictine order at Canterbury for the foundation of Gloucester College. After the White Friars took possession of the Royal Beaumont Palace site located on the eastern frontage of Walton Street they abandoned the former Worcester Street property which was subsequently added to the land of Gloucester College. The monastic college was established with a distinctive layout comprising of a ranges comprised of individual blocks of rooms or *camerae* for each Benedictine monastery in England. As a monastic order, the college was subsequently dissolved in 1540 and was for a short time acted as the Bishop's Palace when Osney Abbey was designated the City Cathedral.

Gloucester Hall was subsequently founded on the site in 1559 but was not elevated to college status until 1714 when it was renamed Worcester College. Many of the original college structures were reused by the later Hall and College and the medieval layout has been, for the most part, maintained. The surrounding landscape comprised formal enclosed gardens in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These were replaced by the current designed landscape in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The front and north range of the college, including the library, chapel and hall, were rebuilt in classical style between 1720-86, to a design by George Clarke, under the influence of Nicholas Hawksmoor.

The college is exceptional in its retention of medieval *camerae* illustrative of the character of monastic college. Its character area is also illustrative of a fusion of medieval gothic and classical 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture in contrast to the wider gothic continuity which is the dominant style of monumental college structures in Oxford. Pevsner notes that Worcester is unique amongst contemporary colleges for the absence of any major 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.



**Former Gloucester College Gateway – 15<sup>th</sup> century.**

### **Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence**

The character area has high potential for archaeological remains relating to medieval and post-medieval activity along Stockwell (Worcester Street and Walton Street), including activity associated with the former Carmelite Friary, Gloucester College and Hall and the post-medieval Worcester College including garden archaeology associated with the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape. The Urban Archaeological Database records four archaeological events in the area. Previous investigation on the corner of Worcester Street and Hythe Bridge Street recorded evidence of 13<sup>th</sup> century domestic tenements along the Hythe Bridge Street frontage.

### **Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation**

The aesthetic value of the college grounds is reflected in their Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden designation. Views into the college grounds are limited however with a high rubble stone wall surrounding the campus on almost all sides while views from the canal side walk are restricted by significant tree and hedgerow cover. The 18<sup>th</sup> century front range of the college is the focal point for views along Beaumont Street,



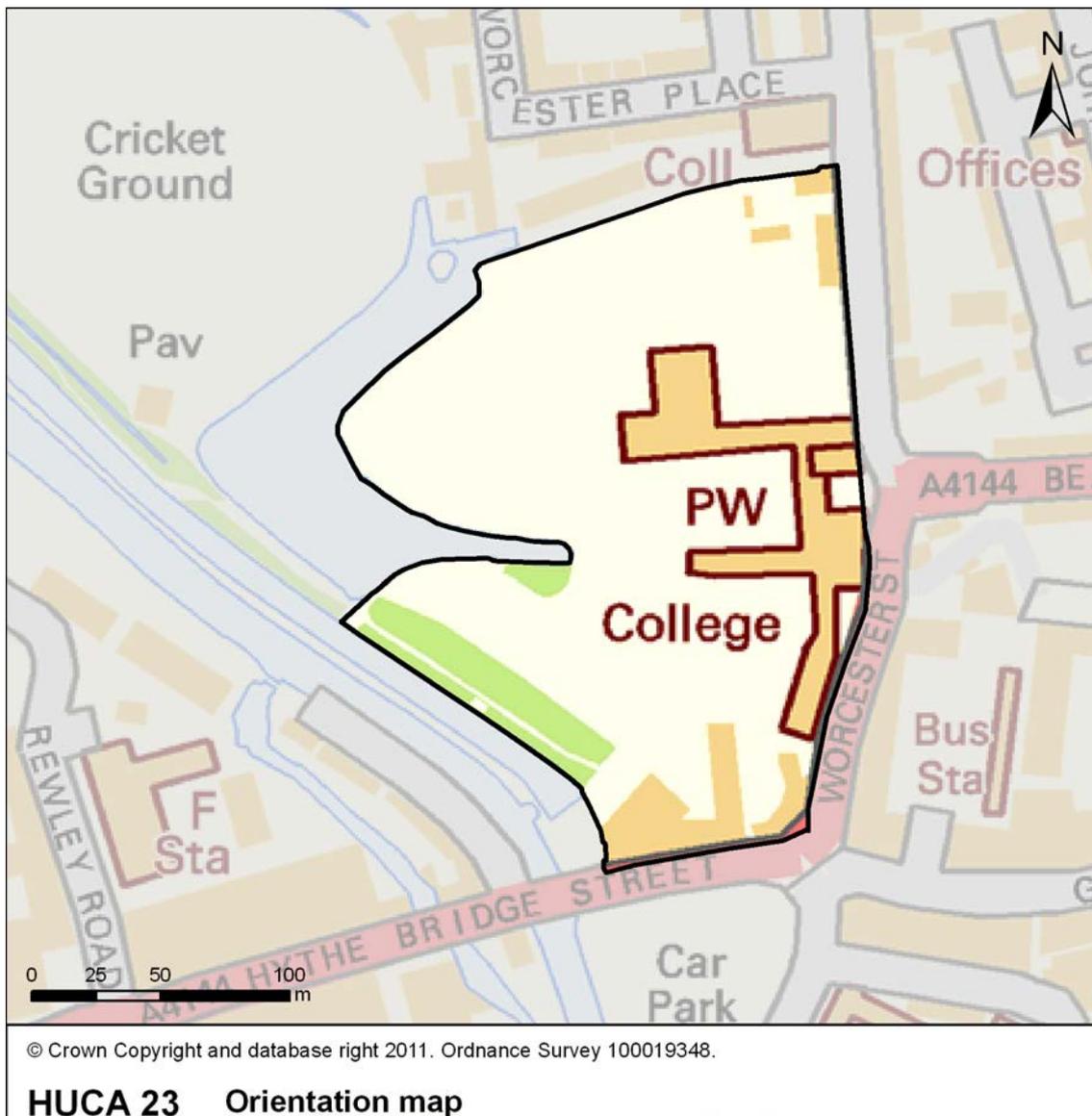
**The front entrance to Worcester College**

which was inserted in the 1820s in late Regency style to orientate on the college. Notable architectural arrangements within the area include the 15<sup>th</sup> century monastic camerae of medieval Gloucester College, the 18<sup>th</sup> century classically designed hall, chapel and library and the recessed 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages on Walton Street. The college precinct preserves a tranquil green space located within an otherwise dense and busy urban environment.

**Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory**

Access to the grounds is limited to staff, students and visitors. College buildings and trees make a valuable contribution to the character of the adjacent public streets.

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**HUCA 23 Orientation map**