

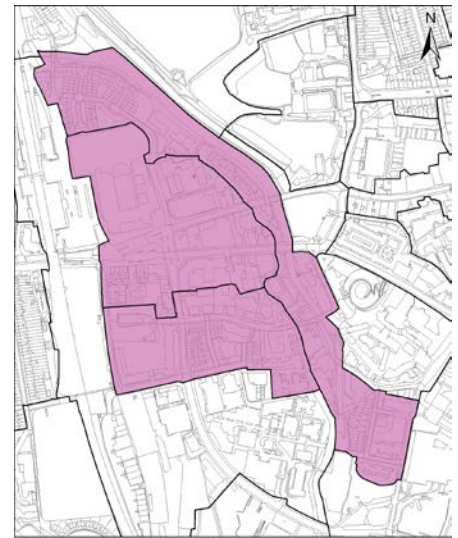
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 7:
WESTERN SUBURB- CASTLE MILL STREAM AND FISHER ROW**

The HUCA is located within broad character Zone B: The Western Suburb.

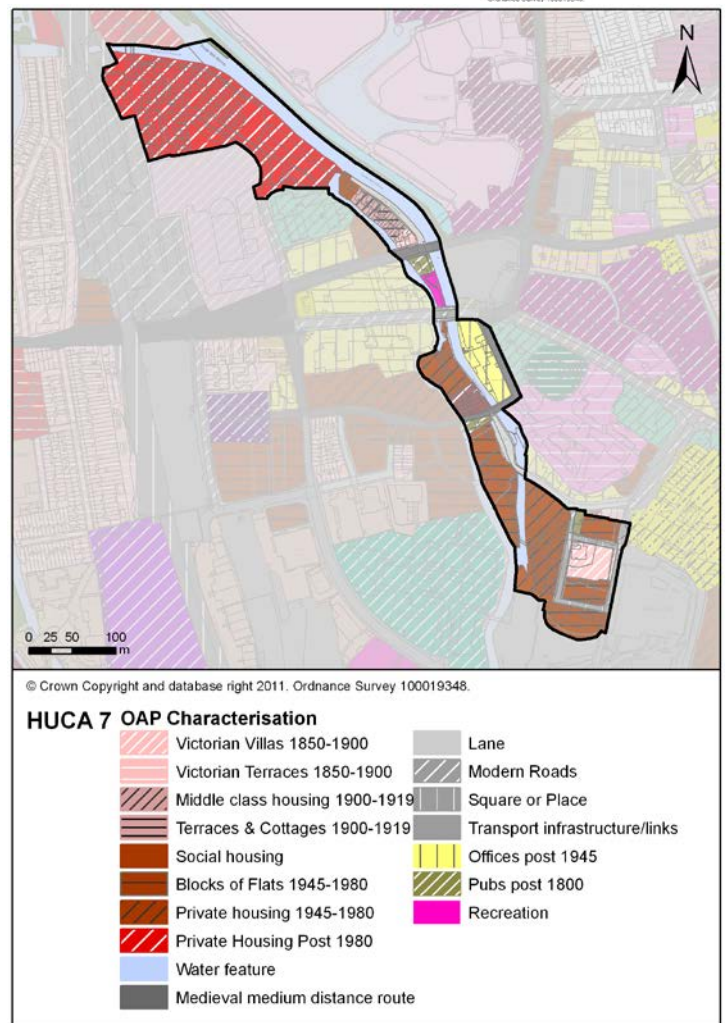
The medieval suburb of St Thomas and related development south of the castle combined with development on former site of the medieval Rewley Abbey to the north. It forms part of Osney Island defined by the River Thames to the west and the Castle Mill Stream to the east.

Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: 20th century but with strong medieval, post medieval and early modern influences.
- Designations: Rewley Abbey wall Scheduled Ancient Monument. Five Grade II listings. Central Oxford Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Interest: There is a good potential for archaeological remains relating to the Late Saxon and medieval and post medieval development and use of the Castle Mill Stream, its back channel the Wareham Stream, and the Trill Mill Stream. Also for settlement activity related river borne trade centred on Fisher Row the nearby 'Hythe' near Hythe Bridge. The area includes a part of Rewley Abbey and the Franciscan Friary (The Greyfriars). The area also encompasses part of the projected extent of the Castle ditch and the line of Royalist Civil War defences, including and outlying scone north of the former Abbey.
- Character: Multi-storey modern housing, apartments and Victorian terraces orientated on man made mill channels and former gardens at Paradise Square.
- Spaces: Pockets of public green open survive along Fisher Row. The paths and streams that border this character area enhance its appearance and extend provide views within and out of the area.
- Road morphology: Sinuous route along the eastern edge of the island formed by the Castle Mill and the Wareham Stream. Four bridge crossings support east-west routes across the island. In the south eastern part of the character area the rectangular street grid of Paradise Square (originating as gardens belonging to the Greyfriars) represents one of the few



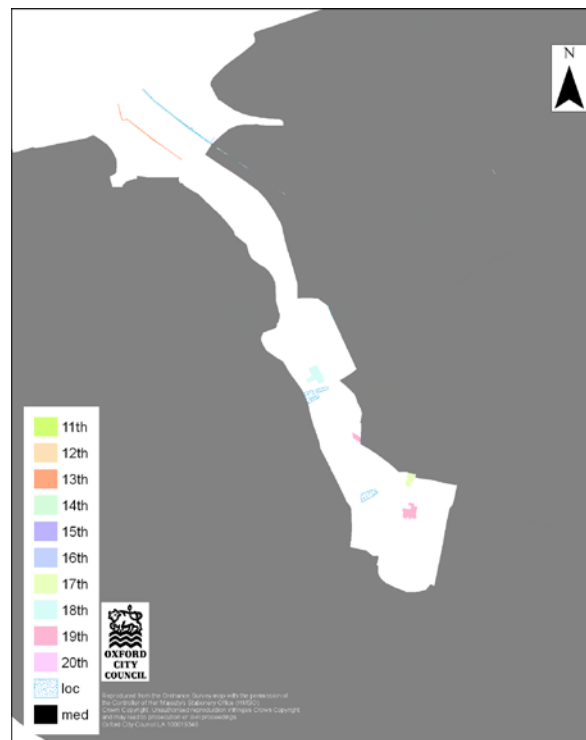
St Thomas' and the Western Suburb (Zone B)



Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

areas of the Victorian street pattern of St Ebbes to survive redevelopment in the 1960s-70s. The curve of Paradise Street to the south-east of the island reflects the line of the Norman Castle defences.

- Plot morphology: Mixed post-medieval and modern narrow tenements and large irregular modern plots.
- The natural topography of the area is low lying at a fairly uniform height of around 58m OD and for the most part lies on the alluvial floodplain.
- Survival of historic townscape elements:
 - 18th century listed buildings- No 1-3 is a last remnant of Fisher Row.
 - No 46 Hythe Bridge Street- 19th century former pub on Upper Fisher Row (Part of contemporary row of buildings fronting onto Hythe Bridge Street).
 - Oxford Retreat (formerly The Nags Head), Hythe Bridge Street, an early 20th century pub on site of earlier Navigation House Pub. Name Nags Head a reflection of former barge horses stabled nearby.
 - Medieval river crossings at Hythe Bridge and Quaking Bridge.
 - Unlisted industrial structures of note include the former 19th century Malthouse in Tidmarsh Lane and Old Malthouse located south of Swan Court on Paradise Street.
 - A rubble wall forming rear of No 19 Paradise Street may be remnant of 19th century Malthouse complex.
 - Some survival of medieval and post medieval boundaries.
 - Noteworthy views to medieval St Georges Tower at the Castle.
 - Extant scheduled stretch of medieval Rewley Abbey wall and gate.
 - The Brewery Gate public house, St Thomas' Street. A 1898 pub
 - Paradise Square is one of few areas that preserves the Victorian Street pattern of St Ebbes which was otherwise redeveloped in the 1960s-70s.
 - Stretches of coursed rubble walls from Victorian industrial buildings survive on the south side of Paradise Street.
 - 17th century listed Jolly Farmers Inn on section of Paradise Street that reflects the line of the castle defences.



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

Description

The Castle Mill Stream character area is a long sinuous strip of land that encompasses blocks of modern residential development on and either side of the narrow island formed by the Castle Mill Stream and the Wareham Stream. Dispersed amongst the modern flats are pockets of post medieval industrial townscape, for example the brick Victorian and Edwardian terraced housing at Upper Fisher Row, brick 18th-19th century houses and outbuildings at the east end of St Thomas' Street and rendered timber and stone post medieval buildings on the south side of Paradise Street. The area forms transitional water-lined space between the city and the western suburb. The eastern edge of the island known as Fisher Row supported a community of fishermen and boatmen from at least the 16th century. Only a few 18-19th century cottages now remain to reflect this history with modern flat development dominating the built character. The character of the area is strongly influenced by the public riverside footpaths, the bridges over the Castle Mill stream and imposing tower of St George at the Castle. To the north, recent residential development has extended this area across to the 'Sheepwash Channel' while to the south, the residential corridor continues into Paradise Square. Elements of the 19th century industrial buildings that lined the Mill Stream survive in places, notably the large Malthouse in Tidmarsh Lane, now the University Surveyors' Office.

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

Oseney or Osney Island is believed to have been formed in the late Saxon period as a result of artificial channelling of the River Thames to create the channel now known as Castle Mill Stream. The word 'Osney' is first mentioned in 1004 and is thought to be a personal name meaning 'Osa's Island' combining the name Osa or Osna with 'ey' the Old English word for an island. Alternatively the name may derive from the ancient British word for river - 'ouse'. Documentary evidence suggests a small settlement or manor likely existed on the Island in the Late Saxon period, an estate at Oseney was devised by Archbishop Alfric of Canterbury (d. 1005) to St. Alban's abbey. The first firm evidence of settled activity occurs in the 12th century with the foundation of Augustinian Osney Abbey further and the subsequent development of the suburb at St Thomas's both located west of the character area. A Cistercian house, Rewley Abbey, was subsequently founded on Osney Island in 1281 to the north.

The central part of the character area comprises Upper and Lower Fisher Row on the Wareham Bank (the island formed a bank that retained water on the south side of the Mill Stream to stop it draining into the floodplain). This is an area of historic settlement that remains poorly understood. A rental to Osney Abbey for the island dated to 1278 records fishermen living here at this time. By the 16th century a community of fishermen and boat people were well established. Agas' map of 1578 records tenements fronting onto the Castle Mill Stream while a century later, Loggan's map indicates the Bank was densely developed. The Castle Mill was held by the Crown and leased out throughout the medieval period. By the 13th century it was leased to the town and Osney Abbey on a more or less permanent basis. It originally stood on the west bank of the Castle Mill Stream, west of the castle, but was moved to the adjacent island in the 16th century. It remained a working mill until its demolition in 1930.

In the 19th century the Swan Brewery and related malthouses were established on the banks of the Castle Mill Stream. The OS Town Plans (1876) record a brewery, two malt houses, a coal yard, a mill, four bridges, an almshouse, a school and five pubs within the area.

Paradise Square at the southern end of the



Looking north along stretch of medieval Rewley Abbey Wall fronting onto the Castle Mill Stream

character area was first developed with terraced houses and a school built over the former Greyfriars Paradise Gardens (paradise meaning 'walled garden'). By the late 20th century, the Victorian terraces had been replaced by newer housing and St Ebbe's School had been replaced by flats.

The area is illustrative of the 19th century brewing and malting history of the town. The 18th cottages at Nos.1-3 Fisher Row are a remnant of the now lost tight-knit fishing and boating community that played an important role in the social and economic life of the city from the early post medieval period. The houses along Upper Fisher Row are also illustrative of working class housing associated with the declining boat community, including a few pre-1914 houses and a pair of c1920 council houses.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The area has good potential for archaeological remains. Themes of interest include the date of the creation of the Wareham Bank and the Castle Mill Stream. Evidence for activity associated with river trade, the Castle Mill, medieval fishing communities and later post medieval boat and barge communities may be present. The remains of Rewley Abbey and the Paradise Gardens are also of interest.

The Urban Archaeological Database records thirty one recorded archaeological events in this character area. Rewley Abbey has been extensively investigated since the 1960s. Beyond the main abbey complex, recorded features included an outbuilding, barn, garden soils and a fishpond. Excavations on the Wareham Bank have identified evidence of medieval and post medieval domestic activity including evidence for low status rubble cottages dating from the 13th century overlying land reclamation and a 15th century structure which included a 'knuckle floor' made out of sheep metacarpals. Timber revetments and a substantial platform dated to the 14th century have been recorded along the Castle Mill Stream along with substantial foundations of wood, clay and stone that may have been part of the mill itself as well as sections of the main sluice. Structural evidence of the 19th century mill and its channel walls and remains belonging to the 19th century Swan Brewery have also been investigated. A number of the post medieval buildings along Fisher Row were subject to early surveys before their demolition.

In Paradise Street evidence for land reclamation and 14th-15th buildings has been recorded. In Paradise Square a single inhumation of a probable 13th century date may be associated with the medieval Friars of the Sack.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

The character area has pleasant stream side walks and attractive buildings interspersed with roads and large scale modern flat developments. The walks along the sinuous Castle Mill Stream are sporadically tree lined



The Old Malthouse at Swan Court

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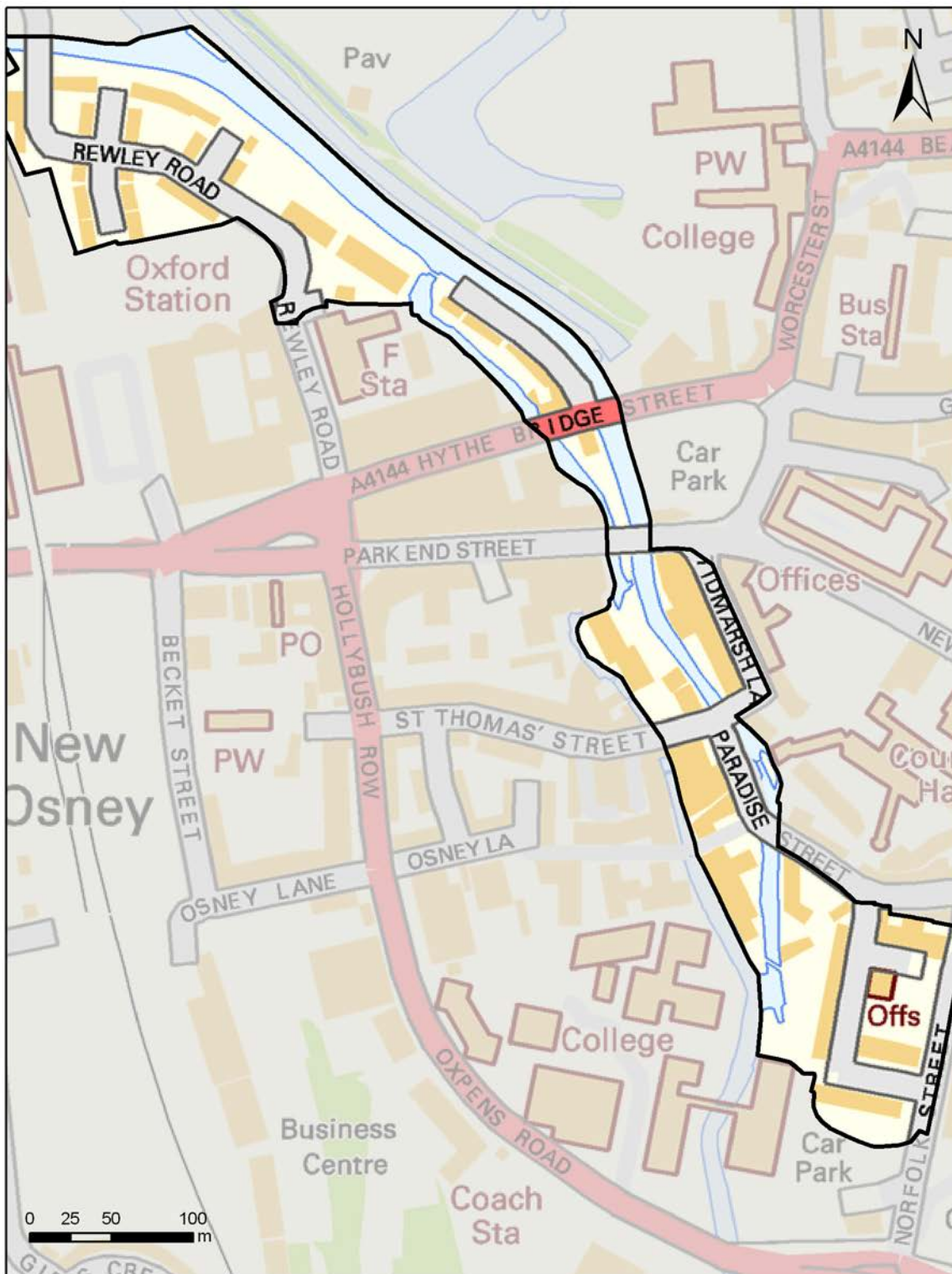
Upper Fisher Row looking north from Hythe Bridge

and framed by imposing structures, including the bridges, malthouse and St Georges Tower. There are three distinctive areas of residential settlement; in the north the former Rewley Abbey area is modern red brick terraced buildings set in a small but high density estate with a high level of building conformity and design. The central part of the character area comprises more varied plot morphology with some narrow post medieval tenements and some irregular historic plots now redeveloped. The built character comprises post medieval and modern three-storey terraces and mixed modern apartments and offices blocks. To the south, Paradise Square is strongly influenced by its Victorian design, with a grid-like narrow street plan lined with modern flats and offices and isolated earlier survivals.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The walk along Fisher Row is an important area of public open space with strong communal value. The history of the fishing and boat communities in this area is one that has a strong resonance with residents. The surviving section of the Rewley Abbey precinct wall, with its 15th century doorway, is a rare example of extant monastic architecture in the town and can be enjoyed from the public footpath.

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HUCA 7 Orientation map