

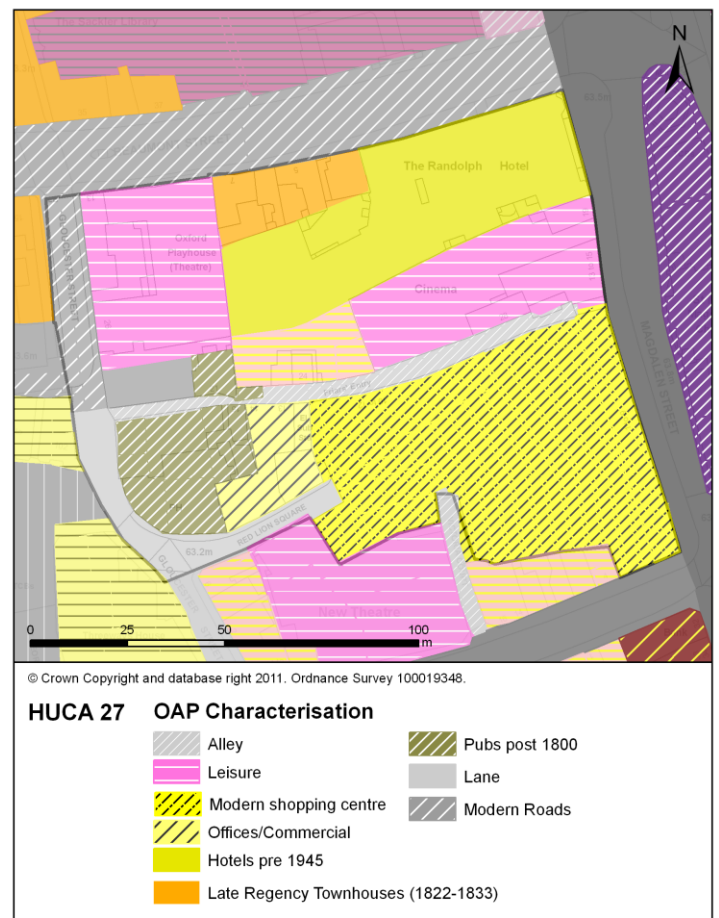
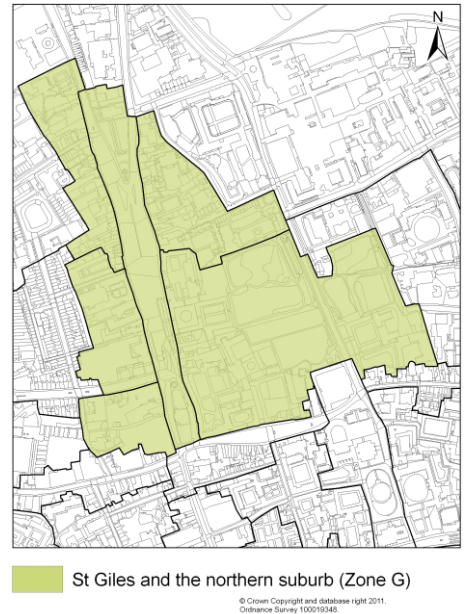
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 27:
ST GILES AND THE NORTHERN SUBURB- WESTERN FRONTAGE COMMERCIAL**

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: 19th - 20th century.
- Designations: One Grade II*, two Grade II listings. Central Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Potential: Potential for Saxon, medieval and post-medieval remains but likely to have been heavily disturbed by later development in certain areas.
- Character: Early Victorian townhouses, theatre, late Victorian hotel mixed modern offices & shops, leisure, open tarmac car park.
- Spaces: high density of development, narrow high sided lanes, no open spaces except a private car park, no green space.
- The area is bounded by the 19th century Beaumont Street and medieval Magdalen Street and George Street. It encompasses a number of alleys including Friars Entry, which once provided as route from the town towards the former medieval Carmelite Friary located further to the west.
- Plot morphology: large regular and irregular modern plots, low survival of long narrow medieval plot boundaries.
- The character area lies on the Summertown-Radley Second Terrace at a height of around 64m OD.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - Friars Entry- medieval route way.
 - Listed 19th and 20th century structures.
 - 19th century pubs- Red Lion, Far from the Madding Crowd and The Gloucester Arms (now the White Rabbit).
 - Part of possible Victorian Coaching Inn in Red Lion



Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

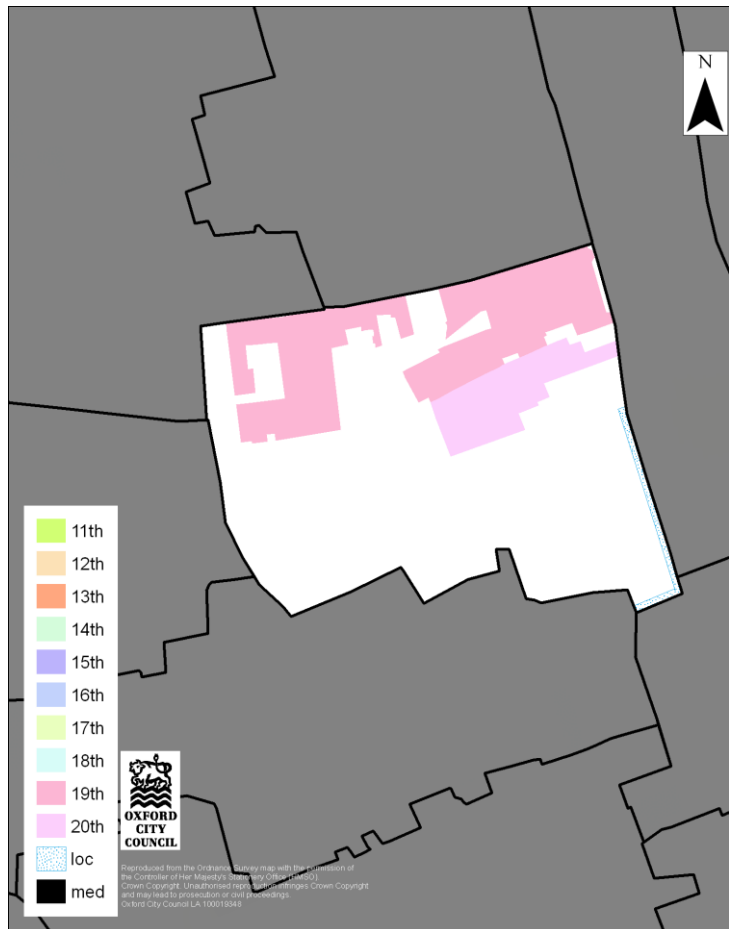
Square.

Description

This Character Area is comprised of a tall densely developed urban block just beyond the former northgate of the town, formed by medieval George and Magdalen Street, the 19th century Beaumont Street and Gloucester Street. On the western frontage of Magdalen Street is a five storey early 20th century façade with modern shop fronts at ground level. Behind this is a massive L shaped department store and retail building with basements.

Modern office building with shop fronts and two small shop fronted townhouses lie to the north along the continuous Magdalen Street frontage and on the corner of Beaumont Street sits the large luxury late Victorian Gothic Randolph Hotel, of six storeys. The Beaumont Street frontage continues west with a series of three and four storey Bath stone fronted early Victorian townhouses in Regency Style and the 1930s Neo-Georgian Oxford Playhouse Theatre, of three storeys.

In Gloucester Street there is a 20th century brick extension to the Oxford Playhouse, also private parking area and the Red Lion Inn with its distinctive curving. Further pubs, offices and shops are located along the pedestrian Friars Entry. The land behind the street frontages is heavily built up with rear wing extensions, outbuildings and purpose built office ranges.



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

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

A burgh was founded at Oxford by the early 10th century and it is possible that extra-mural settlement developed just outside the northgate from this time although this has not been archaeological demonstrated. Documentary evidence suggests that the suburban settlement here expanded in the 11th-12th century. The construction of the Royal Beaumont Palace just to the west by 1132 would have provided an additional stimulus to growth. H E Salter's survey of the Northgate Hundred suggests that by the late 13th century two small urban blocks of around five to seven plots were established fronting

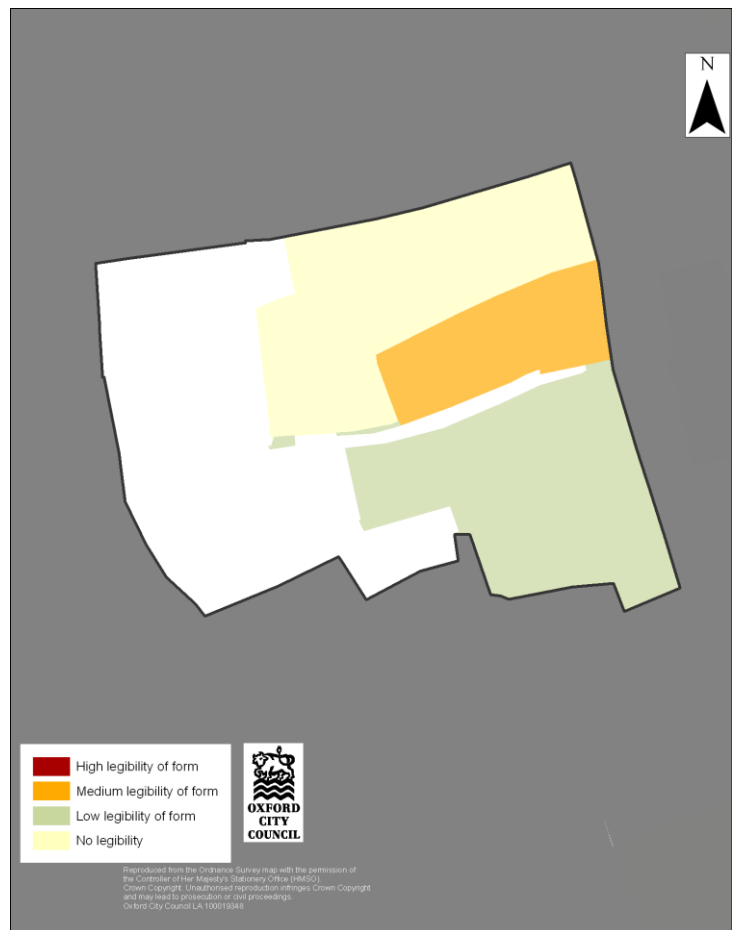


Friars Entry looking east

onto Magdalen Street to the east and separated by the east-west aligned access route to the Carmelite Friary known as Friars Entry. This urban morphology appears to have survived until the late 18th-19th century when more significant alteration to the layout and character of the suburb was introduced with the rationalisation of the plots, the insertion of Beaumont Street in the 19th century and the subsequent Victorian rebuilding of George Street. The generous Regency and Victorian design of Beaumont Street and the huge Randolph Hotel with rooms for sixty-eight guests is illustrative of early and mid-19th century Victorian confidence, with the later signifying the transition from coach travel to the Railway Age and Oxfords adoption as a tourist destination.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The area has the potential to provide important information about the size and character of the Late Saxon activity outside the Northgate, the subsequent development of the Norman suburb and the character of the medieval and post-medieval town. It encompasses the historic passage to the Carmelite Friary located further to the west (Friars Entry). The Urban Archaeological Database records twelve archaeological events in the character area. Previous investigations have recorded burials associated with the medieval friary in the vicinity of the Oxford Playhouse. Also evidence has been recovered for 12th and 13th century tenement activity along Magdalen Street, despite the truncation of parts of the frontage by large basements.



Assessment of medieval tenement survival

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

The area encompasses the Regency and Victorian architecture of Beaumont Street which is noted for being one of Oxford's 'most successful' streets. The retained facades of Magdalen Street make an important contribution to the junction of Cornmarket, Broad Street and George Street. There is little green space and the height of the buildings gives the impression of an enclosed and densely developed area. The high sided side Red Lion Square and Friars Entry retain the character of historic through routes and retain elements of Victorian fabric. The area retains a notable Victorian character which is particularly distinct between George Street and Gloucester Green where widespread rebuilding took place in the 19th century. The



Magdalen Street Frontage

most striking structure in the character area is the Randolph Hotel of yellow brick with Gothic detailing, designed by William Wilkinson.

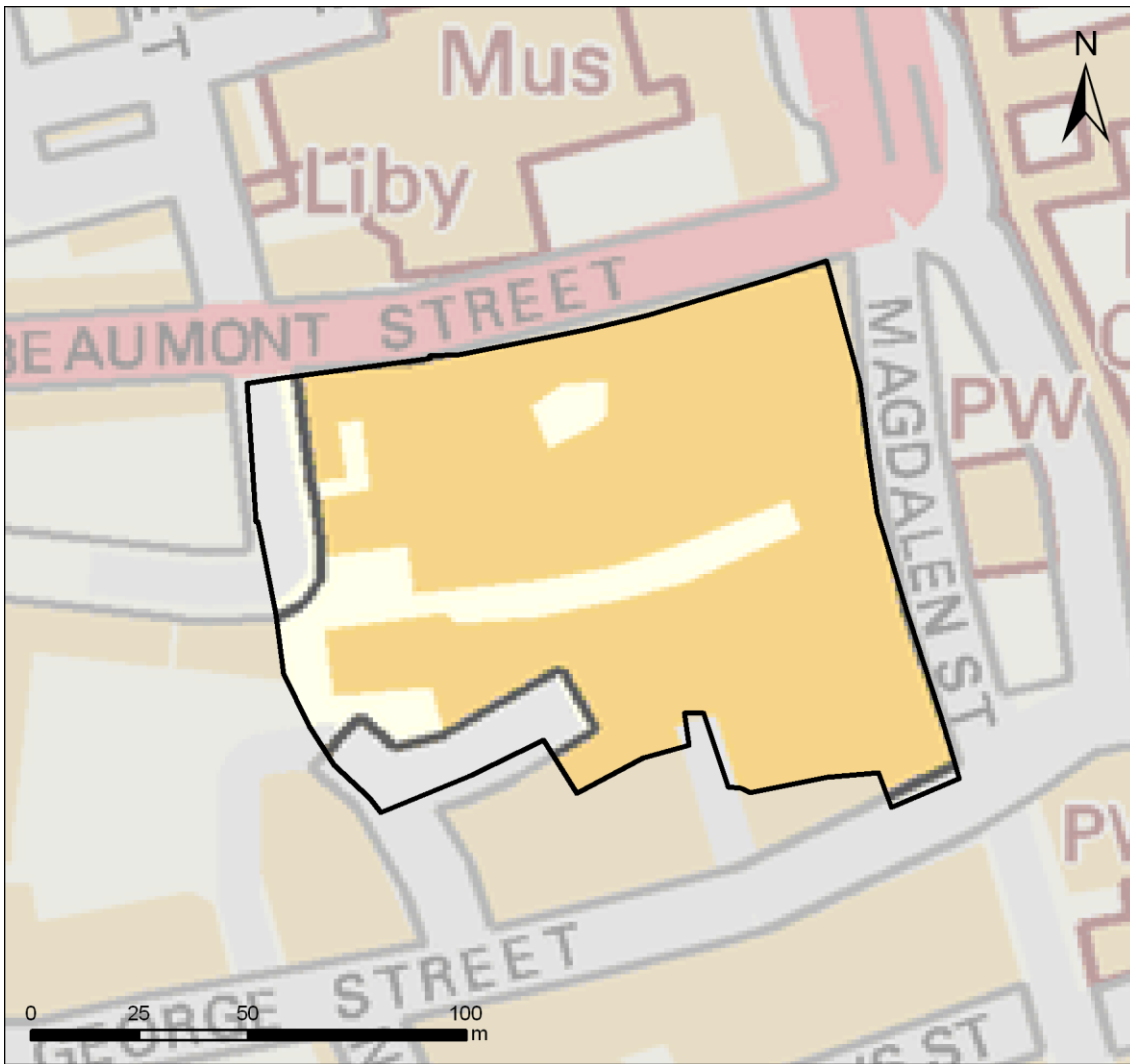
Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The area has communal value as a long established focal point for entertainment and recreation in the city, including pubs, theatres and cinema. It includes one of the main points for the Park and Ride system, numerous shops including department stores, the Oxford Playhouse Theatre, the Burton Taylor Studio and the Randolph Hotel. The narrow lane Friars Entry contains a number of cafes and pubs and provides access to Gloucester Green.

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**Beaumont Street looking west
(Randolph Hotel on the left)**



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HUCA 27 Orientation map