

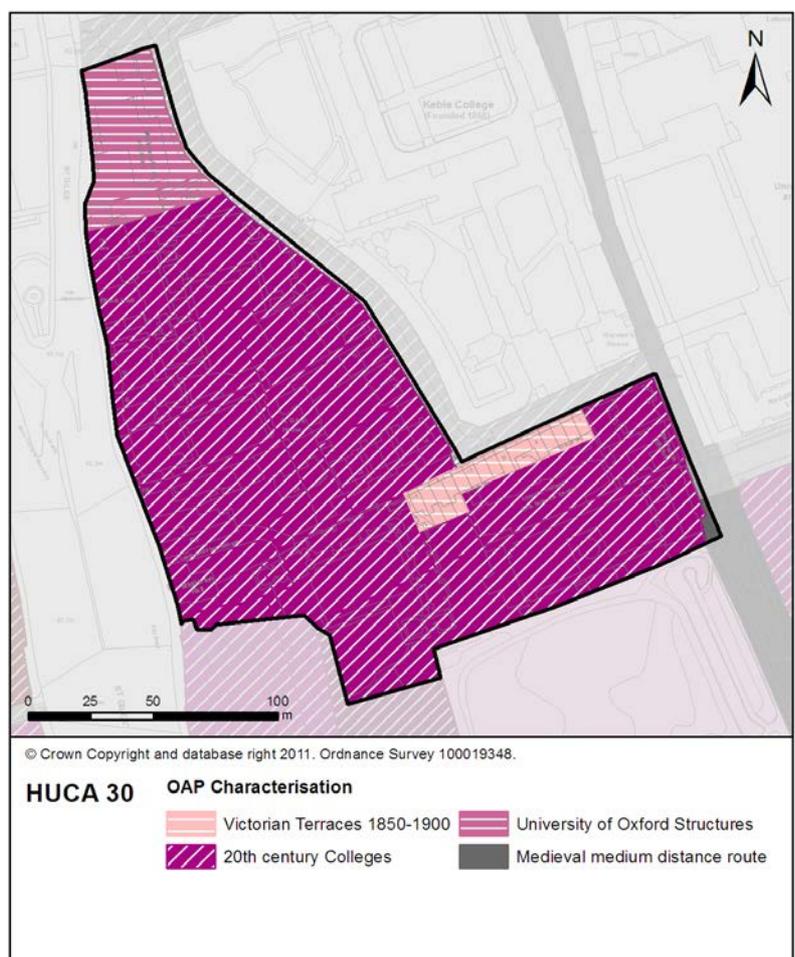
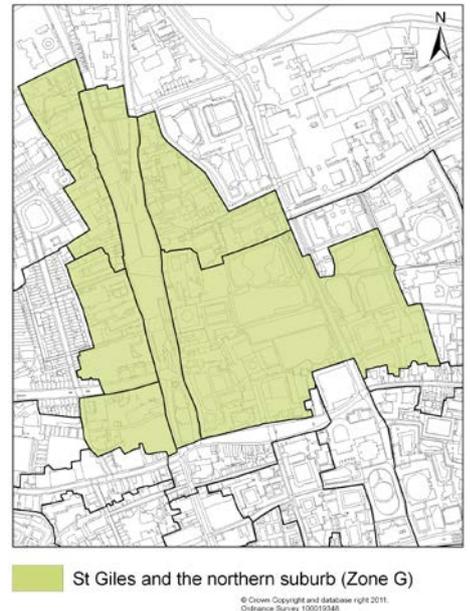
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 30:  
ST GILES AND THE NORTHERN SUBURB - ST JOHN'S COLLEGE EXPANSION**

**The HUCA is located within broad character Zone G: St Giles and the northern suburb.**

*The broad character zone comprises of the expansive northern approach to Oxford, the northern medieval suburb and subsequent modern expansion within the former line of the Civil War defences.*

**Summary characteristics**

- Dominant period: 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Designations: Two Grade II\* and twenty-one Grade II listings. Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Potential: Encompasses the site of a prehistoric henge and Late Saxon mass grave. Potential for remains relating to medieval and post medieval tenements and farms fronting onto St Giles.
- Built character: 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century town houses, 20<sup>th</sup> century college accommodation blocks, University of Oxford 1970s mathematics buildings.
- Green space: primarily located to the rear of the plots and limited spaces between buildings.
- Road morphology: linear north south routes to the east and west may be of considerable antiquity. Irregular right angled post medial access road and narrow east-west pedestrian cut through by Lamb and Flag.
- Plot morphology: long narrow medieval plots on St Giles, significant boundary loss to the rear. Large irregular plots for college and University infilling land to east of St Giles.
- The character area is located on the central ridge of the Summertown-Radley Second Terrace at a height of around 65m OD.
- Survival of townscape elements:
  - Medieval tenement pattern.
  - Post-medieval- Victorian Street frontages.
  - Lamb and Flag college pub.



**Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.**

- Lamb and Flag passage.
- Multiple listed buildings of post medieval-modern date.

### Description

This character area combines parts of St John's College and the University Mathematical Institute located at the northern end of St Giles and its junction with the Banbury Road. The area encompasses large 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century town houses fronting onto St Giles, now mostly used by the University and colleges, and a terrace of smaller three storey 19<sup>th</sup> century townhouses along the Museum Road. Formerly spacious grounds belonging to properties on St Giles and Parks Road have steadily been developed in the 20-21<sup>st</sup> century, occupied by large three to four storey student accommodation blocks and University faculty buildings. Nevertheless significant areas of lawn and tree cover survive in this character area. A popular pedestrian cut through, The Lamb and Flag passage, links St Giles with Museum Road. The line of the former enclosed low walled forecourts projecting into St Giles on the east frontage can still be traced in the pattern of road side parking.

### Historical value- means of connecting with the past

St Giles forms a north-south axis that runs along the top of the Summertown Radley gravel terrace towards crossing point over the Thames floodplain to the south. The date of this north-south route is not known however prehistoric and Roman routes along this alignment have been suggested. In 2008 the remains of the late Neolithic henge monument were discovered under St John's College new Kendrew Quad, located between St Giles and Blackhall Road. The projected extent of the henge, known to have been visible as an earthwork in the Late Saxon period, was big enough to have influenced the routeways either side of it (St Giles and Parks Road). The henge lies within an extensive Middle Neolithic-Early Bronze Age complex of ritual and funerary monuments located between the Thames and Cherwell Rivers. An early 11<sup>th</sup> century mass grave was found in the ditch of the henge suggesting that this area was seen as a marginal space at this time. The current evidence suggests that the suburban settlement in this area developed in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> century with St Giles Church, located at the northern end of the street, established c.1130. The uniformity of the plots along St Giles and the placement of churches at the north and south end of the street could suggest a deliberate planning rather than episodic expansion northwards. A medieval hospital is associated with St Giles but has not been located.

St Bernard's College to the south of the character area was founded by the Cistercian monastic order in 1437 however limited funds meant construction was slow and possibly comprised temporary timber structures that were only gradually replaced. St John's College was established on the site of St Bernard's in 1555 and subsequently expanded northwards. During the post-medieval period, development was largely limited to the St Giles' street frontage with gardens and



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

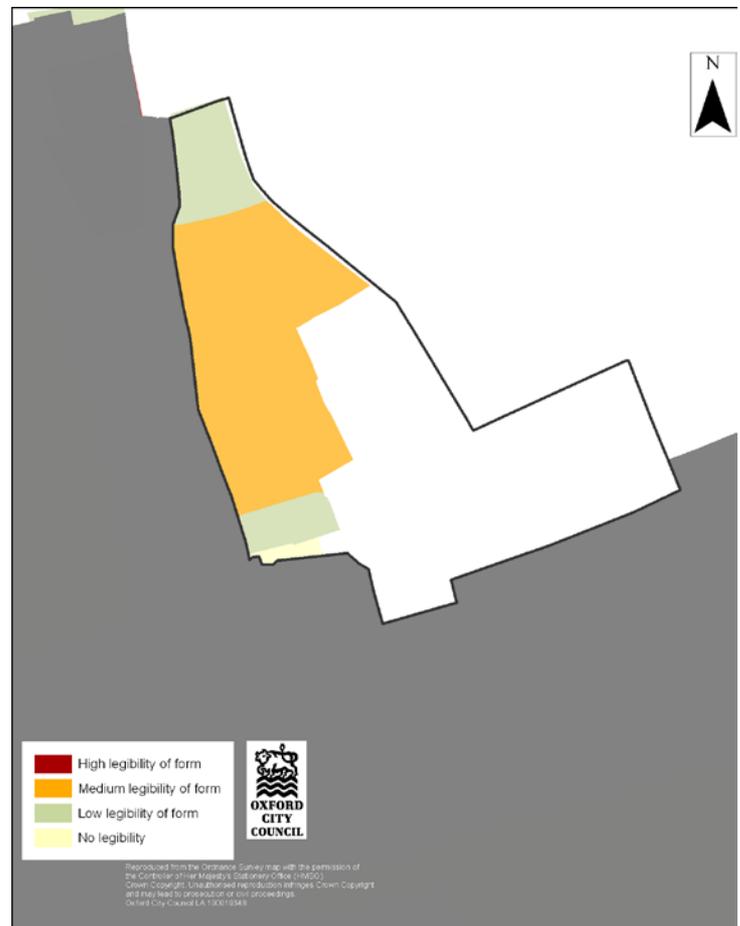
farmland behind, and it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the establishment of the University Science and Museum area to east that its present character began to emerge. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, domestic terraces and a racquet court had been built on the new road network established to the east of St Giles with increased development throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the University faculties and colleges expanded.

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

This area has high potential for prehistoric, Late Saxon, Roman, medieval and post-medieval remains. The Urban Archaeological Database records seventeen archaeological events in the character area. The most important investigation in recent times has been the investigations at the new Kendrew Quadrangle which recorded part of a Neolithic Henge, a Late Saxon Mass Grave, remains associated with medieval and post-medieval farm buildings and evidence for extensive small scale gravel quarrying in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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

This area has attractive street frontages on St Giles and Museum Road and contains a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century structures that have been listed for their architectural merit, including the monumental 1994 Garden Quadrangle at St John's College. The buildings on the east side of St Giles are notably different to those on the west with larger detached Georgian townhouses dominating here in contrast to smaller, more narrow tenements on the western frontage. A series of terraced houses on Museum Road represent a cohesive block of domestic development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century retaining much of their original detail. The construction of a new Kendrew Quad accommodation block at St John's College in 2009 has notably reduced the amount of green space within this character area, which nevertheless retains areas of pleasant lawn with mature and semi-mature tree cover.



### **Assessment of medieval tenement survival**

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

The character area is a largely enclosed college space, although Lamb and Flag passage leading to the college owned Lamb and Flag Pub is a popular and attractive route through from Parks Road to St Giles.

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