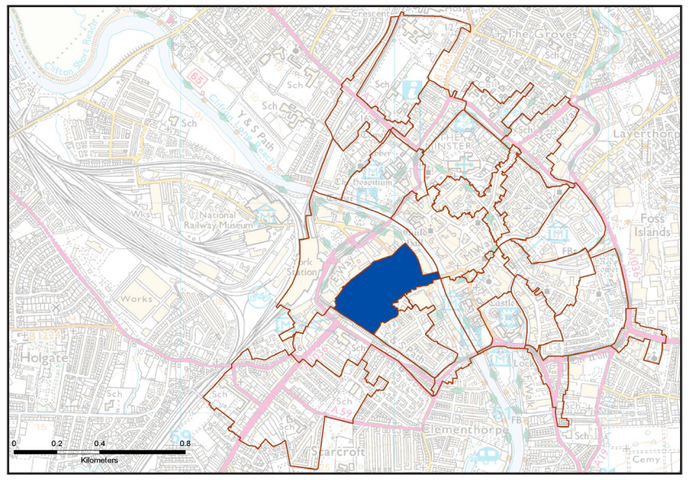
Character area 21: Micklegate



The location of the character area within the historic core.

Description

Character varies considerably throughout this area. Micklegate has the strongest and most rewarding identity, and four factors combine to make this one of the most handsome streets in Yorkshire. The first two are the rising topography and sinuous form. The third is the extent of survival of high quality buildings and the fourth, their density. The result is an evolving series of excellent views up the street.

The character of the other streets is more varied and fragmented because of the different style and age of construction; none have the excellence of Micklegate. It is the principal historic route into the city and one of the city's finest streets and bars. To its north, the gardens and yards of the houses along it were developed to create the southern side of Toft Green and Tanner Row. To the south, medieval churches and religious houses have helped shaped the development of Priory Street and Trinity and St Martin's Lanes

Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal

Archaeological background

Roman

During the Roman period, Bishophill was part of the civilian Colonia of Roman York. Where the topography rises up from the River Ouse to the ridge of Bishophill Senior, natural terraces were further enhanced to make the best use of available land. There is significant Roman archaeological evidence within the Micklegate area and to the south particularly in the vicinity of Bishophill.

A Roman building (MYO2289) containing a plunge bath was observed during the excavation of a sewer trench along Fetter Lane in 1852 (EYO2706) just outside of this character area (Character Area 19). Another evaluation also on Fetter Lane in 1998 (EYO156), to a depth of 1.75 metres, contained evidence of a well constructed mortar floor which was overlain by levelling deposits and a less well constructed floor of a later date all Roman in date. These layers were sealed under a sandstone flags representative of a roof collapse of a well constructed building of 2nd century date. A 4th century wall standing to a height of four courses was also exposed and evidence for an earlier stone building along with an associated infant burial. At the Ideal Laundry site on Trinity Lane (EYO11) late Roman debris was noted at the base of the trench 1.69m below ground level.

The Queen's Hotel site, between Micklegate and Fetter Lane, excavated in 1989 exposed evidence of Roman ditches, dumps, stone structures and associated floors as well as demolition debris (EYO2327 & EYO2329). These deposits were waterlogged, between 3.2m and 4.5m thick and c.3.0m below ground level.

In the Tanner Row and Toft Green area two Roman apsidal buildings and mosaic paving (MYO3601-2) was discovered in 1840 during works to the Old Railway Station at an approximate depth of 6ft (c.2.0m) below ground level (as existing in 1840). Other 19th century investigations have exposed other large buildings such as a public baths and a dwelling.

Three mosaics was found in 1853 under Toft Green (EYO2470-71 & MYO3614). A Roman wall (MYO3600) was exposed in 2011 during sewer repairs (EYO4626) at 1.8m below ground level on Toft Green road.

This is almost certainly associated with the apsidal building discovered in the 19th century. Potentially, any moderately deep excavation in this area may encounter structural remains of Roman date. Modern services have disturbed more recent archaeological deposits in this area. For instance, modern services were encountered to 1.4m below ground level during gas mains work in 1990 (EYO3344).

Small amounts of occupation evidence were encountered during works at 47-55 Tanner Row (EYO169) including a possible mortar floor. Further investigations on Tanner Row (EYO3298) exposed Roman deposits and pottery at c.2.7m below ground level.

At Kenning's Garage site, Micklegate (EYO402) On Site Archaeology excavated three trenches to depths of c.1.4m to 3.5m below ground level. A possible well and a Roman wall foundation were found c.3m+ below ground level. At the former Victoria House also on Micklegate (EYO586) boreholes exposed Roman material including possible timber structures. On the line of Micklegate several investigations have exposed cobbled surfaces (EYO3276, 3293 and 2952) which may relate to the principal road from York (Eboracum) to Tadcaster (Calcaria). The surfaces were recorded at depths between c.1.2m and c.2.6m below ground level. Further masonry was recorded at depths of c.2.36m below ground level (EYO3291-94).

Immediately outside this character area (character area 22), Occupation evidence from the 2nd century was recorded (EYO2173-2184) on the north side of Tanner Row at the General Accident site. On North Street (EYO4065) a river retaining wall (MYO2035) was exposed as well as evidence of dumping of clay and cobbles to raise the ground surface on nearby Rougier Street by over 1.0m.

Anglian-Anglo-Scandinavian

Archaeological evidence of Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian occupation is relatively sparse. It is likely that some of the grander stone buildings of the Roman period may have been standing during the Anglian period in this area and the immediate vicinity.

The street layout was clearly re-arranged by at least the 8th century and in common with other parts of York, most roads and alleys have Old Norse names such as Skeldergate (Sceldergate) and Micklegate (Mikillgata or Great Street). Micklegate diverted from the earlier line of the Roman road to Tadcaster in order to cross the river more conveniently for the major settlement areas across the river in the Foss/Ouse triangle south east of the former Legionary Fortress.

The Queen's Hotel excavations (EYO2328, 2330 & 2333) in the late 1980s exposed evidence for a series of 9th and 10th structures c.1.0m below ground level as well as evidence for amber, antler, leather, textile and metal working. The riverside area has produced some significant finds from this period such as on Skeldergate, leading from North Street where waterlogged Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian deposits and timber structures are known (EYO429, EYO4848, EYO4850, EYO2910-22, EYO2012-28).

Investigations on Trinity Lane (EYO11) exposed several Anglo-Scandinavian pits and a possible cemetery. Structures, possibly dating to the Anglo-Scandinavian period were noted during a watching brief at 21 Micklegate in 2000 (EYO409).

Limited evidence has also been recovered to the north on Rougier Street, and on nearby Wellington Row, where a layer was recorded as being cut by pits containing 9th to 11th century worked bone artefacts. Several churches have Anglo-Scandinavian origins such as St. Mary, Bishophill Junior (MYO1868), St Martin-cum-Gregory (MYO1172), St Gregory (now demolished) (MYO2247) and Holy Trinity Priory (MYO3520) as well as St. Mary Bishophill Senior further south.

Although there is no direct archaeological evidence, the later medieval earth and masonry defences of the city walls may well have their origins at this time.

Medieval

As the importance of York grew from the 11th century onwards, Micklegate continued to be a significant gateway into the city.

There is clear evidence surviving into the early 21st century of medieval burgage plots with houses fronting the street and a garden/workshops to the rear. The re-founding of Trinity Priory (MYO3520 & church MYO1169) as a Benedictine Priory in the 1080s and the establishment of the Dominican Priory (to the north of Toft Green) added to the significance of this part of the city. The precinct of Holy Trinity Priory was particularly large which its main entrance off Micklegate surviving until the 19th century. Other churches, such as St. John's Church, now a night club (MYO1173) and associated churchyard (MYO3690) and All Saint's Church were established in the medieval period. St. William's Chapel, constructed on Ouse Bridge in the late 12th century, later became a cloth hall for York's Merchant Adventurers.

Toft Green was known as the Kingestoftes in the early 13th century. A king's house and chapel are recorded c. 1133. The chapel or an earlier version of it may date to the 8th century (Pallister 1978:16). Toft Green was one of the few large open green spaces within the city walls during the medieval period. It was used to put on plays and hosted a cattle and horse market. Evaluations carried out on a site adjacent to 16 Toft Green by On Site Archaeology (OSA) (EYO382 & 483) unearthed medieval cobbled surfaces, pits and structures.

Tanner Row was recorded as Barker Rawe in 1524 which relates to the Middle English word Barkere meaning tanner. Barker Lane was known as Gregory Lane (Gregorelayne) until the 16th century when it changed to Barker Lane due to its close proximity to the tanning processes on Tanner Row (Pallister 1978:16).

A watching brief at the junction of Priory Street and Bishophill Junior revealed a medieval wall, thought to be part of the boundary wall of the Holy Trinity Priory. The wall survived to within 0.32m of the ground surface (EYO437).

An evaluation on St. Martin's Lane (EYO566) in 2001 revealed a complex archaeological stratigraphy dating to the medieval period. A watching brief on the same lane in 1980 (EYO3555) observed the foundations of the churchyard wall at a depth of 0.30m below ground level, composed of re-used stone possibly from Holy Trinity Priory.

Another watching brief in 1989 (EYO3397-98) revealed burials which would have been part of Holy Trinity or St. Martin's Churchyard. Trinity Lane has also provided evidence for medieval pits, a garden, and oven structure (EYO11 & 3054-59) recorded at 1.8m to 2.0m below ground level. Cellars on Trinity Lane exists to depths of c.2.5m below ground level as proved at no.20 during a watching brief in 1989 (EYO3416).

Borehole investigations at Victoria House, Micklegate (EYO586) revealed the existence of medieval and post-medieval walls and deposits. While a watching brief at 112 Micklegate (EYO3403) revealed a brick wall on limestone footings at a depth of 0.2m. Further watching briefs at 88, 94 and 104 Micklegate have exposed medieval pottery, post-medieval wall and garden soil at 0.9m below ground level, and re-used medieval architectural fragments within a boundary wall.

Stone structures, associated floor surfaces and a circular oven were excavated at the Queen's Hotel site (EYO2332 and 2334). All deposits were waterlogged and varied between 0.3m and 1.25m in thickness.

Excavations at All Saint's Church, North Street (EYO698) by the University of York's Field Archaeology Services encountered medieval deposits and artifacts associated with a pit cutting earlier Roman deposits. Finds included building material and glass of 12th and 13th century date. The pit was sealed by a levelling layer of 16th or 17th century date, over which a brick floor had been laid. The result of a borehole survey (up to 5.0m below ground level) suggests the survival of several metres of medieval stratigraphy across the site.

The City Wall, forming the south-west boundary runs from Baile Hill to Barker Tower (MYO 1715) and dates to the late 13th century. The lower section of Micklegate Bar is 12th century while the upper sections date to the late 13th – early 14th century. The barbican was demolished in 1826.

Post-medieval – Early modern

In the 17th and 18th century wealthy merchants and aristocrats built town houses on Micklegate away from the riverside and city centre. Micklegate House is a particularly fine example.

The 1852 Ordnance Survey map depicts a number of formal gardens. At the Kenning's Garage site, Micklegate (EYO402) a number of features possibly associated with an 18th century formal garden cut through Roman deposits. In Trench 3 a series of garden soil and brick rubble layers were encountered. The upper layers dated to the early modern and Victorian periods. The former Priory grounds became Holy Trinity Gardens by the early 19th century.

18A-19 Fetter Lane (EYO81) borehole investigation suggested that post-medieval cellars had truncated earlier deposits. Investigations on George Hudson Street (EYO436) revealed that post-medieval and modern deposits were removed by 19th century cellars and a 20th century supermarket.

During York's 19th century expansion the prestige of Micklegate declined and workshops built in the back gardens on the north side of the street on Tanner Row and Toft Green.

George Hudson Street was created in 1843 to connect the newly built railway station area to Micklegate. The 12th century Ouse Bridge was replaced by Old Ouse Bridge in 1566 and the present bridge dates to 1821.

Visible character

Micklegate has a strong identity and interesting views

Dense arrangement of high quality buildings on Micklegate

Surviving basalt setts on carriageway on slope down to the George Hudson Street junction

One of city's finest streets entered though a medieval gateway

Area contains Medieval churches, Georgian town houses, 19th century terraces, 19th century non-conformist chapels and 20th century commercial buildings

Churchyards of St Martin's and Holy Trinity provide accessible green space

Buildings are predominantly 3 storeys in height

Survival of medieval burgage plots on Micklegate

Sub surface character

Ove Arup Development & Archaeology Study Research Zone: 10 and 11

Deposit Depth (where known): Ove Arup Archaeology and Development Study suggest average quality archaeological deposits of all periods at average depths of c.2.0m in this area

Natural levels were recorded at numerous points across the area varying between c.1.65m below ground level at Tanner Row, c.3.0m to 5.2m below ground level on Fetter Lane, c.3.3m in the centre of Micklegate and c.6.0m below ground level on Priory Street.

Roman structures and deposits vary in depth between c.1.2m - c.3.0m+ below ground level e.g. on Micklegate to 1.75m on Fetter Lane

Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian evidence is recorded between c.0.6-c.1.0m below ground level at the Queen's Hotel site.

The results of a borehole survey suggested the survival of several metres of medieval stratigraphy at All Saint's Church. Excavation at Trinity Lane car park revealed medieval deposits at a depth of 1.80-2.0m below ground level.

Post-Medieval walls and garden soil were noted at 94 Micklegate at 0.9m below ground level

Deposit thicknesses vary between: Roman c.0.2m to 4.5m, Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian c.0.17m to 2.0m and medieval 0.3m to 1.85m

Period Survival: Significant Roman, Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian deposits including structures have been found within the area, which formed part of the Roman civilian town. Earlier deposits have sometimes been disturbed by later activities.

Medieval deposits are also common although later periods and post-medieval levels are often disturbed by more modern activity.
Interventions (recorded on HER April 2013): There are approximately 44 Watching Briefs and c.19 excavations/evaluations, including several historic interventions, recorded on the City of York Historic Environment Record (HER). Few of the interventions are recorded in any detail and a brief examination of some grey literature suggests several interventions are yet to be recorded in the HER. Many archaeological discoveries presumably went unrecorded during the construction of buildings on Micklegate and Toft Green over several centuries and through the creation of George Hudson Street. See Appendix 1 for a brief summary.

Significance

Overview: One of York's finest streets, Micklegate is still visually dominant as a principal gateway from the south, at least for pedestrians. The area is part of the Roman Colonia/West Walled City area as identified by Ove Arup in the Archaeology and Development Study. The Colonia contains average quality deposits at a depth of c.2m below ground level, relating to all periods. Waterlogged deposits of high quality exist closer to the river.

The limited information available on the Historic Environment Record suggests that substantial stratified deposits can survive in the area at depths between c.0.5m and 2.0m. Archaeological remains from the Roman to late medieval period have clearly been significantly impacted on by various phases of later development.

Designations: The site falls within the Central Area of Archaeological Importance meaning that significant archaeological deposits representing a valuable finite resource are present here. Archaeological remains dating from the Roman to medieval periods are well known throughout the area..

Micklegate contains a vast amount of architecturally or historically significant buildings as well as many Buildings of Merit (Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal 2011). There are 7 Grade I, 26 Grade II* and 117 Grade II listed buildings. The City Walls (Barker Tower to Baile Hill) are also Grade I listed and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM 30).

Streetscape components: Paving is a mixture of riven English Pennine Sandstone, pre-cast concrete flags (Marshall's Saxon paving principally), and asphalt.

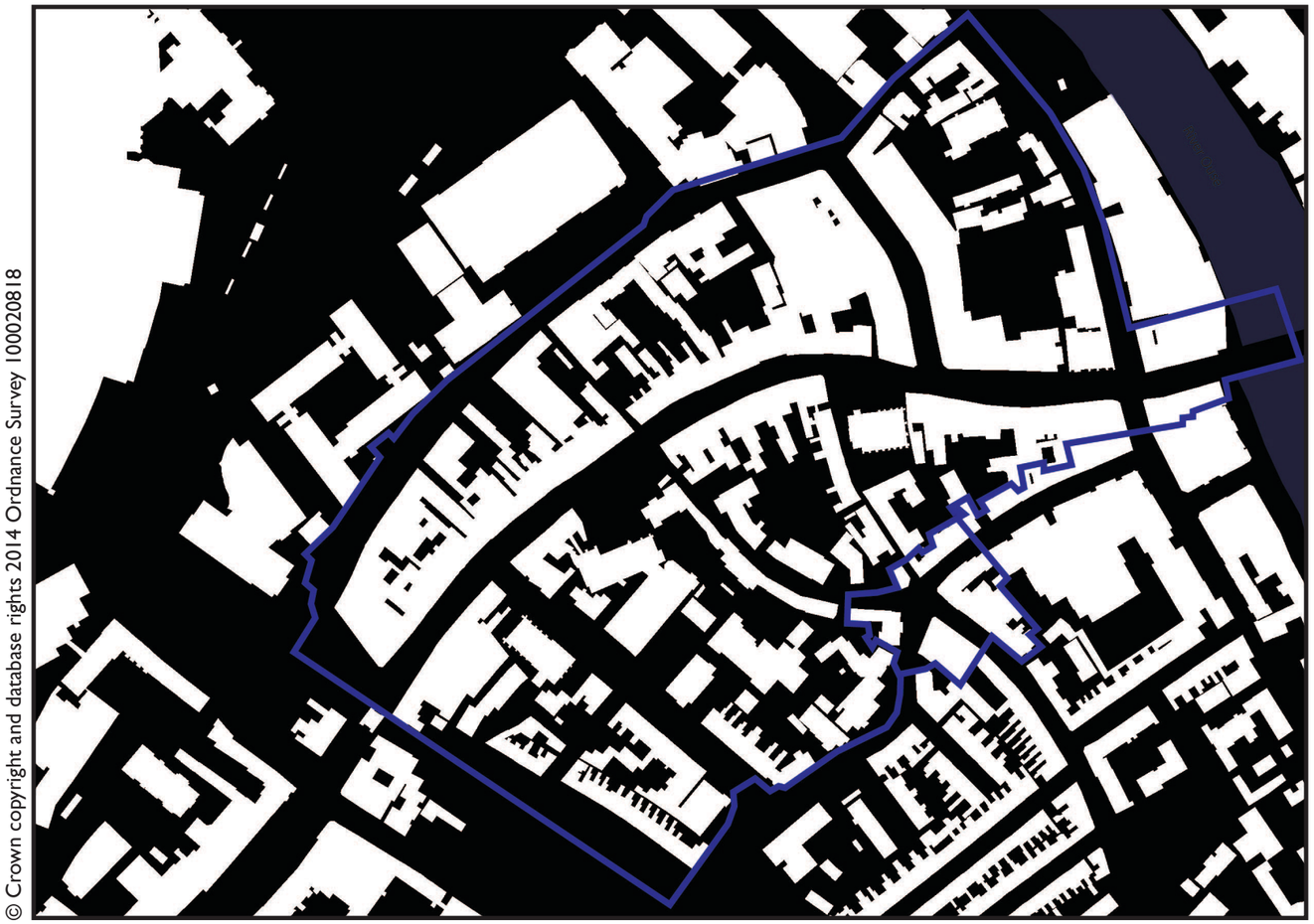
Pre-cast concrete flags are used on Micklegate, Tanner Row, George Hudson Street, North Street, Priory Street (re-laid with a grey rather than buff Saxon flag in 2013) and Trinity Lane.

Micklegate retains some riven natural stone flags at its southern end. Some small side alleys such as St. Martin's Lane retain original setts.

Barker Lane retains some original insitu granite runners, some with clearly visible wear grooves. Carriageways are generally surfaced in asphalt as are some footpaths on Toft Green and Barker Lane. Micklegate carriageway retains a section of original in situ basalt setts at its southern end which is a particularly fine contribution to local character.

Throughout this area, a variety of free standing and attached mid to late 20th century street lighting units (some in replica period styles), historic and modern street signage, late 20th century phone boxes and traffic signage, Edinburgh style waste bins, and green cast iron wayfinding posts are in use. On Micklegate cast iron drain covers survive running across the concrete paving slabs. Micklegate also includes black cycle racks and decorative black iron signage attached to many of the shops and offices as seen elsewhere in the city.

Figure ground map with built environment shown as white on black.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

Above: Plan showing the heights of the buildings within this character area.

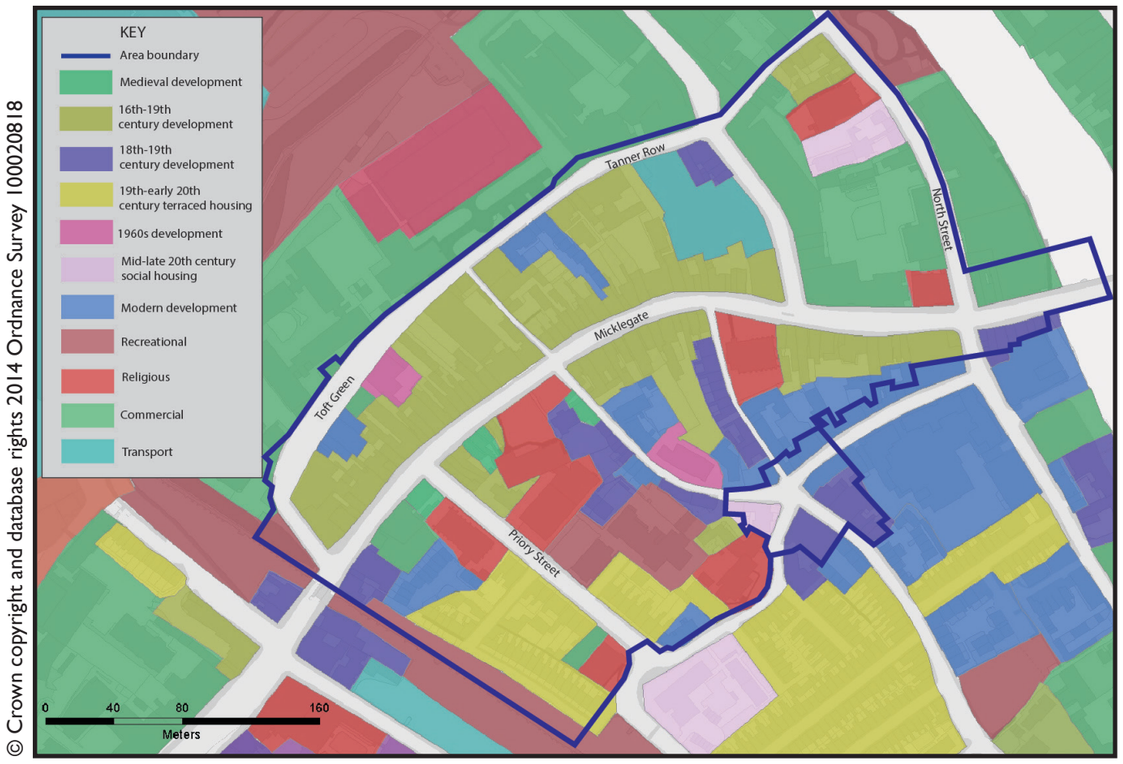
Below: Plan showing the construction dates of the buildings within the area.

© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

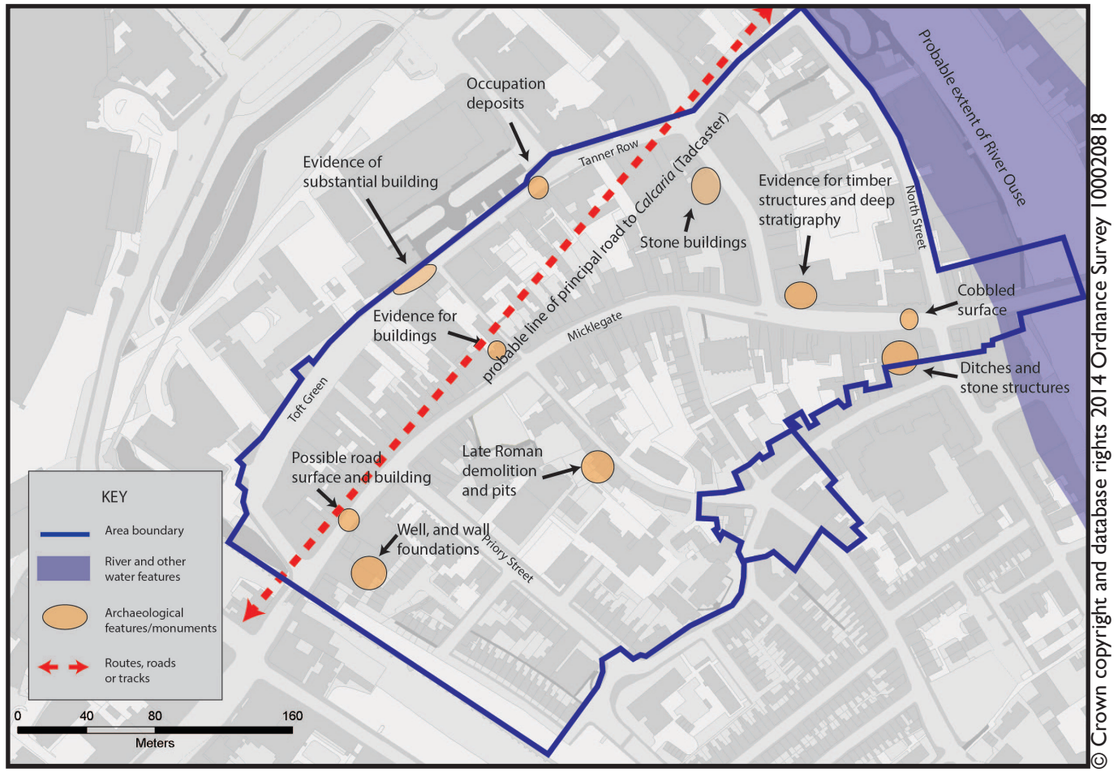
© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

Above: Plan showing designated heritage assets within this character area.

Below: Plan showing the Broad Type characterisation of the area. White roadways indicate roads or lanes visible on the 1852 Ordnance Survey Plan.

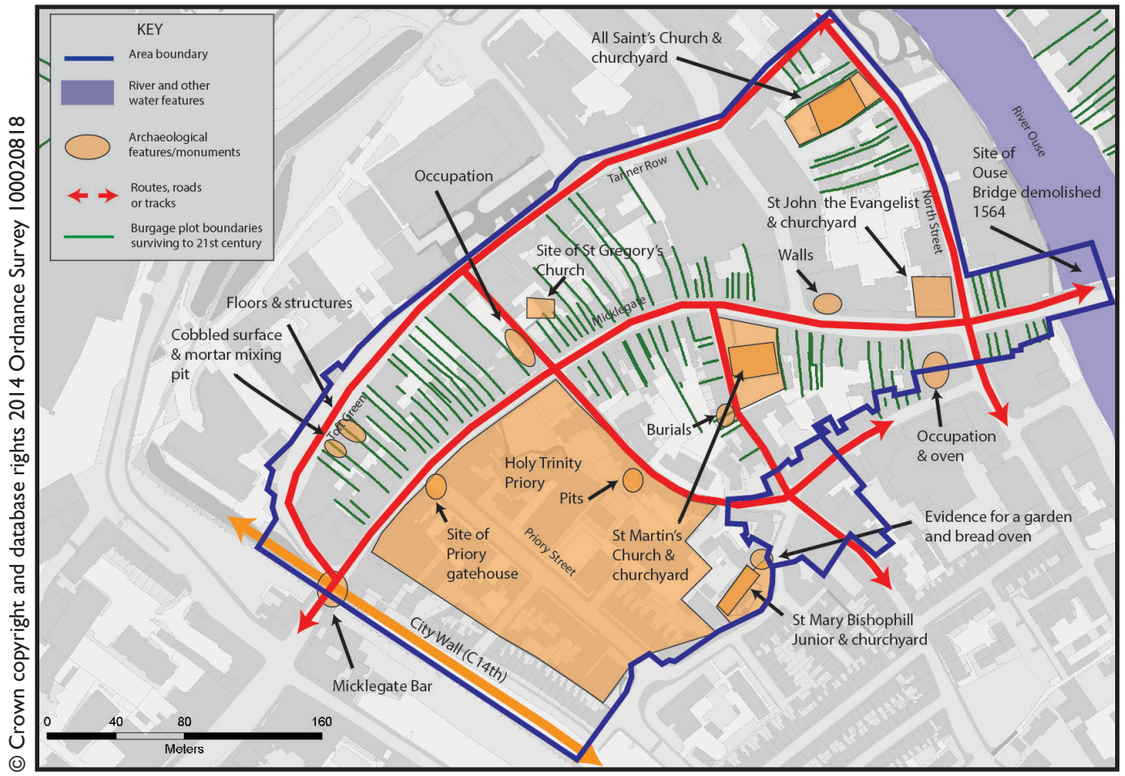


© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

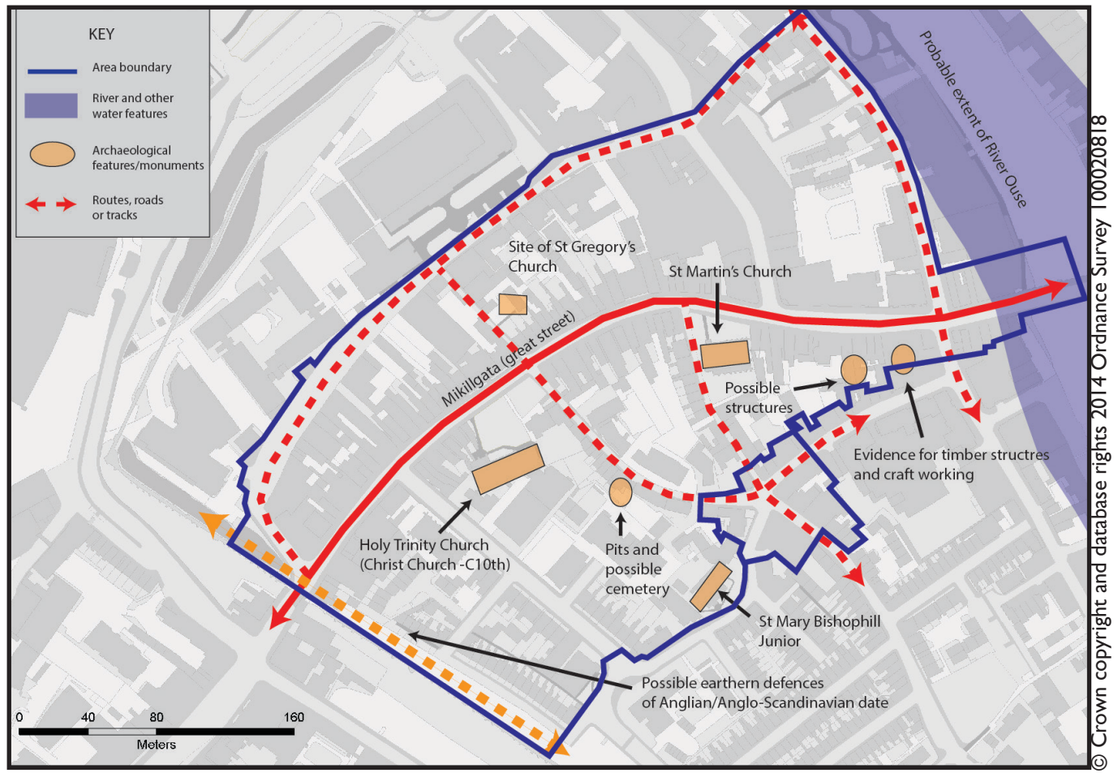
Above: The Roman landscape.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

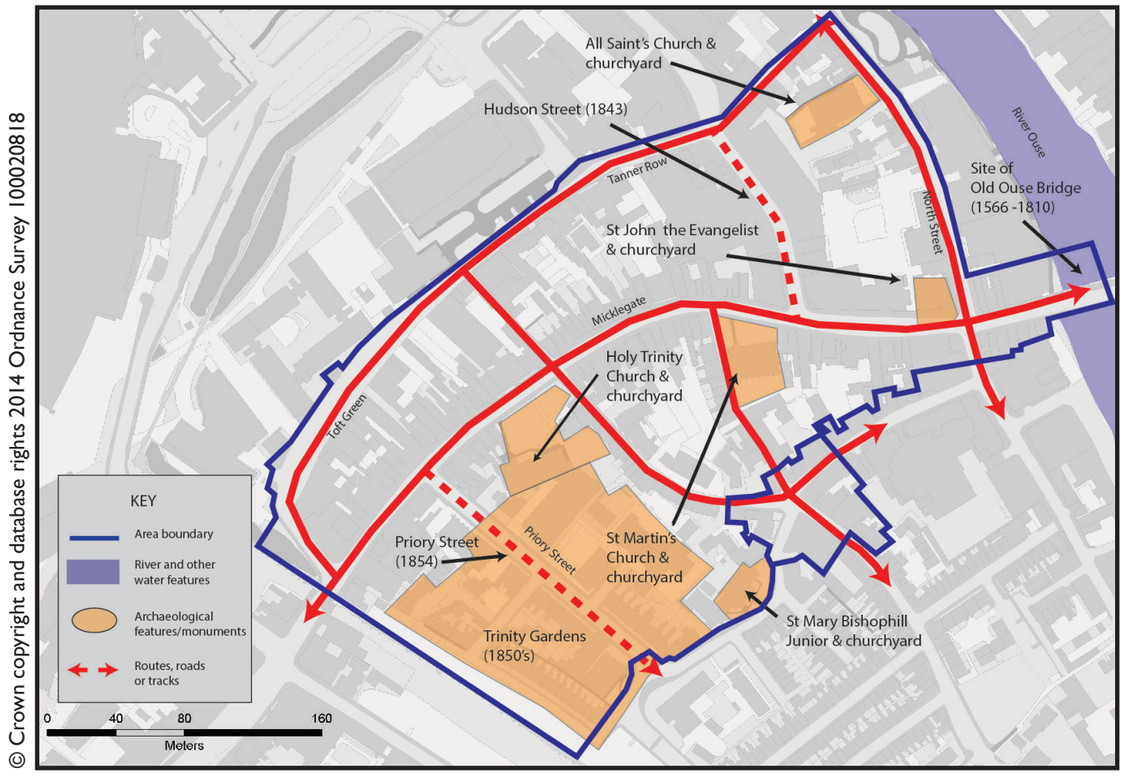
Above: The medieval landscape.

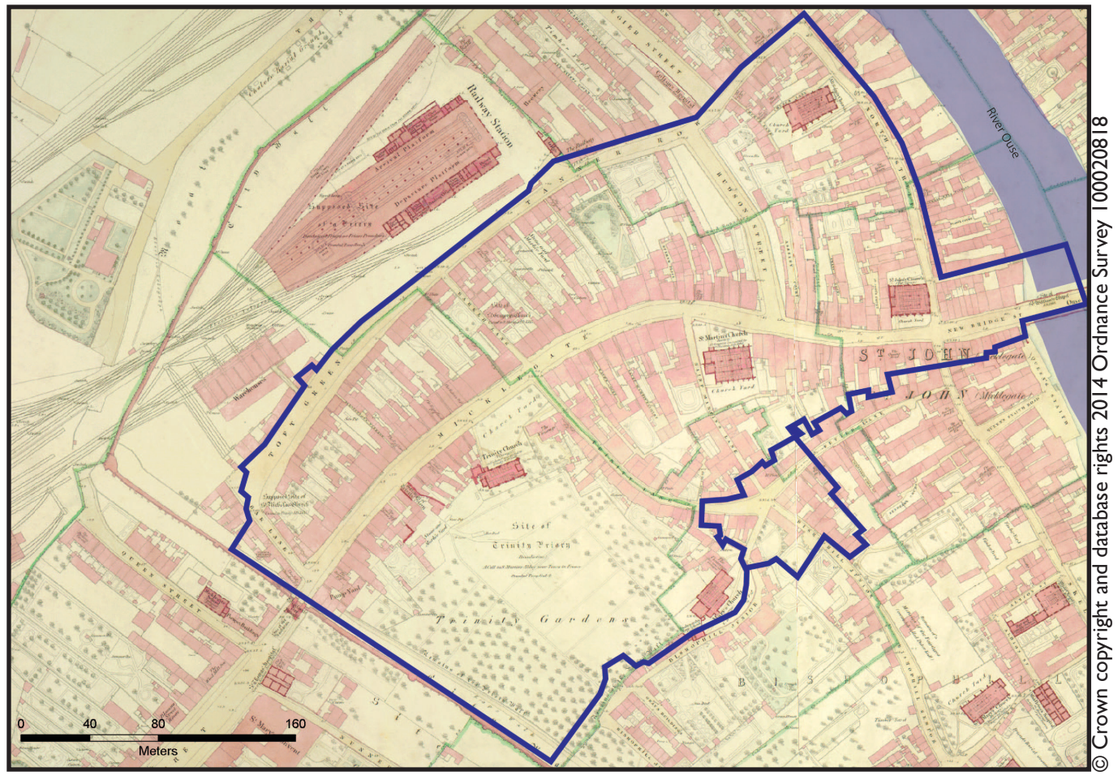
Below: The Anglo-Scandinavian landscape



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

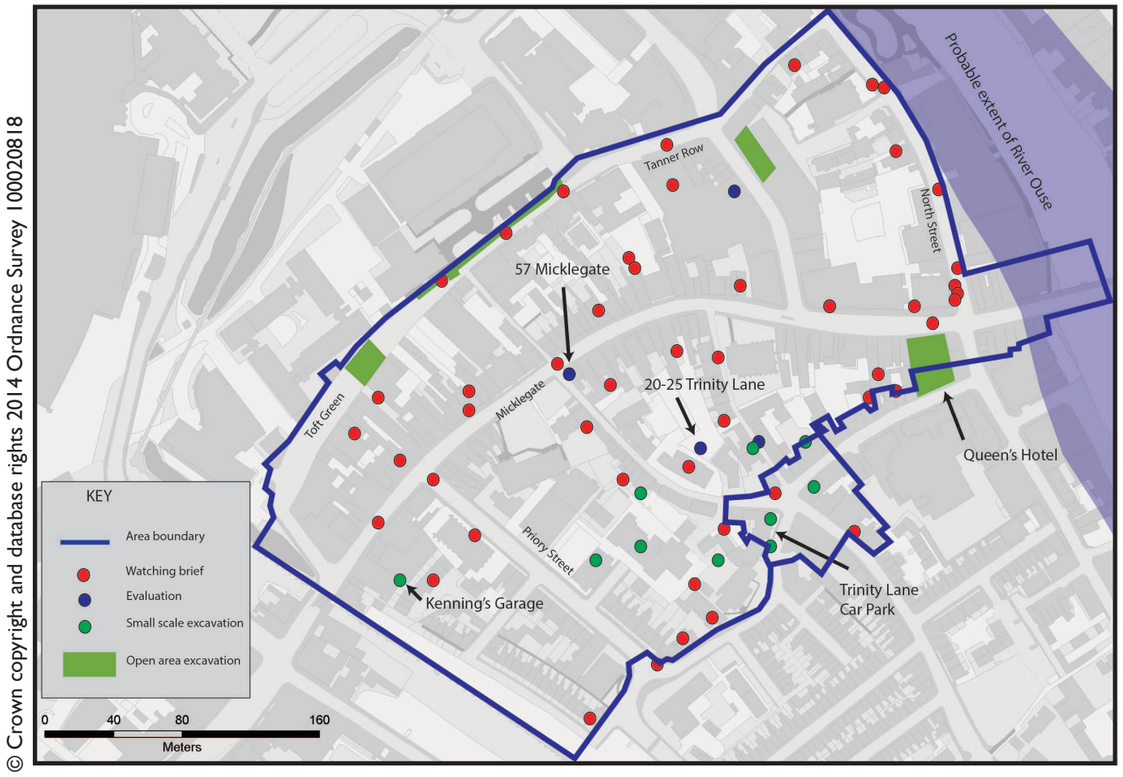
Below: The post-medieval landscape.





© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

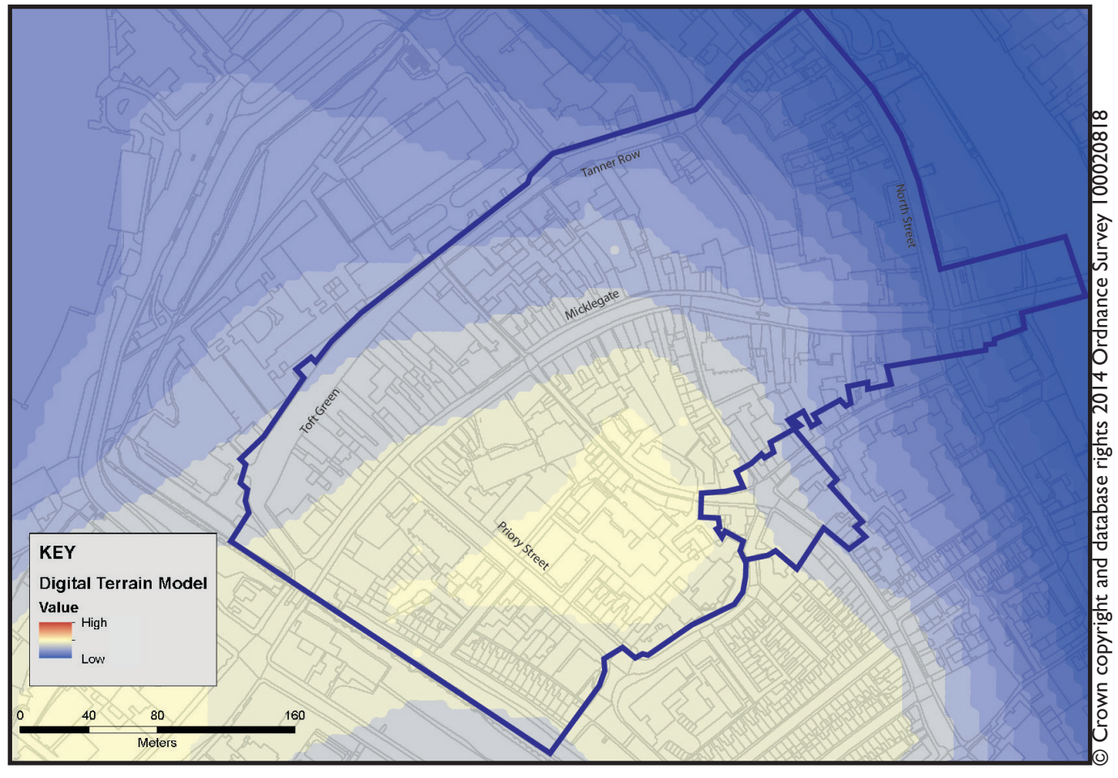
Above: The 1852 landscape.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

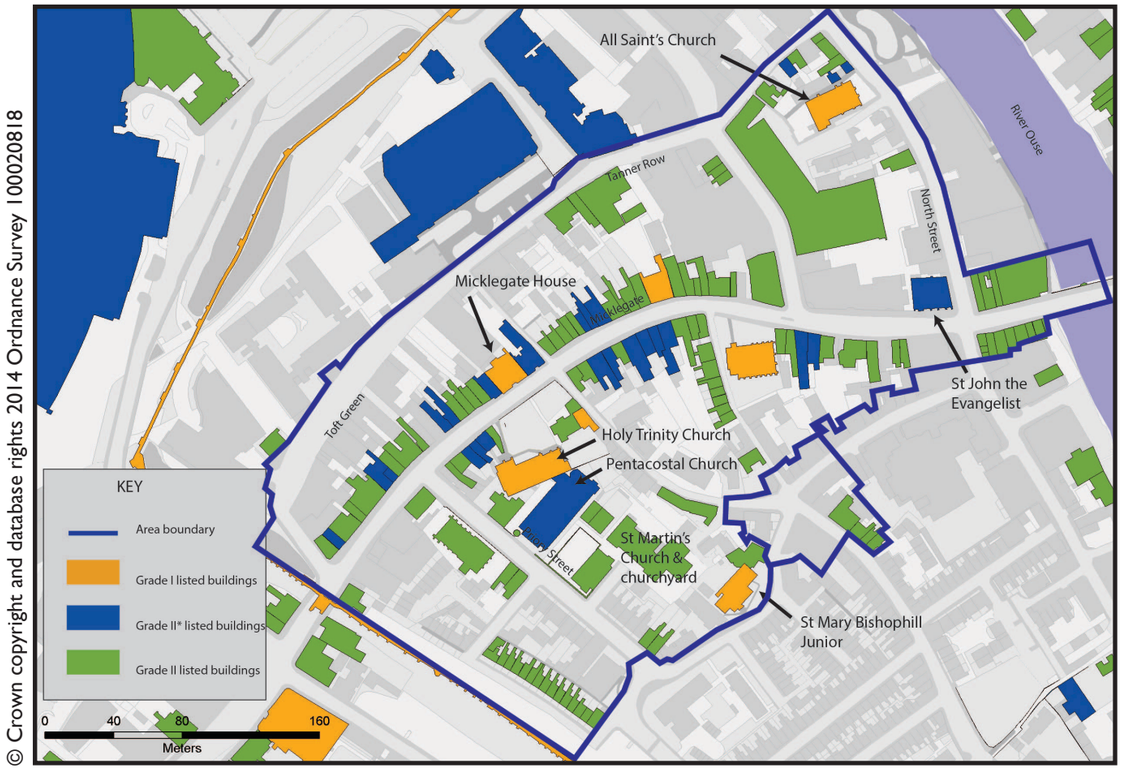
Above: The location of archaeological interventions recorded on the City of York Historic Environment Record.

Below: The general topography showing higher ground to the south of Micklegate in the Priory Street area.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

Below: Location of listed buildings. Note there are several Grade I listed structures.



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818

Main Sources

Hall, R. A. Et. Al., 2004, Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York, Council for British Archaeology

Ottaway, P. 2011, Archaeology in the Environs of Roman York, CBA, York

Ove Arup, 1991, Archaeology and Development Study, York

Pallister, D, M., 1978 The medieval street-names of York, in York Historian, 2

York City Council Historic Environment Record (and grey literature report EYO81, 169, 464, 728 and 791)

York City Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal- 21: Micklegate

Researched and written by: Claire MacRae

Photographs: Claire MacRae except where indicated

Graphics: Bob Sydes

Edited by: Bob Sydes

Funded by: English Heritage

Issued: November 2013

© City of York Council 2013

ENGLISH HERITAGE

CITY OF YORK COUNCIL