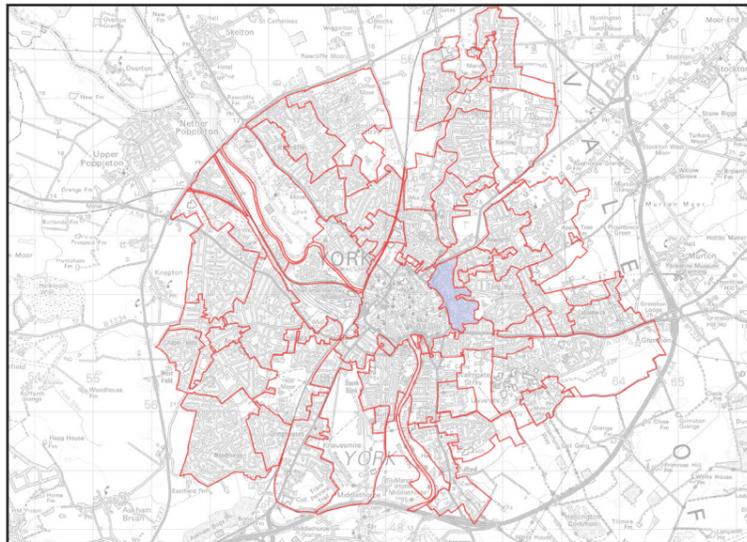
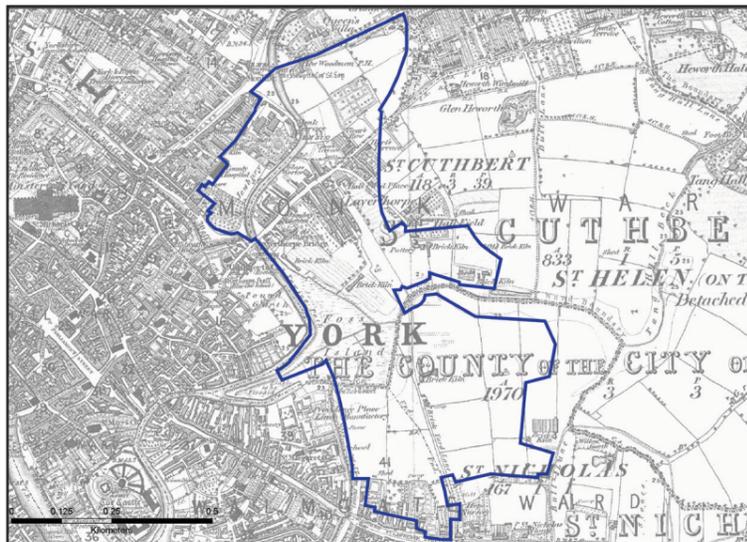


## Character area 52: Layerthorpe



Location of character area



Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey Plan 1852

### Key Characteristics

**General Character:** 20th century commercial premises built across a former industrial landscape. Small amounts of multi-storeyed 21st century residential development in pattern book architectural styles that have no distinctive York features

Layerthorpe lies immediately to the east of York, bounded to the north by Heworth Green; to the west by Monkgate, Outer Walmgate and the River Foss; to the south by Lawrence Street, and to the east by Tang Hall estate.

Partly within Central Area of Archaeological Importance

The land is generally flat with the River Foss running North South through the north-west corner of the area

Important commercial area vital to York's economy as a source of employment

Connection to city reinforced by views of the Minster

Approximate walking/cycling distance to the city centre from the centre of James Street 1.3km via Layerthorpe

**Key Building Types:** One to two storey buildings made up of a mixture of retail units, supermarkets, office blocks, car showrooms and warehouses on linear streets and within industrial estates

**Other Key Housing Types:** Multi-storey 21st century residential development

**Designated Heritage Assets:** Refuse destructor chimney and 26 Heworth Green (both Grade II listed), Central Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) (part)

**Non-designated Heritage Assets:** Potential archaeological remains outside the AAI identified during archaeological interventions

**Key Views:** Local views of Layerthorpe destructor chimney. View of Minster from Layerthorpe and glimpses of Minster from James Street

**Surviving historic roads and tracks:** Layerthorpe and Hall Field Road

## Archaeology and history

Heworth Green Roman cemetery (MYO3330) in the north east corner is one of several cemeteries in the area relating to probable Roman roads leading east from the city. Other prehistoric and Roman evidence is absent apart from residual pottery and a single flint found during investigations to the north of Lawrence Street (EYO595).

Evidence of Anglo-Scandinavian and medieval activity and occupation along Lawrence Street was also found during these investigations.

The village or hamlet of Layerthorpe is first mentioned in a charter of 1184-9 where it is referred to as Leirthorp. There is no mention of the place in the 11th century Domesday Book and the hamlet may have formed part of the village of Heworth. St Mary's Church was built in the 14th century and survived until 1549 when the parish was united with St Cuthbert's, Peaseholme Green. The medieval hospital of St. Loy, possibly a leper hospital, was located to the north of Layerthorpe on Heworth Green.

The Foss Islands area incorporated part of the King's Fish pool created in 1089 by damming the River Foss and this area of marsh and open water served as part of the city defenses throughout the medieval period. Marshy ground survived into the 19th century and high ground water levels have continued to challenge development into the early 21st century. It is likely that the area has always been relatively wet.

Jewbury, a medieval Jewish cemetery (EYO 2265) was situated outside of the city, on the west side of the River Foss. It was in use from c.1177AD until 1290 when the Jews were expelled from England. Five hundred skeletons were excavated from this site ahead of the creation of the extant car park but the cemetery is believed to contain over 1000 burials <http://www.historyofyork.org.uk/themes/norman/jewbury-cemetery>.

By the early 14th century Layerthorpe bridge and the road (Layerthorpe) had been created, leading from the city to a small linear settlement at Layerthorpe and onto Heworth.

The bridge was attached to a gatehouse, on the York side, known as Layerthorpe Postern. The postern and old bridge were demolished and the bridge has been replaced several times, most recently in 1996.

1930s aerial photographs reveal evidence of medieval ridge and furrow in the area of the now James Street industrial estate. In the northern half of this character area, medieval ditches and postholes associated with agricultural practices were discovered during archaeological investigations in 2003. The fields to the south of the settlement were known as Hall Fields, most likely associated with Tang Hall. The eastern extremes of the Layerthorpe character area formed part of Hither Plough Field and Far North Fields Common shown on the 1772 enclosure plan. Enclosure occurred across this character area between the 1770s (Walmgate area) - 1820s (Heworth area) when larger medieval fields were divided into smaller areas.

By the 18th century the King's Pool had begun to silt up and small islands began to appear. This gave rise to the name Foss Islands. Soon afterwards, the River Foss was canalised and the King's Pool dried up completely. Drainage of the area followed in the mid 19th century ahead of the construction of Foss Islands Road.

Small-scale industries such as potteries and brick kilns existed south of Layerthorpe before the late 18th century; however, during the 19th century this largely agricultural area of Layerthorpe became fully industrial. On the west side of the Foss, close to Heworth Green, the York Gas Light Company was set up in the 1820s. The settlement in Layerthorpe had grown by the 1850s to contain several residential streets such as Monks Terrace and Vicars Row.

By the late 19th century, Foss Islands Road had been created, the gas works had been expanded, a power station and refuse destructor constructed (1890s) and to the east, St. Lawrence's Brick and Tile works and associated industries were in operation. The Foss Islands railway branch (1870s) connected most of these industries to the rail network.

Further residential development grew around Layerthorpe and at the southern tip of the character area, north of Lawrence Street.

The Derwent Valley Light Railway opened in 1913, providing an East/West route from Layerthorpe to Selby. The land immediately south of Heworth Green was used as allotments during the early-mid 20th century.

From the mid-late 20th century the gas works site went through several periods of expansion and re-organisation until its closure in the 1970s. The majority of the terraced streets, including public houses and shops which served the Layerthorpe community were demolished in the 1950s to 1960s to create the commercial area in existence today.

Further change from an industrial landscape, with associated residential areas, to a largely commercial site continued on throughout the late 20th and early 21st century with the construction of supermarkets, council depot and office blocks. Recent residential development has been restricted to part of the former gas works site, south of Heworth Green and Merchants Court, on Layerthorpe.



64-70 Layerthorpe in the 1950s prior to demolition - City of York Archives

## Character

The area is characterised by out-of-town, large modern commercial premises and industrial estates generally one to two storeys in height constructed in a mix of styles. Large scale (typically single span steel framed) retail units and supermarkets, brick (skinned, steel framed) built office blocks, car showrooms, and brick and corrugated iron warehouses are some of the buildings which make up Layerthorpe.

Landscaping is much less generous than in similar purpose built large scale retail areas such as Clifton Moor. The James Street area is the only purpose built industrial estate but is indifferent in quality with large spaces for customer and employee parking. The rest of the commercial area has been constructed in spaces of varying size following the demolition of 19th century residential and industrial buildings. This busy commercial area is important to York's economy as a source of employment just out the city centre. It has strong transport links to the city including the Park & Ride service and cycle paths, including the Orbital route running partly on the former Foss Islands branch railway.

Along the cycle path a 19th century brick retaining wall with stone capstones forms the boundary to terraced housing on the outskirts of Heworth. Several pieces of artwork can also be seen along this stretch of the cycle route including four black iron bridge supports surrounding a mid 20th century road bridge supporting Layerthorpe Road. Attached to, and on either side of the bridge a shelf featuring a clock and trophies is visible. The walls of buildings facing onto the cycle route contain graffiti and the path in general contains a large amount of rubbish.

Residential areas are generally early 21st century and are three to four storeys in height. Off Heworth Green several apartment blocks, all named after Italian cities, sit alongside contemporary office blocks faced principally in yellow/beige bricks. Some apartments include balconies and all have access to underground car parking. The whole complex is surrounded by a boundary wall of the same brick surmounted with black cast iron railings.

Access to the residential and commercial properties is by modern; wide asphalt surfaced roads and cycle paths on Eboracum Way.

Other early 21st century four storey residential buildings exist on Merchants Court, with, UPVC sash effect windows, bay windows and generally enclosed by red brick walls and black railings. To the south, near Lawrence Street, Heron House and buildings adjacent to it are named after birds are generally three storeys, mottled/red brick buildings with Juliet balconies and external parking spaces. None of these residential developments are York specific with identical developments existing nationwide.

A traveller site containing one storey red brick buildings and space for caravans is located on James Street.

The oldest buildings in the area date to the 19th century. 26 Heworth Green, an 1830s villa now nursery, a mid 19th century two storey building on Layerthorpe now a shop with residential accommodation and the late 19th century refuse destructor chimney. These buildings represent the different styles of buildings that historically Layerthorpe contained.

## Significance

**Archaeology:** Below ground, this area falls partly within the Central Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI) meaning that significant archaeological deposits representing a valuable finite resource may be present here, often at sufficient depth to be protected from development. These potentially rich deposits are one of the principal characteristics of York. Outside the AAI, archaeological investigations have revealed that deposits (including waterlogged material) may also remain in isolated pockets of undisturbed ground across the Layerthorpe area. In the southern part of the site, investigations on the council depot area, formerly part of the River Foss, suggest that locally and regionally significant deposits exist which can be used to study climate, environment and to a lesser extent, human activity for the last two millennia.

Jewbury, the large medieval cemetery on the west side of the River Foss, was one of only ten Jewish cemeteries in medieval England and is the only to be extensively excavated. The foundations of St Mary's Church were seen in the 1920s.

**Architecture:** The commercial nature of this area provides a valuable economic boost to the city although the design of buildings and spaces are generally unexceptional and anonymous. The high density residential developments, many providing private student lets, are similar to other developments nationwide. Layerthorpe is a busy area, largely a place to visit to purchase goods/service or to work. It is not architecturally significant or aesthetically interesting. The buildings are functional and pay little regard to historic context, grain, or the setting of the wider city centre.

**Historic:** The refuse destructor chimney (Grade II listed) is a well known landmark. It provides a tangible link to the former industrial nature of the area and is visible from many places within the city centre and further afield such as from Monks Stray.

The Minster is visible from Layerthorpe Road and can be glimpsed across low rooftops from James Street.

The Minster would have dominated the skyline to the west from the historic settlement of Layerthorpe and Tang Hall/Heworth.

Less than 20% of the historic boundaries shown on the 1852 ordnance survey plan remain readable in the contemporary landscape. The division between Far North Fields and Lawrence Street gardens, to the rear of Arthur Street dates to at least to the enclosure period of 1772.

The name Hall Fields Road, in use during the 1850s, and the more recent Little Hall Fields Road preserve the former medieval Hall Fields name.

The social value in this area is perhaps lower than other places due to the high level of re-development. The original streets of the Layerthorpe community were demolished to make way for commercial buildings and modern development. The high density contemporary developments, particularly the apartments, have a high turn over of residents, many of them students. This generally means that residents do not know their neighbours.

Some of the older buildings, the beck and former railway area are probably valued socially as places that can be connected to memories of childhood by older generations.

**Streetscape components:** All street lighting is contemporary and the majority of carriageway and pavement surfaces are tarmac.

**Aesthetics:** Layerthorpe contrasts strongly with the city centre immediately to the west of the River Foss and the surrounding suburban areas of Tang Hall and Heworth. It is a mix of industrial, commercial and early 21st century residential developments none of which are particularly attractive. Open spaces are generally in the form of linear cycle routes which provide a safe cycling environment but also seem to attract anti-social activity.

## Opportunities and recommendations

It is recommended that any extensions, new development or re-development in the area should be sympathetic in terms of style, material, proportions and density and should complement and enhance existing character. Street furniture, including street signage and streetlights should integrate with the character of the area.

Opportunities for improving the quality and consistency of contemporary street furniture and the public realm should be identified, in particular the enhancement of existing pedestrian surfaces, cycling facilities and upgrades of existing street furniture. This should be undertaken following guidance contained in the City of York Streets and Spaces Strategy and Guidance (City of York Council, 2013).

The scale (height in particular) of lighting column should always respect the character of the street. Lighting columns on residential streets with low traffic volumes should reflect traditional heights. Further guidance is contained in the City of York Streets and Spaces Strategy and Guidance (City of York Council, 2013).

Wherever possible and practical, it is strongly recommended that inherited historic landscape grain evidenced through post-medieval and 19th century former field boundaries should be enhanced and conserved. These play a key role in explaining the historic development of the area.

Where historic boundaries have been identified, either as surviving hedgerows or where retained as part of historic development, efforts should be made to ensure their continuing survival as part of any future development opportunities.

Great care should be paid to the retention of socially valued buildings and spaces with appropriate weight given to local opinions.

Hedgerows and trees should be carefully managed and opportunities for planting new trees along grass verges and in existing hedgerows should be identified in partnership with local residents. There are clearly many opportunities to enhance the open spaces and landscaped areas that exist, especially along Foss Islands Road to better enhance the setting of the historic core.

More could be done to manage the linear cycle ways and to ensure that anti-social activity is controlled.

Key views of the Minster, other major heritage assets and local landmarks should be maintained and enhanced to help orientation and enhance local distinctiveness.

Development management policy should take account of the contribution made by locally identified heritage assets to the distinctive character of the area. Sub-surface archaeological sites and landscapes are particularly important. Appropriate mitigation strategies should be agreed to protect potential archaeological deposits for any future development in area.

## Character Area 52: Images



*Supermarket on Layerthorpe*



*Former Foss Islands Railway*



*Florence House*



*James Street Industrial Estate*



*Art work on the former railway area*



*Merchants Court*



*Supermarket on James Street with chimney in foreground and Minster in background*



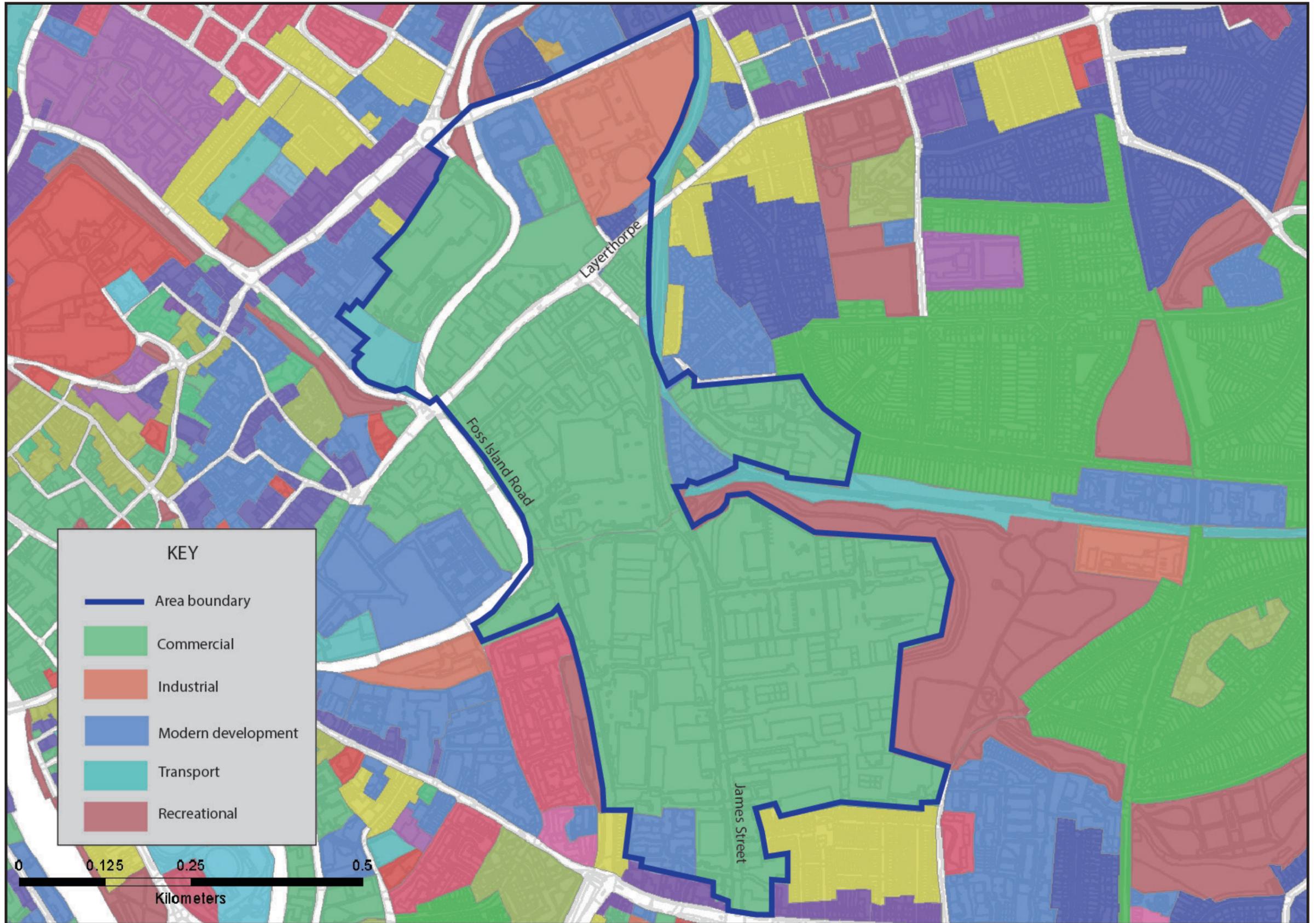
*Artwork at the former railway area*



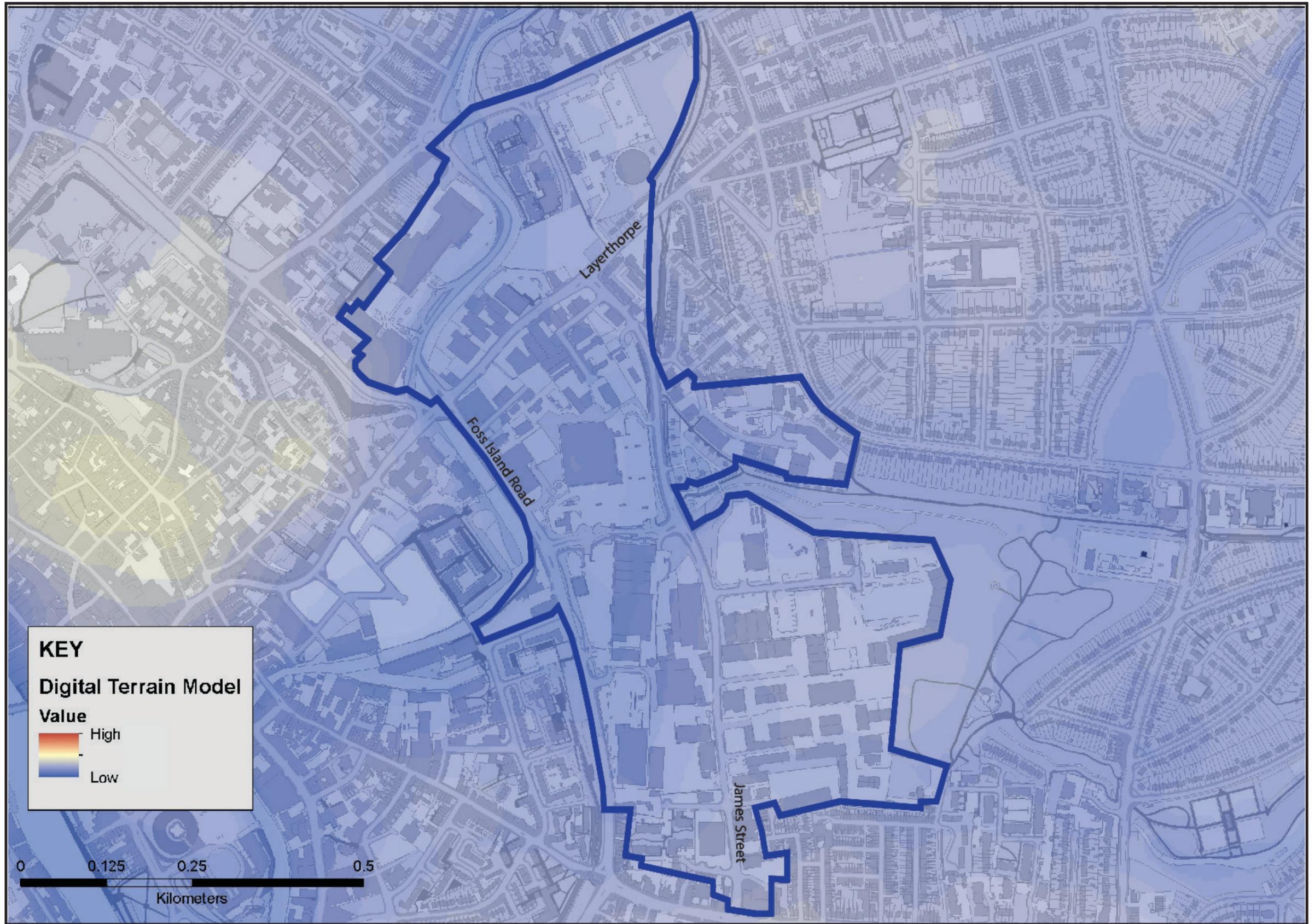
*26 Heworth Green*

## Character Area 52: Maps

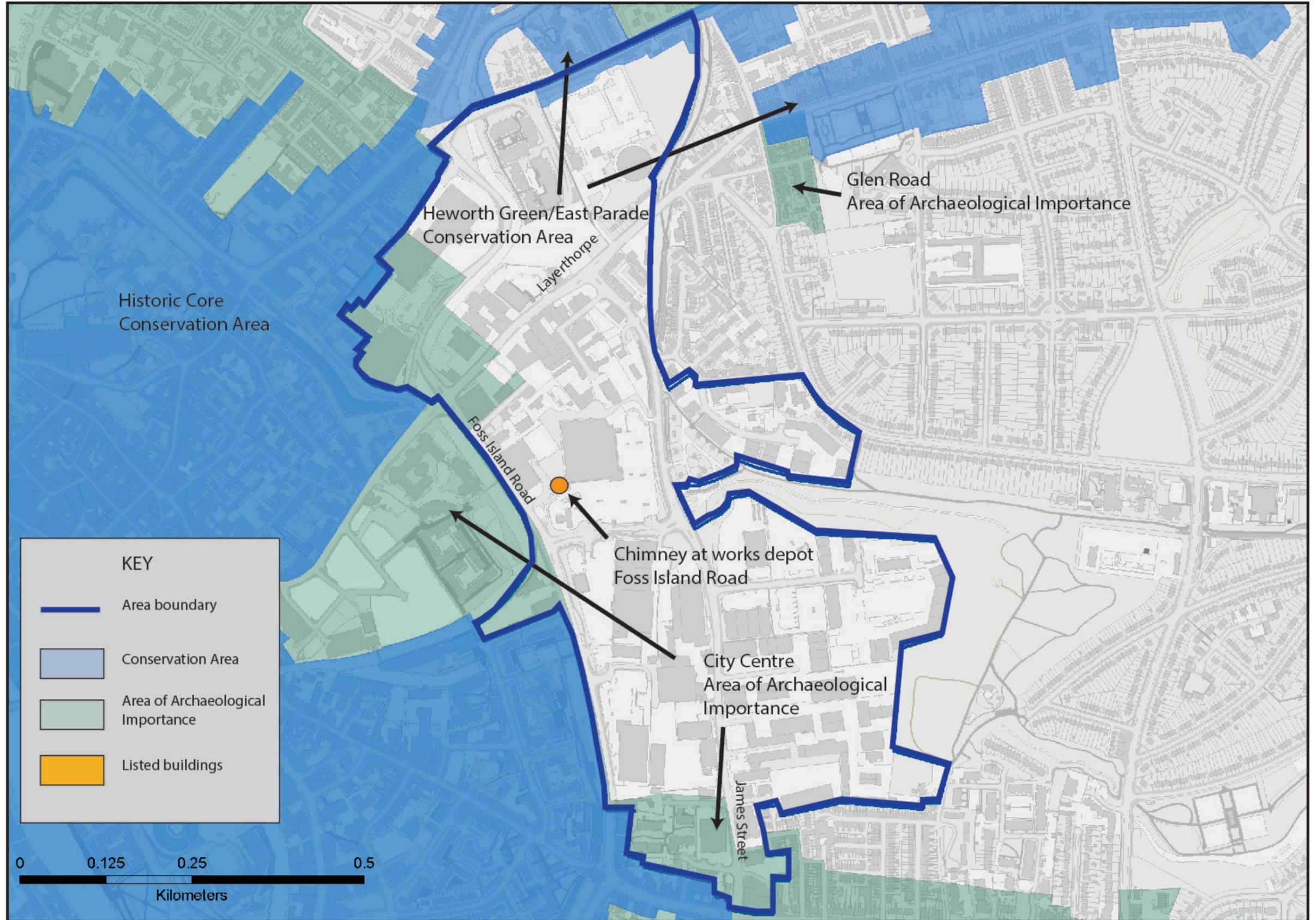
Broad Type characterisation plan.  
White roadways indicate roads or lanes visible on the 1852 Ordnance Survey Plan



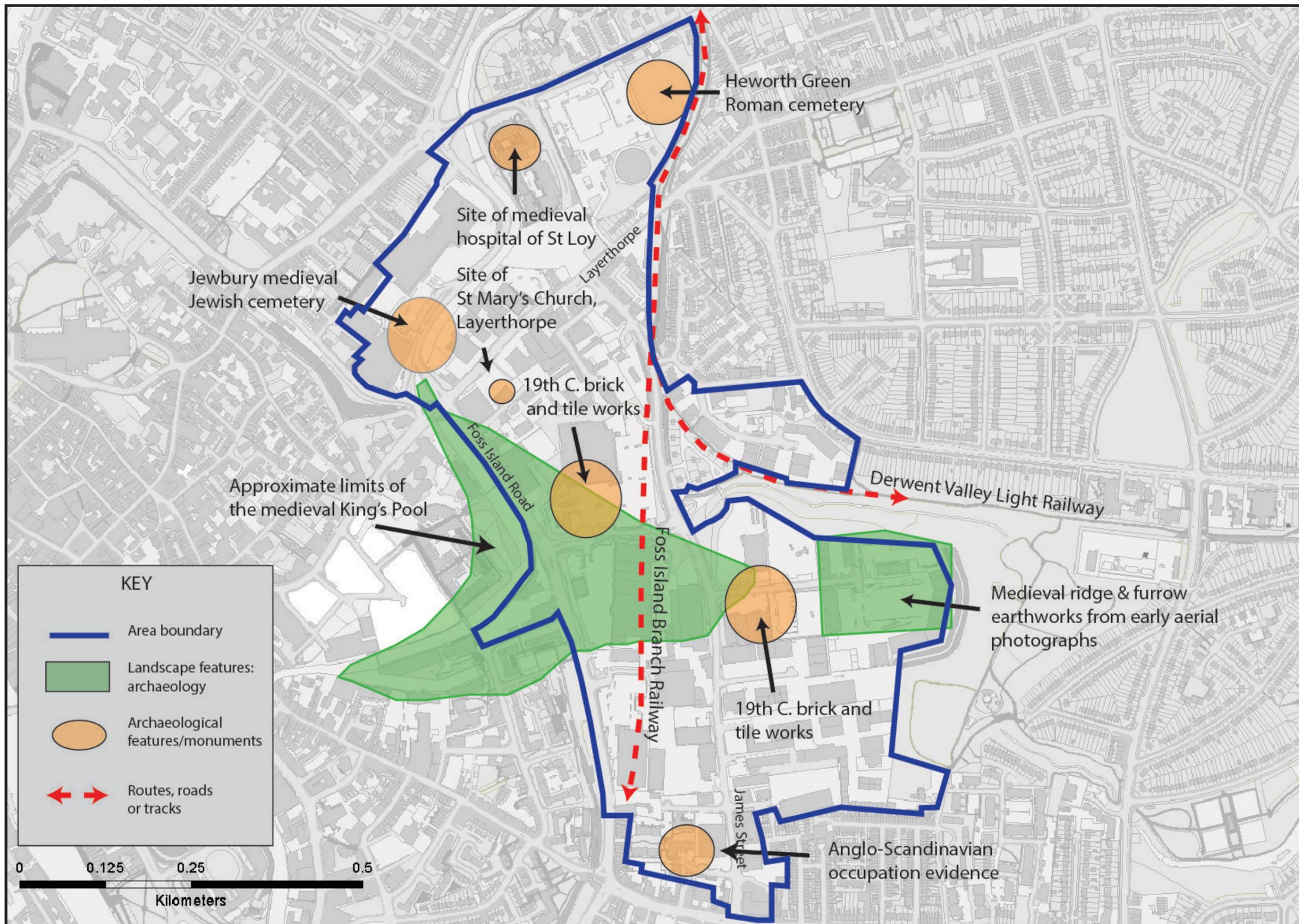
Topography



Designated heritage assets



Archaeology and non-designated heritage assets



Extant surviving boundaries, roads and tracks as depicted on the 1852 First Edition Ordnance Survey plan

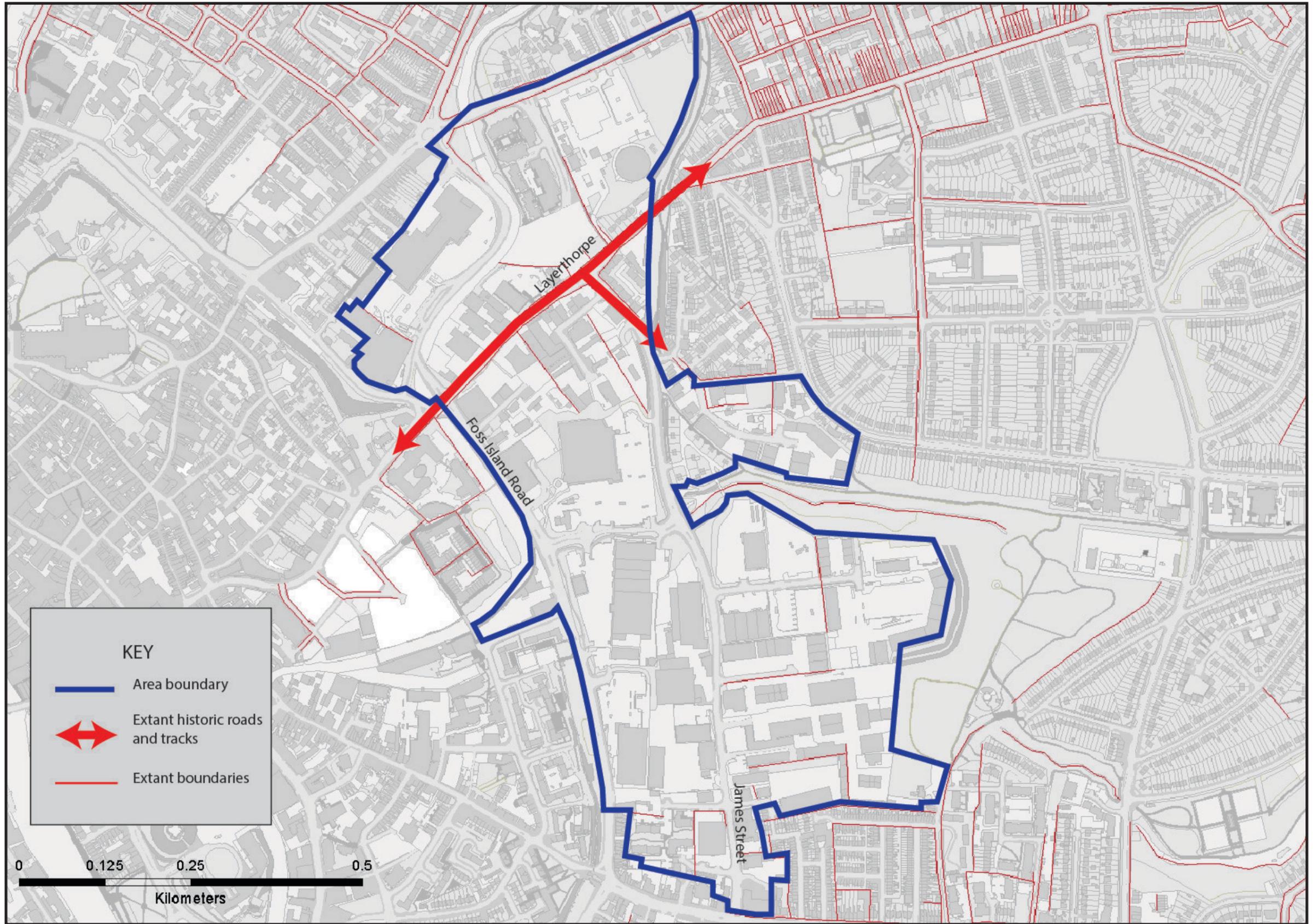


Figure ground map showing the relationship between open space (black) and the built environment



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