

**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 31:
ST GILES AND THE NORTHERN SUBURB- MEDIEVAL COLLEGES**

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

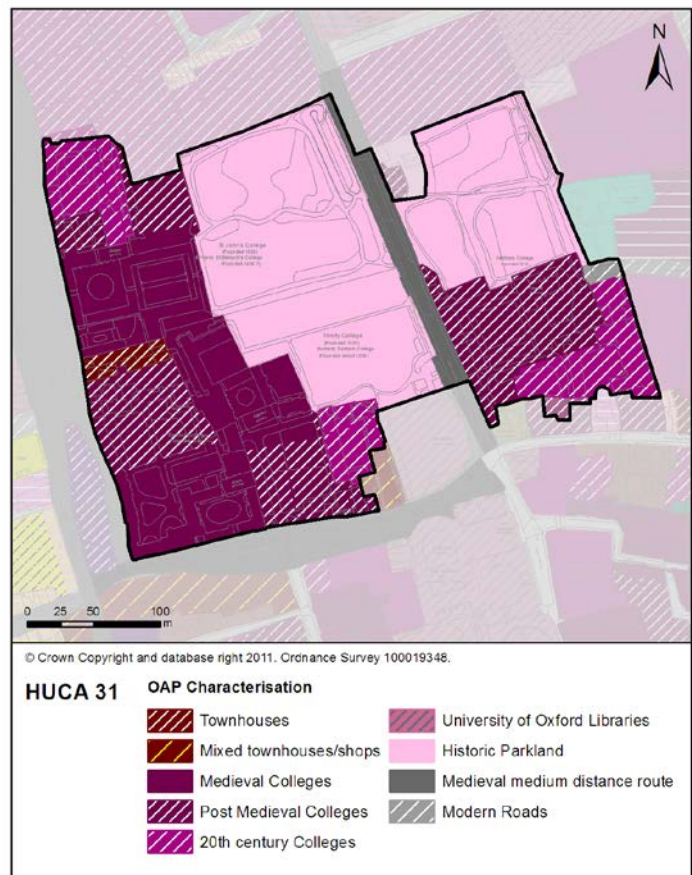
The broad character zone comprises of the expansive northern approach to Oxford, the northern medieval suburb and subsequent modern expansion within the former line of the Civil War defences.

Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: post-medieval.
- Designations: Fourteen Grade I, three Grade II*, forty Grade II listings; 3 Registered Parks and Gardens. Central Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Interest: Potential for medieval and post-medieval archaeology associated with tenements, early academic halls, religious and secular colleges and religious precincts. The archaeology of the Civil War defences and post-medieval gardens is also of notable interest.
- Character: Medieval colleges, post-medieval colleges, historic parkland.
- Spaces: Significant enclosed open space comprising of large designed college gardens and lawns. Notable public glimpsed and panoramic views into these spaces through college gates and railings.
- Road morphology: medieval north-west street pattern of possible greater antiquity creating irregular urban blocks.
- Plot morphology: Large irregular plots.
- The character area lies on the central ridge of the Summertown-Radley Second Terrace at a height of around 63-64m OD.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - Limited survival of tenement boundaries in college boundaries.
 - Multiple medieval to modern listed buildings and designed landscapes.
 - Medieval and post-medieval quadrangles.



St Giles and the northern suburb (Zone G)
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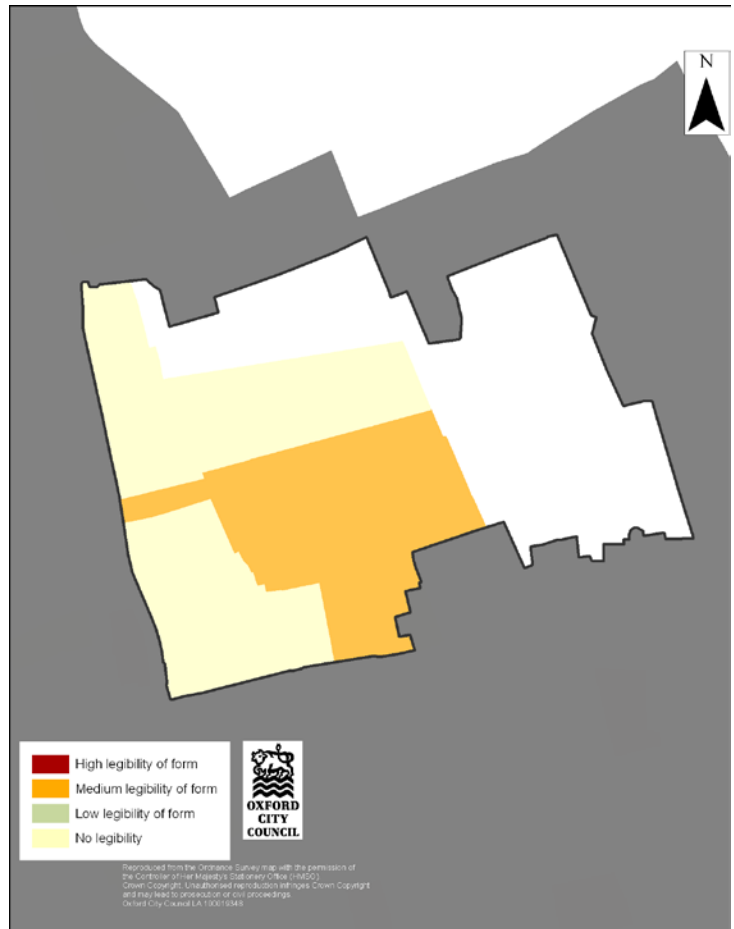


Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

The character area allows for the appreciation of post-medieval expansion of the extra-mural colleges and contains a large number of exceptional buildings that are illustrative of development in medieval, post-medieval and modern building styles, notably Victorian Gothic.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The character area has good potential for medieval and post-medieval remains relating to the expansion of the northern suburb, the foundation of the Austin Friars and the religious and secular college foundations. The Urban Archaeological Database records sixty-three archaeological events within this character area. Previous archaeological work area has recovered an important collection of medieval pottery from 12th-13th century pits and a well at St John's College. Other finds include the remains of late medieval outbuildings associated with the Austin friary that occupied the later site of Wadham College, also two burials perhaps associated with the friary and later Wadham college structures. At Trinity College traces of the cloister of the 16th century Durham Hall have been noted along with medieval to modern rubbish pits and post-medieval wall paintings. A substantial ditch recorded at St John's College may relate to the Royalist Civil War defensive line however its identification remains uncertain as its location does not correspond to 17^h century illustrations of the defensive arrangement around the city. .



Assessment of medieval tenement survival

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

This character area has strong aesthetic qualities created by pleasing college buildings, quadrangles, lawns and gardens. The area is notable for external glimpsed views and vistas of college gardens and grounds provided by gates and railings on Broad Street and Parks Road. The visual character of this area is dominated by the colleges. Largely re-fronted in the 19th century in Gothic style they comprise a core of medieval quadrangles expanded across suburban gardens and open land in the post-medieval period. The gardens, presently largely 19th century in design, have their origins in the post-medieval period. Of the many notable structures in this character area the classical design of St John's Canterbury Quadrangle (1631-6) and the Baroque chapel at Trinity College (Late 17th century) are notable exceptions to the Oxford tradition of gothic continuity. A tradition exemplified by the chapel and Fellows Quadrangle of Wadham College



St John's College Frontage

which opted for traditional gothic features despite its late foundation in 1610 and also the Victorian gothic designs of Balliol Colleges 1860s-1870s rebuilding. A notable break with the otherwise stone built traditionalism of this character area is the modernist 'Beehive' block in the North Quadrangle at St John's College, built in 1958-60.

The present designed landscapes of the four colleges are of high quality and are well maintained. All are designated on the register of parks and gardens. Despite the scale of the built character on St Giles, the gardens and open spaces contribute to the appearance of low to medium density suburban settlement.

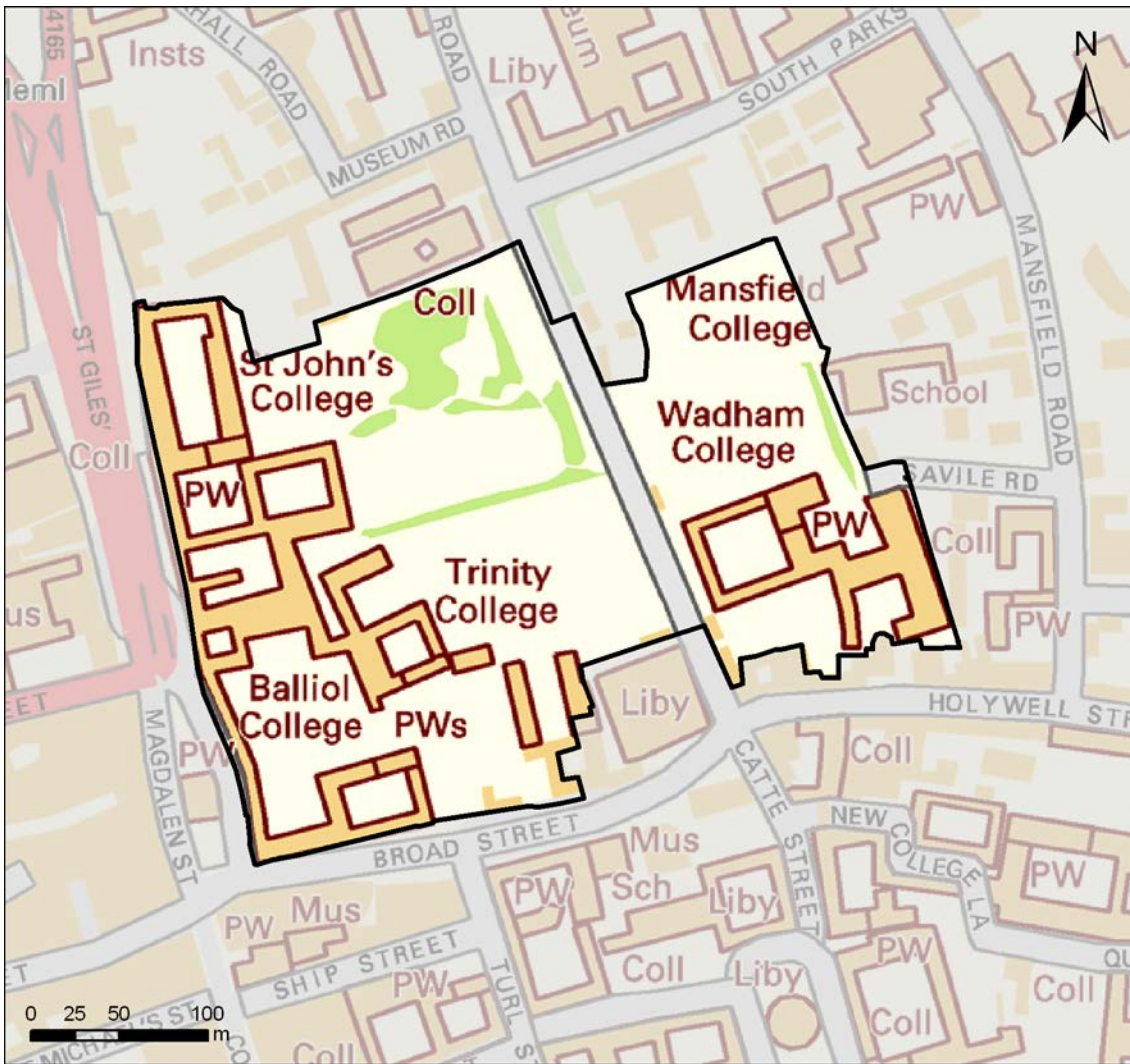
Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The character area is largely enclosed college space with limited public access however important views and vistas are provided by gates and railings on Broad Street and along Parks Road. Broad Street, Parks Road and Madgdalen Street east are all important thoroughfares providing visitors with impressive monumental vistas as they follow routes from the city centre to the large University museums.

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View into the grounds of Trinity College from Parks Road



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HUCA 31 Orientation map