

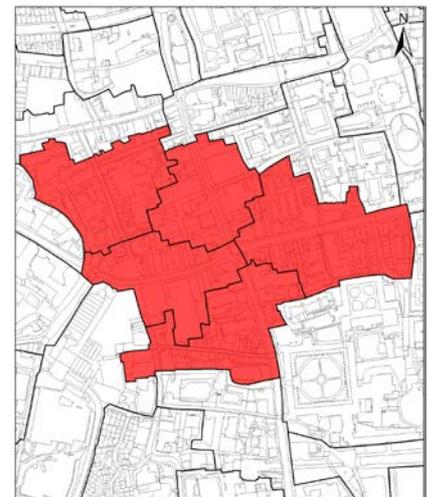
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 16:
CITY CENTRE COMMERCIAL CORE- QUEEN STREET AND BONN SQUARE**

The HUCA is located within broad character Zone E: City centre and commercial core.

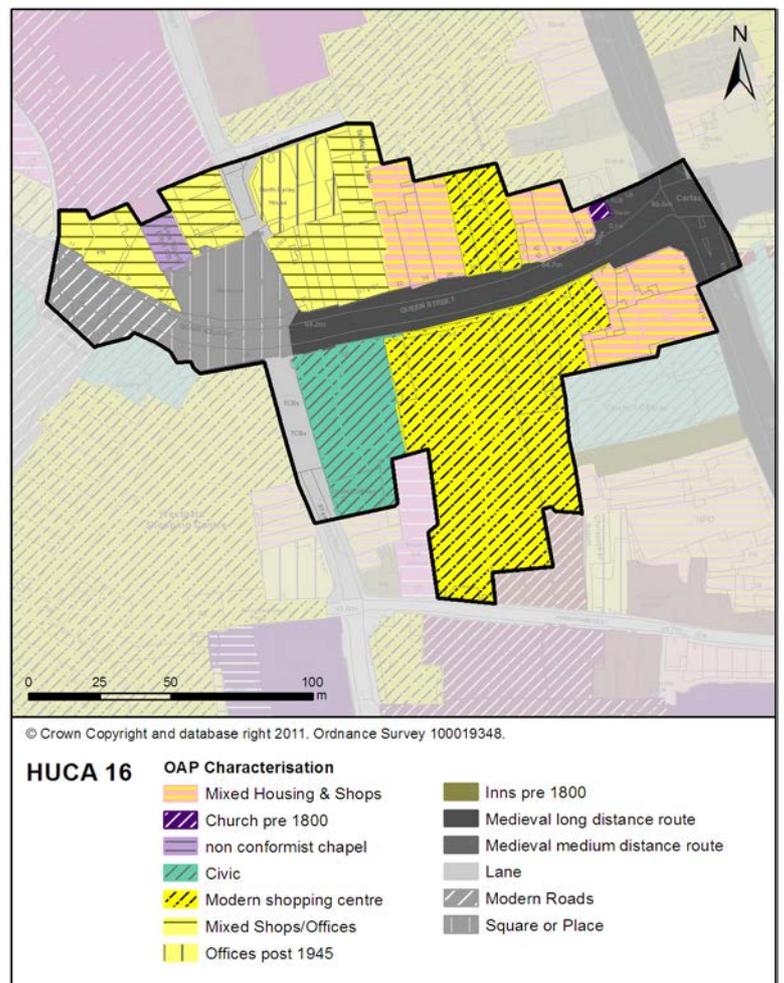
The broad character zone consists of the central historic core around Carfax crossroads linking main axial north-south and south-west Late Saxon streets. The zone forms a coherent central area in the city where the roads, lanes and tenements broadly reflect a history of medieval to modern commercial activity.

Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: 19th-20th century.
- Designations: Seven Grade II listings; Central Oxford Conservation Area.
- Archaeological interest: Potential for Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains, but survival likely to be localised due to the density and longevity of urban settlement and the extent of modern basements and disturbance.
- Character: largely 19th or 20th century commercial buildings.
- Spaces: Tall continuous frontages. Designed public open space at Bonn Square. Limited tree planting at Bonn Square.
- Road morphology: Curving axial Late Saxon street, redirected to the west with the insertion of New Road in the 18th century. Late Saxon side streets at right angles.
- Plot morphology: Medieval long narrow plots and modern large irregular and regular plots. The open space at Bonn Square reflects the former Church and churchyard of St Peter le Bailey. The wide pavement near Carfax Tower reflects the plot formerly occupied by St Martin's Church.
- Geology: The area lies close to the centre of the city on the edge of the Summertown-Radley Second Gravel Terrace at a height of around 65-66m OD.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - Late Saxon street grid.
 - Moderate survival of medieval plot boundaries.
 - Low survival of historic buildings (some notable



City Centre and Commercial Core (Zone E)
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Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

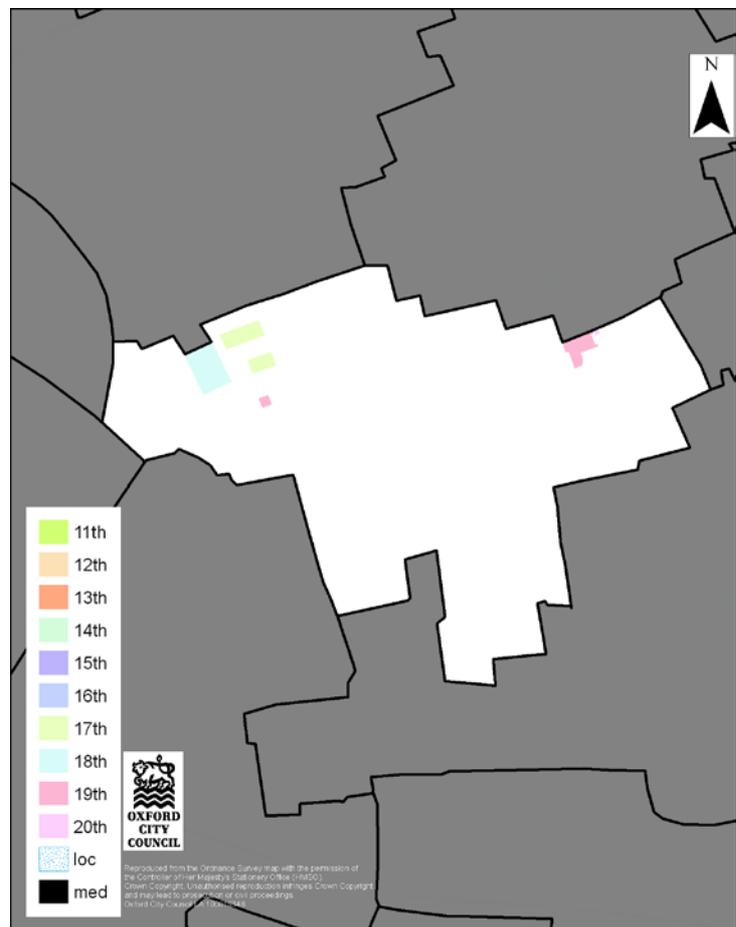
- Victorian and Edwardian facades).
- o Carfax Tower, the former church tower of St Martin's, possibly 14th century in origin but heavily remodelled.
- o The Tirah War Memorial at Bonn Square (1900)- the first war memorial constructed in Oxford.
- o The medieval cemetery of St Peter at the Bailey church, visible in the slope of Bonn Square.
- o Gravestones from St Martin's Churchyard are arranged to the north of Carfax Tower, The Victorian entrance gate (c1896) to the former church cemetery has a carving depicting St Martin.
- o A 1920s public drinking fountain is located next to Carfax Tower.
- o A small number of listed 17th-18th century structures are located within the area, including Baptist Chapel and its crypt.

Description

The area is a primarily commercial and recreational area in the centre of the city, defined by plots fronting onto Queen Street and comprising of a coherent area of 19th and 20th century shops and offices and Bonn Square, one of the few areas of publicly owned open space in the centre of the city.

The buildings are mostly modern structures, three to five storey shops and offices, purpose built for commercial use. The street frontages are continuous and open directly onto the street which is semi-pedestrianised (allowing busses only). A small number of 19th century buildings and facades give the street some time depth and character. The modern buildings have to some extent attempted to reflect the patterns of earlier buildings and gable designs.

The underlying morphology of the urban blocks reflects the medieval tenement patterns despite significant modern alterations and amalgamations. The survival of the medieval plot morphology is varied; on the south side of the street there has been significant boundary loss through redevelopment of the long narrow plots into single large department stores.



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

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

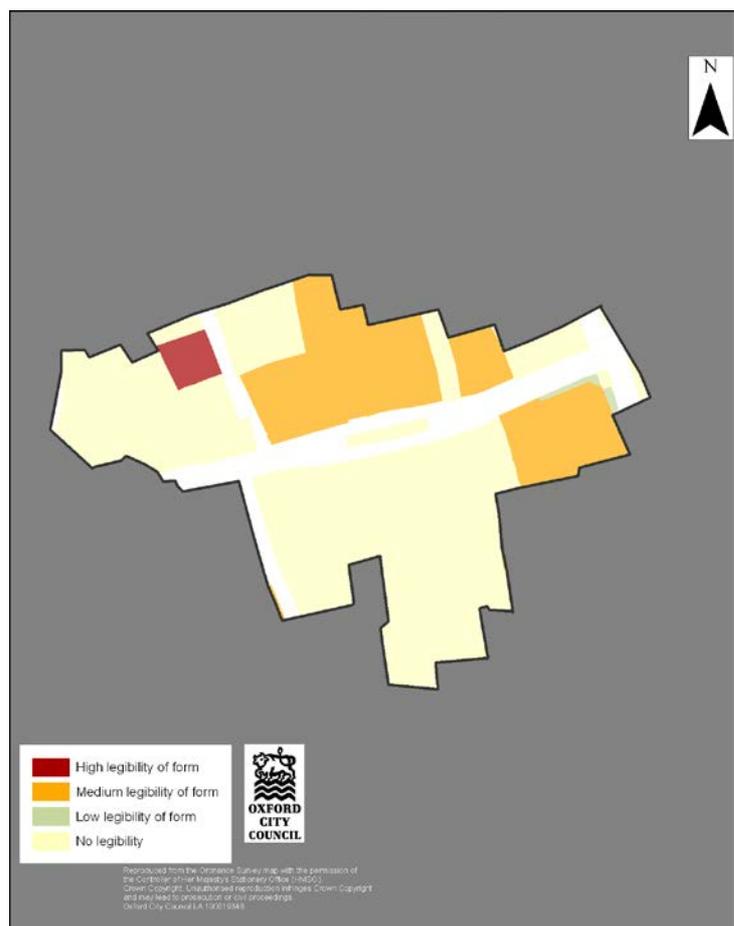
Oxford may have its origins as a defended settlement or religious centre (minster) located next to a crossing over the Thames. A defended burh was established here by the early 10th century with its street grid orientated on the cross roads at Carfax, Queen Street forming the eastern axis. The former St Martins Church located at Carfax may be of Saxon origin, the refaced 14th century tower

is all that now remains. Following the Norman Conquest the morphology of the town was disrupted which a motte and bailey placed in a dominating position over the western part of the street grid. After the initial shock of the Norman Conquest the town appears to have recovered quickly. The Norman period saw major investment in religious buildings and infrastructure projects including the construction of a stone causeway across the river crossing and floodplain (The Grandpont). Despite the disruption of the conquest and the later conflicts of the Anarchy in the 12th century the town appears to have done well with trade in cloth and leather goods driving economic growth in the 12th and early 13th centuries. The tenement pattern evolved in this period with subdivision of Late Saxon and Norman plots, especially along the desirable street frontages associated with the market, which extended along the streets leading off the central crossroads at Carfax including Queen Street (the name Carfax either deriving from the French 'quatre-face' or a corruption of the Latin 'quadrifurcus' both meaning four forks or crossroads). These tenements can be plotted with some confidence from 13th century records (notably the 1279 Hundred Rolls). Queen Street was previously known as 'Great Bayly Street' and the market seems to have been confined to its eastern end.

From the late 13th century and 14th century the cloth trade faltered and disruptions to navigation of Thames and the arrival of the Black Death in 1349 combined with other factors to suppress the local economy. An educational tradition of teaching canon and Roman law had been cultivated locally in the 12th century through the activities of the religious houses and courts. The University subsequently emerged in the late 12th as travel to the more established continental Universities became problematic for aspirant students. By the 13th century the academic halls of the University and its fledgling colleges (founded with endowments from rich benefactors) had taken root. The depressed economy opened up opportunities for further expansion, with colleges taking advantage of low land prices to expand, especially to the north and east of the town away from the market area. The west end has consequently remained more commercial in character.

The growing power of the University and the dwindling economic power of the burgesses led to increasing friction between the two bodies. In 1355 a riot between scholars and towns folk led to the intervention of the King who came down on the side of the University. The riot is supposed to have started over the quality of wine being served in the Swindlestock Tavern, the location of which is marked by a plaque on the current Santander Bank on the south-west corner of Carfax.

In the late medieval period the frontages of the main streets centred on Carfax would have been occupied by narrow shop frontages within halls often at right angles to the street or set back parallel to the street behind a range of shops or courtyard. The eastern end of Queen Street housed stalls for dairy produce and in the 16th century a Butchers Shambles was built in the middle of the street at the eastern end. Fire was a constant threat and notably in 1644 a fire started in George Street led to the destruction of much of the northern side of Queen Street. The creation of the Paving Commission in 1771 marked the



Assessment of medieval tenement survival

first major attempt to organise urban development in the city and the Commission was responsible for demolition of the butcher's shambles on Queen Street, the Butter Bench at Carfax in 1773 and the removal of the street market to a permanent indoor venue off High Street in 1773. A post-medieval water conduit at Carfax was removed as was the neo-classical colonnade located on the southwest angle of the crossroads. The western end of Queens Street underwent substantial alteration in the 18th century when New Road was inserted through the castle precinct. The improvements included the re-naming of Great Bailey Street as Queen Street after Charlotte, the wife of George III.

Queen Street was almost entirely rebuilt in the 19th century. The church of St Peter le Bailey was demolished in 1873 and a new church built in New Inn Hall Street. The churchyard was railed off and eventually became a public garden. This former garden and the Baptist Church forecourt was renamed Bonn Square in 1974. The 1st edition OS Town Plans (1876) records hotels, a racket court, inns, pubs, a bank, a brewery and factory in this character area demonstrating the commercial and industrial use of this area in the late Victorian era. Notable industrial buildings that remain include the 1914 office of Halls Brewery, now occupied by the British Home Stores, and part of the brewery warehouse, which survives as Modern Art Oxford in St Ebbes Street. In the 1960s and 1970s much of the working class suburb of St Ebbes located east and south of the castle was demolished and replaced by the Westgate Shopping Centre, fundamentally changing the character of the area. By the start of the 21st century the medieval and pos-medieval street had been redeveloped to encompass several large department stores and the Clarendon Shopping Centre.

Bonn Square, at the west end of Queen Street, one of the few public spaces of its kind in the city, was redesigned in 2008 and incorporates the graveyard of St Peter at the Bailey and the central Tirah War Memorial built in 1900 to commemorate the North West Frontier campaign.

The character area provides illustrates, in a fragmented way, a number of historical process; Late Saxon town planning, medieval worship, Victorian and Edwardian industry, commerce and remembrance.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

This area has good potential for Saxon, medieval and post-medieval archaeological remains although survival may be localised due to the impact of basements, cellars and modern redevelopment. The urban archaeological database records seventy-five archaeological events in this character area. Previous archaeological work has recorded late Saxon to 13th century pit digging on the corner of Queen Street and St Ebbe's Street with a noticeable hiatus in the 14th century. Elsewhere 13th century domestic activity was recorded at 11-18 Queen Street. Here documentary evidence suggests that a Hall known as Kepeharm Hall (later Hinxe) Hall was in use first as a domestic dwelling before it being used as an academic hall in the late 14th century. Excavations undertaken prior to the redesign of Bonn Square in 2008 recorded a total of two hundred and ninety six burials from the churchyard of St Peter le Bailey, dated from the late medieval period up until to 19th century. Analysis of the remains indicated that post-medieval and Victorian parishioners of St Peter le Bailey suffered from the effects of hard labour, crowded living conditions, pollution, and generally poor hygiene.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

Queen Street is a bustling wide, semi-pedestrianised shopping street with a steady flow of pedestrians, cyclists, delivery vans and public transport. The east end is dominated by the wide street junction and the stone built Carfax tower. The built character of Queen Street is tall and dense, with shop frontages at ground level. There is significant variation of design on the northern side, less so on the southern frontage. A pattern of pointed triangular gables is repeated by modern structures along the south side of Queen Street,



Bonn Square and the Tirah Memorial.

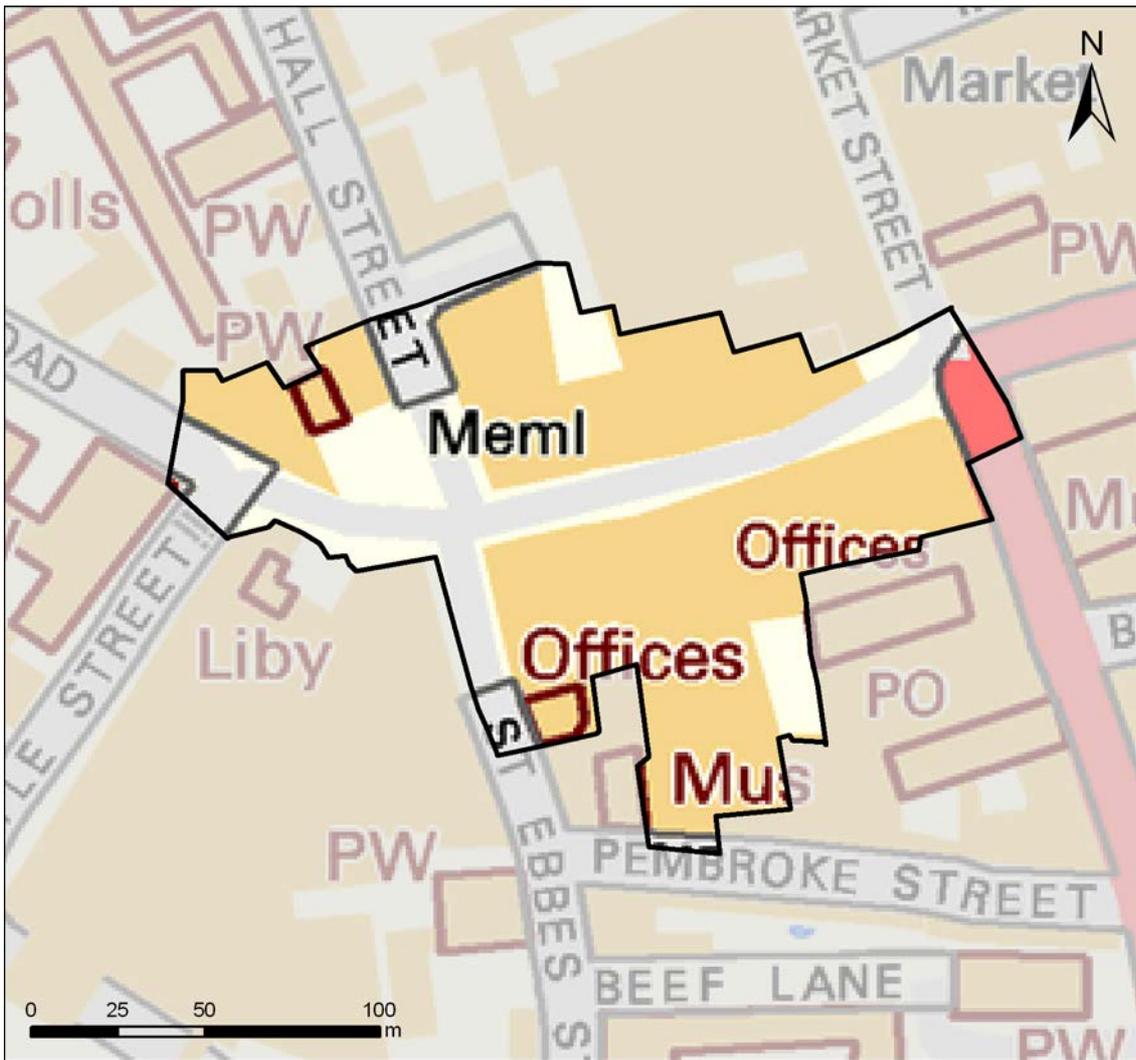
reflected the designs of earlier buildings. There has been a notable effort to reduce signage and street furniture.

Bonn Square is a rare area of designed public space in the heart of the city. It has a strong aesthetic quality reflecting its careful redesign and the incorporation of the former cemetery, the central Tirah monument and new public art. The square is paved with tall lighting columns and with tree planting which offers shade, colour and texture. The slope of the square reflects the build up of the former graveyard of St Peter le Bailey. The faced stone and rubble walls of historic buildings north of the square provide add to its appeal as a space.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

Queen Street hosted part of the historic weekly street market until the 18th century and was a commercial area bordering an extensive working class suburb until the 1970s. The Character Area has retained its commercial character and provides access to the modern Clarendon and Westgate Shopping Centres as well as individual shops and stores. It has communal value as a popular shopping destination and provides a thoroughfare from the car parks and shops in the West End to the central crossroads at Carfax. Bonn Square is a well used meeting and recreational space that has additional value by virtue of being one of the few publicly owned squares in the city. The Tirah War Memorial and Carfax tower are important Oxford landmarks that contribute to civic identity. The character area includes Carfax tower, from the top of which many visitors experience the famous Oxford skyline.

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HUCA 16 Orientation text