

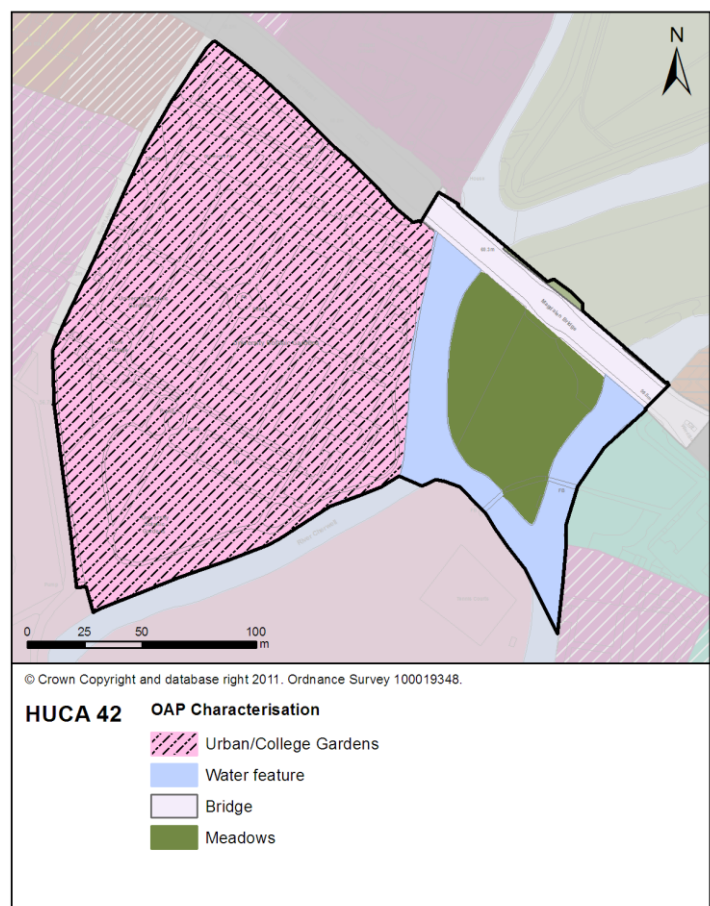
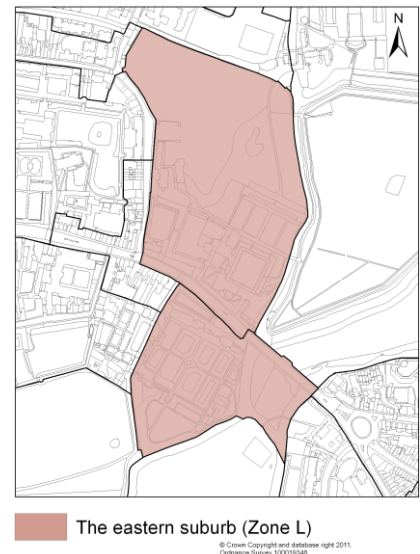
**HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER AREA 42:
THE EASTERN SUBURB BOTANIC GARDEN**

The HUCA is located within broad character Zone L: The eastern suburb.

The broad character zone is comprised of the area beyond the former medieval Eastgate dominated by Magdalen College and the Botanic Gardens.

Summary characteristics

- Dominant period: 17th-19th century
- Designations: Six Grade I, one Grade II* and four Grade II listings. Central Conservation Area. Grade I Registered Park and Garden.
- Archaeological interest: Potential for Late Saxon, Viking burials, 13th century Jewish burials and medieval extra-mural settlement. Also for post-medieval garden archaeology associated with the Botanic Garden.
- Character: Walled Botanic Garden with monumental arch. Rose garden and eighteenth century bridge over the River Cherwell, with central island used as a sports pitch.
- Spaces: Formal designed garden, flower beds, wide gravel paths, hard standings, grassed open space and grassed island.
- Road morphology: Medieval river crossing.
- Plot morphology: Large regular and irregular plots.
- The natural topography of the area is low lying alluvial floodplain at a height of around 56m OD at the river rising gently to a height of around 58m OD at the western edge of the character area.
- Survival of townscape elements:
 - 17th century Botanic ‘Physic’ Garden and monumental Danby Arch
 - Historic river meadow
 - Historic river crossing over the Cherwell.
 - There are a number of plaques and memorials on Magdalen Bridge and in the Lasker Rose Garden.
 - Rose lane to north forms part of ‘Dead Mans Walk’ from the former Jewish



Historic urban character area showing modern urban landscape character types.

Quarter located on St Aldates.

- A drinking fountain and items of street furniture are located on the on bridge

Description

This character area is comprised of the 17th century Botanic Garden and its later southward extension, the 18th century Magdalen Bridge and a small tree lined grassed island between channels of the river. The historic botanic garden is formed by a southern 18th century range centred on the 17th century Danby Arch with a rectangular garden wall enclosing rectilinear beds and gravel walks. A later garden of curvilinear design is located further south beyond the walled enclosure. Modern green houses and single storey offices are located beyond the east wall of the garden fronting onto a wide gravel track along the banks of the Cherwell. A formal rose garden with gravel walks is located between the Botanic Garden and the High Street frontage. Iron railings and the stone balustrade of the bridge separate the garden from the High Street pavement.



Historical value- means of connecting with the past

This character area is located to the east of the Late Saxon burh and later medieval walled town on the route towards London. Formerly called Pettypont, and then East Bridge, a crossing existed here from at least 1004. The way the High Street curves south to meet the crossing could suggest that the core of the early settlement at Oxford was laid out before the crossing point was firmly established. The bridge straddles the town boundary, which historically made responsibility for its upkeep a contentious issue.

A Jewish burial ground was established beyond the east gate in the late 12th century. The land belonging to the burial ground or 'garden of the Jews' north of the High Street (formerly Bridge Street) was subsequently granted by the king to the Hospital of St John in 1231 and it seems likely that a Jewish burial ground continued in use south of the road in the vicinity of the current Lasker Rose Garden until the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290. The cemetery was linked to the synagogue on St Aldates by Rose Lane and Deadman's Walk (the name reflecting its use for funeral processions), a route which survives in the present townscape. The land south of the High Street was later granted to the hospital in the late 13th century and held by it until the 15th century when the hospital was dissolved and the land was acquired by Magdalen College.

During the 14th century a drawbridge stood at the east end of the bridge. In the 13th and 17th century houses are recorded on the bridge, but appear to have been subject to clearances soon after. After a number of major repairs the old bridge was finally declared unsafe in 1771 and replaced with the current structure.

The Botanic Gardens or 'Physic Garden' were established in 1621 by Sir Henry Danvers. Originally occupying one hectare it also included land outside the original walled garden and the garden was later extended. The land was subsequently raised to counteract flooding along the river. The Gardens include glasshouses, a fernery, water and bog gardens and a variety of borders largely arranged by botanic classification. The present interior garden design dates to 1884.

The character area retains elements that allow for the appreciation of elements of the Jewish History of Oxford and the development of England's earliest Botanic Garden, an influential example of its kind.

Evidential value- potential to yield primary evidence

There is potential for Late Saxon, Viking, medieval and post-medieval remains in this character area, including potential for 13th century Jewish and Viking burials. The archaeology of the post-medieval Botanic Garden is also of considerable interest. The Urban Archaeological Database records eight archaeological events for this area. Previous finds include objects from the bank of the Cherwell south of Magdalen Bridge which have been interpreted as part of a burial of 'Viking' type. The decorated stirrups from this burial are currently on display in the Ashmolean Museum. Further poorly recorded burials, likely to be from the Jewish Cemetery, have also previously been recovered from this area.

Aesthetic value- sensory and intellectual stimulation

The character area has outstanding aesthetic value. The Botanic Garden is a Grade I Registered Garden and with its riverside setting represents a tranquil designed space. Building density is low. The imposing Darby Arch and stone built annexes of the Botanic Gardens are set back from the High Street and are an important focal point. The Danby Arch is one of three entrances to the Botanic Garden designed by Nicholas Stone between 1632 and 1633 and is one of the earliest Baroque structures in Oxford, a city otherwise noted for its Gothic conformity. The 18th century Magdalen Bridge is a wide, visually attractive structure with seats and viewing points. It retains important views north and south across the grounds of Magdalen College and along the Cherwell. The imposing 15th century tower of Magdalen College on the north side of High Street projects over the river crossing and is the striking landmark encountered when approaching Oxford over Magdalen Bridge from the east.



The Danby Arch and Botanic Garden Car Park with the Rose Garden to the right.

Communal value- meaning for collective experience and memory

The Character Area incorporates a publicly accessible University Botanic Garden, providing an important visitor destination and a centre of learning. Magdalen Bridge is an important recreation, viewing and resting point and provides a historic focal point for traditional May Day celebrations. A punting stage is located on the river either side of the bridge.



The Cherwell Island from Magdalen Bridge

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HUCA 42 Orientation map