

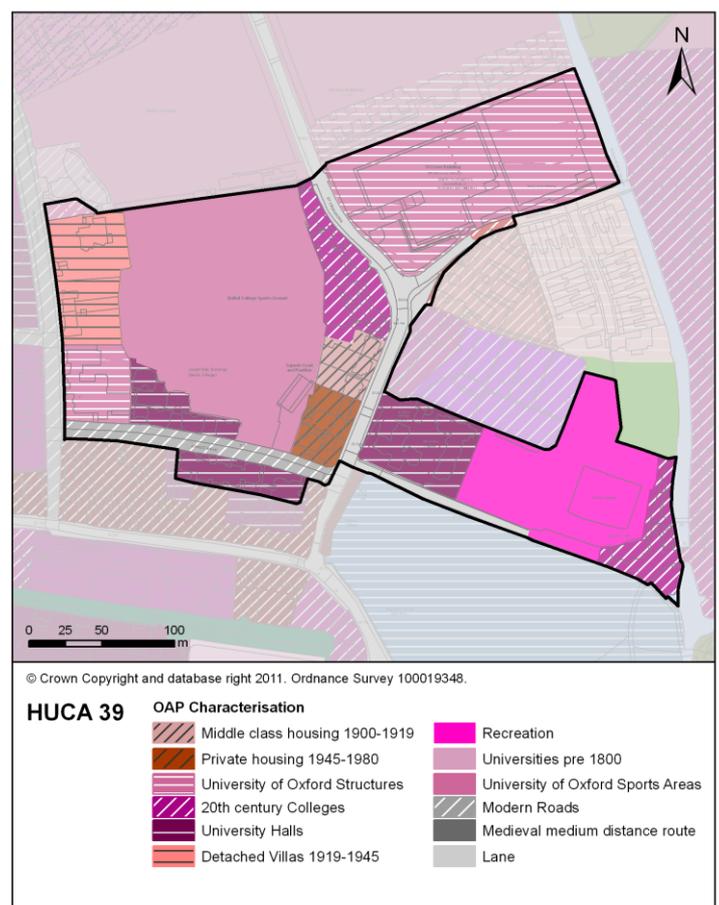
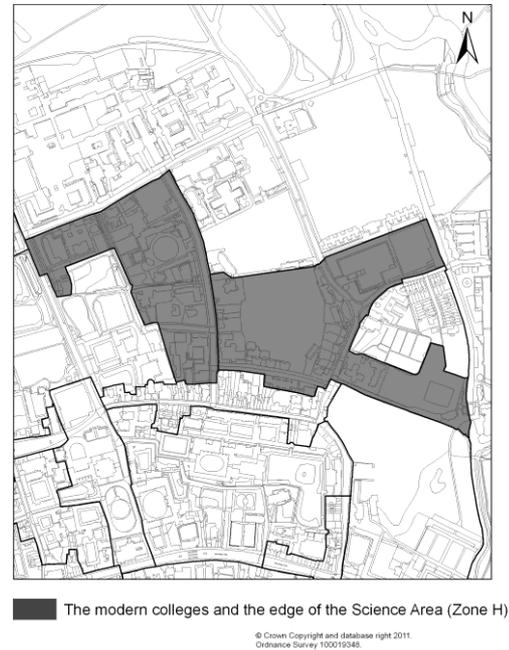
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 39:
HOLYWELL AND NORTHEAST EXPANSION - MODERN COLLEGES**

The HUCA is located within broad character Zone H: Holywell and northeast expansion.

The broad character zone encompasses part of the former medieval suburb of Holywell and its subsequent expansion resulting from the development of new colleges and the University Science Area in the 19th and 20th century.

Summary characteristics

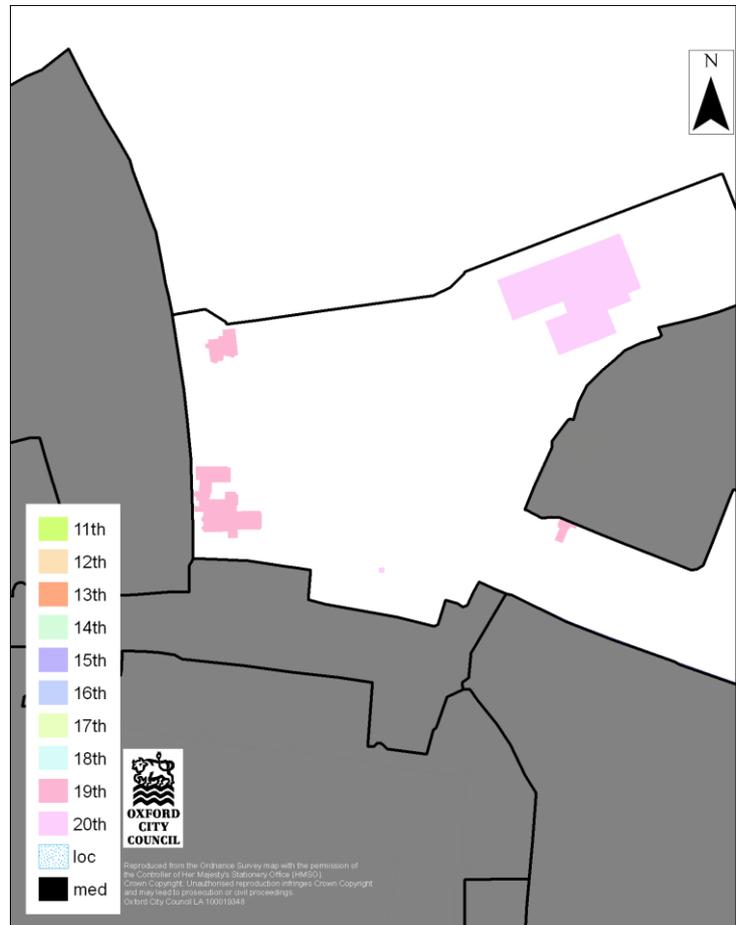
- Dominant period: 20th century
- Designations: Two Grade II*, four Grade II listings. Central Conservation Area.
- Archaeological Interest: Moderate-High. Potential for medieval, post medieval remains including Civil War structures.
- Character: Large modern University buildings, Victorian-Edwardian and pre-war townhouses and mansions, mixed design student accommodation blocks, modern private housing, college sports field.
- Spaces: Generally low building density with large open sports ground and area of scrubland.
- Road morphology: Element of sinuous medieval route to Holywell and inserted Victorian link roads.
- Plot morphology: large regular plots laid out in 19th and 20th century.
- The area is located on the edge of the Summertown-Radley Second Terrace at a height of 63m OD, with a gradual decline in height across the Northmoor First Terrace at around 62m OD towards the alluvial floodplain on the banks of the Holywell Mill Stream at a height of around 58m OD.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - St Cross Street-medieval routeway.
 - Notable 19th century mansions on Mansfield Road.



Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

Description

The St Cross character area lies to the north east of the town and comprises a mixed group of 19th-20th century buildings, Balliol sports field and scrub covered up waste ground south of Manor Place. The north-east part of the character area comprises of the modern three-four storey rectangular buildings of the Law and English Library and Institute of Statistics and the Politics and the Politics and International Relations Faculty. The University buildings retain a strong internal consistency of design with large modern structures set within large open plots with close ties to the architecture and design on the University Science and Museum Area. South of the cemetery on St Cross Road is a complex of three storey modern student accommodation blocks around a courtyard and lawn. To the east of this complex is a large L shaped expanse of scrub, semi-mature trees and hard standings running up to the banks of the Cherwell. The western frontage of St Cross Road retains a row of post-war short terraces and semi-detached small townhouses, notable for being one of the few groups of buildings in central Oxford to retain conventional small front gardens. Further north along St Cross Road on the western frontage are large three storey student blocks well screened from the road by an area of forecourt with semi-mature trees. The western part of the character area comprises of Balliol sports field and club house, with square and rectangular modern college accommodation blocks fronting onto Jowett Walk. The School of Geography fronts onto Mansfield Road, located in an extended Victorian villas. Smaller Edwardian town houses front the road and a second large Victorian villa located to the north retains a generous garden plot. The character area contains a significant amount of open space, tree and vegetation cover with low visual barriers including railings, low walls and an open campus layout.



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

Historical value- means of connecting with the past

This character area to the north west of the city encompasses a relatively recent area of development dating from the 19th century on land previously used for open field agriculture and



College flats backing onto Balliol Sports field looking north from Jowett Walk

meadow. The Civil War saw the creation of two phases of defensive earthworks across the area between St Giles and the Cherwell river. Loggan's map of 1675 illustrates the remains of both phases of the defences. Post-medieval activity appears to have been contained by the original (interior) line of the Civil War defences with a mixture of meadow, market gardening and open land until the 19th century. Holywell was also the location of a cock pit and bowling green shown on Loggan's map in the vicinity of the later Jowett Walk. In the 19th century much of the area was given over to the recreation and sports grounds for the colleges, market gardens and some development around the pre-existing road network at Holywell and the newly created University Parks. The start of the 20th century saw the rationalisation of the road network creating more uniform urban blocks. Both Mansfield College and the Harris Manchester College had been founded to the north-west by 1900 while the site of the later St Cross buildings was used as the headquarters of the Bucks and Oxon Light Infantry until the late 20th century. The present character is largely modern institutional in designed although there are some early 20th century domestic houses on Holywell Lane and Mansfield Road. The character is illustrative of the significance of college sporting activities from the Victorian era to the present.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

The character area has moderate potential for prehistoric and Roman activity and significant potential for medieval and post-medieval settlement associated with suburb of Holywell and related Holywell Mill and also for remains relating to the Royalist Civil War defences. The Urban Archaeological Database records thirteen archaeological events however comprising one building survey by the MHLG in 1950, one chance find and eleven archaeological investigations. Previously the inner line of the Royalist defences has been recorded near Jowett Walk. The alignment of the ditch does not conform to Loggan's or De Gomme's 17th century maps of the defences, however it may form part of a bastion. Evidence for the second phase of the Royalist defences at Holywell has been recorded at the former mill site and on St Cross Road. Cartographic and documentary evidence indicates that the mill, as a prime strategic target, would have been heavily defended.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

The character area has moderate aesthetic value with substantial areas of open green space and a low density of built environment. The St Cross Building (1961-4) houses the University English and Law Faculty and the Institute of Economics and Statistics, is a notable modernist structure designed by Leslie Martin and Colin St John Wilson.

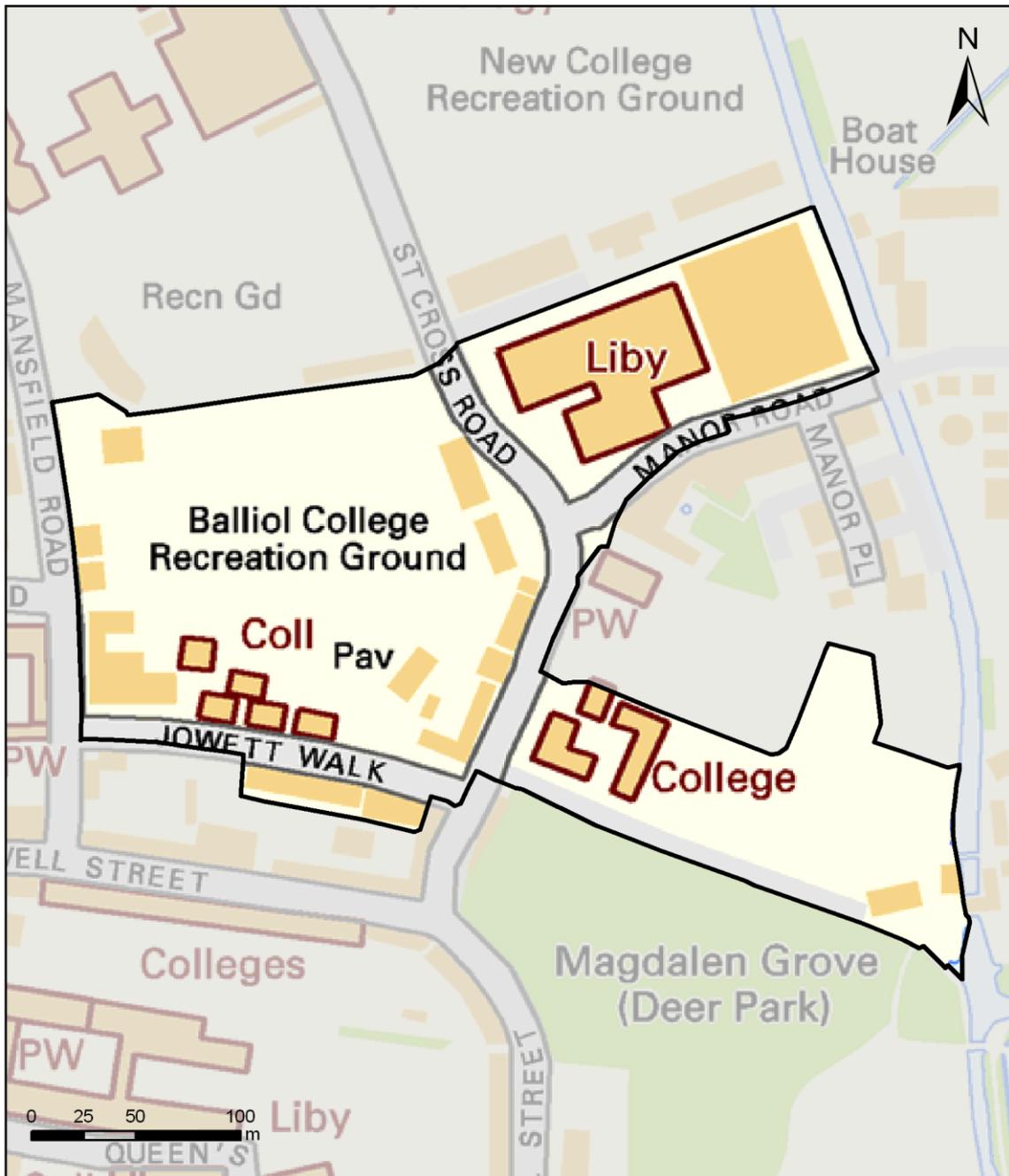


University Manor Road Buildings

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The character area has reasonable community value as an area of low density development with college sports facilities. It is located on a route largely used for access to St Catherine's College and the Science Area and by vehicular traffic heading for north Oxford bypassing the city centre traffic restrictions.

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HUCA 39 Orientation map