

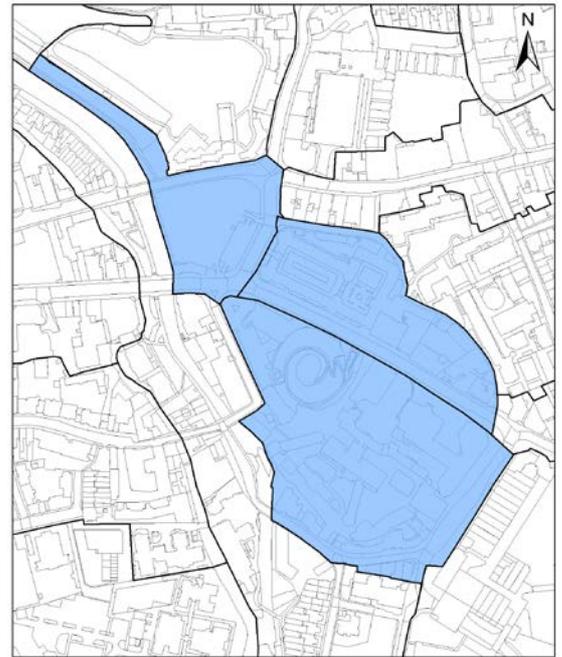
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 13:
CASTLE AND PERIPHERY- NUFFIELD COLLEGE**

The HUCA is located within broad character Zone D: Castle and periphery.

The broad character zone is defined by the extent of the Norman castle defences and includes part of the former canal basin located to the north.

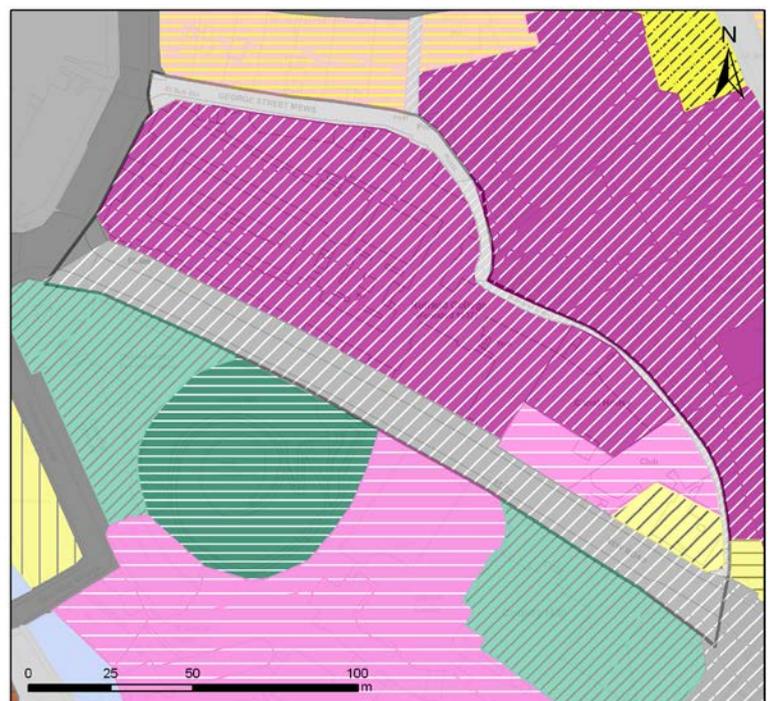
Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: 19th-20th century.
- Designations: Three Grade II, one Grade II* listings. Central Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Potential: The area has the potential to preserve evidence for Saxon, medieval, post-medieval and 18th-19th century industrial remains. The area encompasses the line of the medieval castle ditch and the 12th century siege works, although extensive disturbance was caused by the construction of the canal basin
- Character: Modern college, Conservative Club and 19th century town house bounded by an 18th century link road and an historic back lane.
- Spaces: The open spaces comprise of formal college quadrangles and the designed rockery and lawn of Canal House. There are also two small rectangular tarmac car parks.
- Road morphology: The sinuous Bulwarks Lane retains the line of the castle ditch. Straight 18th century turnpike road.
- Plot morphology: A number of large irregular plots reflect the shape of the castle precinct with large rectilinear college, and large irregular town house and Conservative Club plots.
- The natural topography of the area largely comprises Northmoor First Terrace at a height of around 59m OD rising gradually to a height of 64m OD at its eastern end.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - Bulwarks Lane preserves the curve of Castle defences and former seigeworks.



Castle and Periphery (Zone D)

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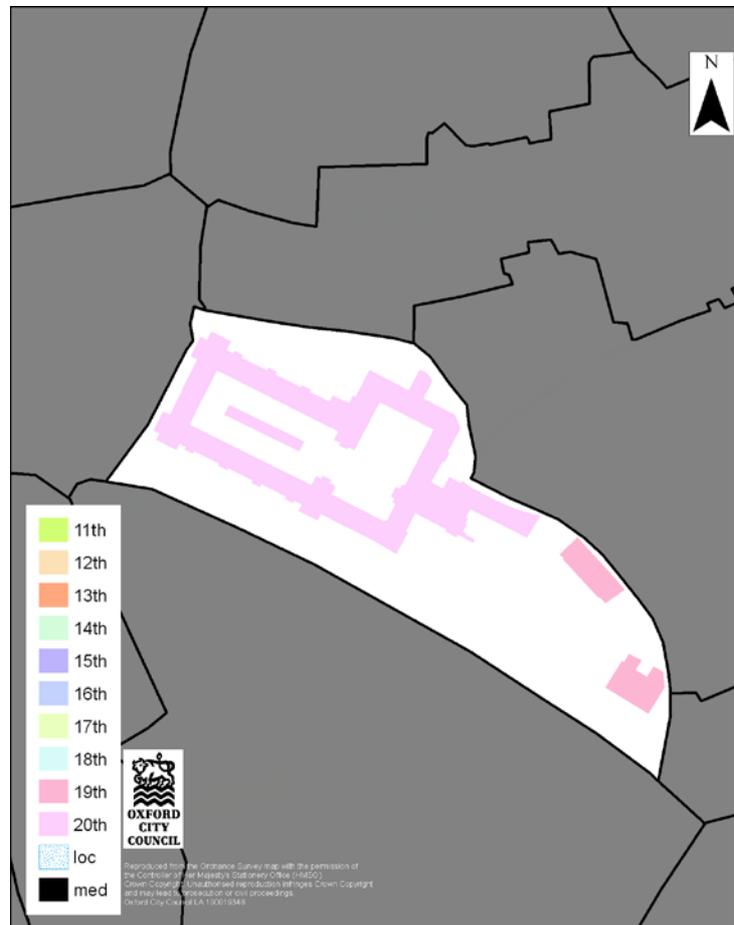
| HUCA 13 | | OAP Characterisation |
|---------|--|--------------------------------|
| | | 20th century Colleges |
| | | Offices/Commercial |
| | | Leisure |
| | | Medieval medium distance route |
| | | Lane |
| | | Alley |
| | | Modern Roads |

Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

- o Part of the canal and its operational infrastructure is preserved in the Canal Garden of Nuffield College and at Canal House.
- o 19th century former Probate Office.
- o Period light fittings and street surfacing in Bulwarks Lane

Description

This character area comprises of Nuffield College, the New Road Conservative Club, the adjacent 19th century former Probate Registry (and car park) and the house and grounds of Canal House, formerly the headquarters of the Oxford Canal Company and now the master's lodgings for St Peter's College. The area is defined by the New Road which was cut through the castle precinct in the 18th century and to the south and the double arc of Bulwarks Lane, which retains the shape of the castle defences and siegeworks, following the outer line of the in-filled castle ditch. Nuffield College (built 1949-60) comprises of three storey limestone quadrangles with a steel framed stone tower and copper covered spire. The 1827 Canal House has a Classical Greek Doric design. Other buildings include the plain single storey flat roofed modern Conservative Club and a brick built Victorian chapel and school room adjacent.



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

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

The Norman motte and bailey was inserted over the western street grid of the Late Saxon burh in 1071. By the 12th century an extensive castle precinct was established defined by an outer defensive ditch. The precinct subsequently dominated the west end of Oxford until it was dissected by the construction of New Street in the 18th century. To the north of the precinct two mounds recorded on historic maps, known as Jews Mount and Pelham Mount, were probably created by King Stephen to lay siege to the castle during the Anarchy. These survived until the 18th century. The double arc of Bulwarks Lane reflects the line of the outer castle precinct ditch and to the west the line of the former mounds (now levelled under Nuffield College).

In the post-medieval period the castle ditch was in-filled and developed as the town expanded. In the late 18th century New Road was created, forming a westward route towards Botley bypassing the suburb of St Thomas', and the canal was constructed (built 1745-c90). A canal basin and warehouses occupied the current Worcester Street car park with an arm of the canal running east from the basin under the current Nuffield College site. Canal House, the offices of the Oxford Canal Company (built 1827-9 in with a Greek Doric tetrastyle portico) was later incorporated into St Peter's College. St Peter's was founded in 1928 as an academic Hall and became a college in 1961.

Nuffield College was founded in 1937 by William Morris (Lord Nuffield) with the bulk of the college built between 1949-60. The college has a distinctive appearance with austere 1930s functionality

combined with elements of Cotswold manor House design (low roof disguising the upper floor, Cotswold gables and windows).

The character area is illustrative of the scale of the medieval defences which are reflected in the line of Bulwarks lane and of the economic impact of the canal, reflected in the ostentatious design of the later canal company offices. Nuffield College is illustrative of the city's association with the car manufacturer William Morris.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The character area has the potential to preserve Saxon, medieval, post-medieval and early modern remains. The Urban Archaeological Database records twelve archaeological events within this character. Previously excavations at Canal Wharf have demonstrated the presence of 11th century Saxon occupation and excavations at Bulwarks Lane revealed further evidence of activity in the 9th-10th century. During the construction of the New Road in the 18th century foundations of two towers and several wells were noted and several substantial walls were recorded opposite the County Hall in the late 19th century.

During the construction of Nuffield College in the 1950s the edge of the outer castle ditch was recorded. The character of the ditch fill suggests that it was open and maintained until the 18th century when the canal was built. The Nuffield College investigations also recorded several wooden piles from a possible late 16th-17th century footbridge across the outer Castle Ditch.



Bulwarks Lane looking north

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

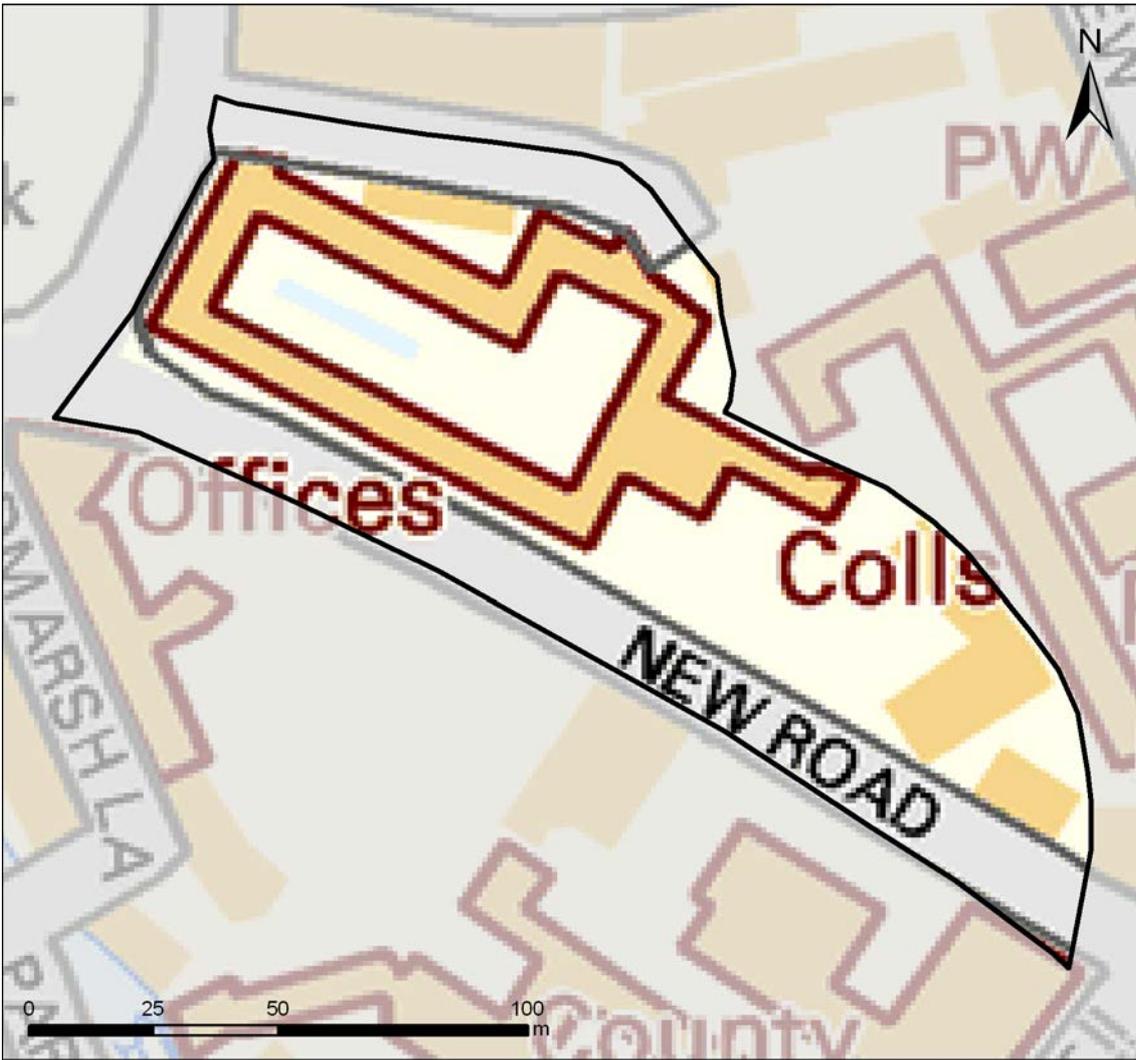
The character area is dominated by Nuffield College, and in particular the tall ten storey tower with its copper spire, which is noted as positive contribution to the Oxford skyline by architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner. Built in limestone in traditional quadrangle form it also contains a pond reflecting the line of the former canal basin in its main quadrangle. The early 19th century Canal House is built in ornate Greek Doric style and has an associated walled garden and rockery. This is an impressive building which is mostly obscured from public view by the limestone walls along Bulwarks Lane and New Road. The Canal House garden preserves strong views across to the Norman motte.

The character area contains the distinctive high sided Bulwarks Lane with Victorian style street lamps, flanked by high coursed limestone walls, a pleasing picturesque route which preserves a sense of enclosure and history. Building density within the area is moderate to low with Nuffield College and Canal House set within well proportioned grounds. Mature tree cover is largely confined to the planting along the wide New Road pavement and the garden of Canal House. A further notable mature tree is located east of the Conservative Club.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The Character Area forms a now isolated and enclosed part of the former castle precinct with limited public access, although Bulwarks Lane is a well used cut through to the west end of George Street. The Nuffield College and St Peters College components maintain enclosed quads and gardens, the former are accessible to the public.

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HUCA 13 Orientation map