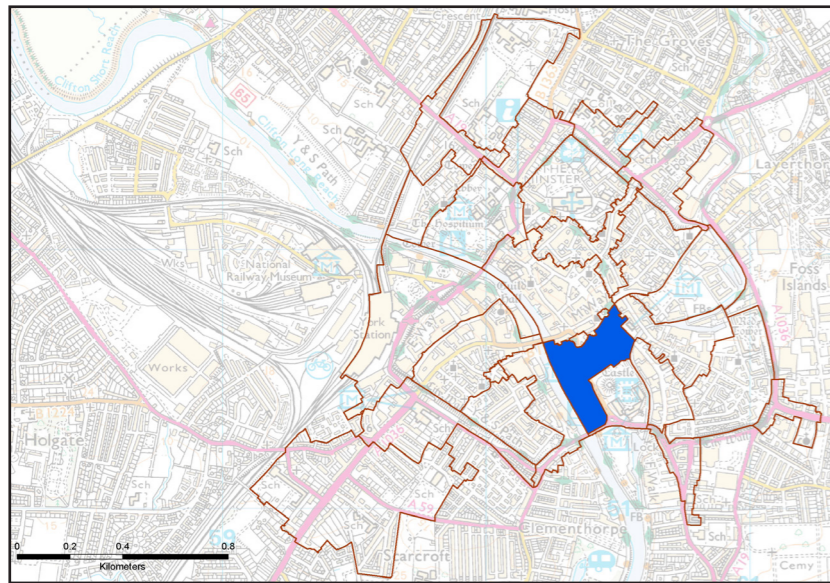


Character area 12: King's Staith



Description

Four main phases of development have shaped the character of this area. The Anglo-Scandinavian settlement of Jorvik established the street pattern and was built upon in the medieval period when the area was home to an important friary and the city's main river landing stage, King's Staith. Five hundred years later, Victorian civic improvement swept away slums in the Water Lanes and created Clifford Street, followed by the Edwardian Piccadilly. In the mid- 1980s, the Coppergate Centre was created on a former industrial and cinema site next to the Foss.

As a result of these phases and changing uses, this area is hugely varied in its architecture. Most streets are off the main tourist trail and it's location on the fringes of the retail core make it a relatively quiet area, aside from the Coppergate Centre. The main pedestrian route from the Castle car park passes through the Centre towards the Central Shopping Area (character area 11). The area's main strength is undoubtedly the long stretch of riverside which is very popular in the summer.

Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal

Archaeological background

Roman

The Rivers Ouse and Foss were wider than today and as evidenced in Character Area 11, the ground between the legionary fortress and the rivers was occupied and there is evidence of relatively high status residential with the discovery in 1871 of a tessellated pavement located beneath a buttress of St. Mary's Church (EY2065). A limestone and cobble wall was recorded at 12 King Street/2 Cumberland Street within waterlogged Roman deposits at c.2.0m below ground level (EYO3325 & EYO3386) Occupation evidence in the form of ditches and timber and stone buildings were located in the 1970s and early 1980s at Coppergate and the Piccadilly/ Castlegate area, as well as an inhumation cemetery (EYO2092-2013, 2116-2136, 3923-25). The Coppergate area also revealed evidence of a substantial glass making industry in the area. Evidence for a building was uncovered close to the Ouse off Cumberland Street.

The road, identified through investigations on Spurriergate and High Ousegate is presumed to continue through the area beneath the present Castlegate.

Anglian- Anglo-Scandinavian

Settlement activity is absent as far as is known, until the Anglo-Scandinavian period during which time the land between the former legionary fortress and the Ouse and Foss rivers was intensively occupied. The famous Coppergate Helmet, found in a well during excavations in advance of the Coppergate shopping centre, is Anglian in date but was already old when deliberately deposited. These excavations provided a highly detailed examination of an intensively occupied part of Anglo-Scandinavian Jorvik. Settlement comprised narrow timber buildings fronting gable first onto Coppergate with narrow back yards stretching back towards the Foss. Timber buildings including wattle walls were extremely well preserved along with many other organic artifacts including leather, antler, bone and human refuse.

The investigations have provided a significant insight into the life of Anglo-Scandinavian York, which was clearly an intensive manufacturing and trading centre of international importance.

Accumulations of organic material were uncovered at 5 Castlegate in 1984 (EYO3470-71). A 1.0m thick layer of organic Anglo-Scandinavian deposits was noted at 12 King Street/2 Cumberland Street (EYO3385), a 1.16m thick deposit at 5-13 Clifford Street including evidence of antler working (EYO3219) and a pit containing 1.0m of organic material at 17 Clifford Street (EY3376). St. Mary's Church in Castlegate was almost certainly founded at this time. Carved stones, including a foundation stone date to this period. As noted in Character Area 11, many of the extra-mural Roman roads seem to have been re-used and Castlegate (Nessgate in Old Norse) reflects a probable earlier Roman road alignment.

Medieval

Archaeological evidence dating to the medieval period is abundant. The outer bailey of the Norman motte and bailey castle founded in 1068, originally enclosed land within the area but was built over by the early 13th century at least. Castlegate (Castelgate) is referred to from the 13th century onwards, prior to that it was part of Nessgate. The Coppergate excavations examined in detail, medieval tenements (successors of the Anglo-Scandinavian tenements) fronting on Coppergate. Medieval archaeology, up to 5.0m below ground level and waterlogged, was recorded during excavations beneath the old ABC cinema on Piccadilly in 1987 (EYO3163-3175). Many medieval and later deposits within the Coppergate area were disturbed by 19th and 20th century cellars.

A Franciscan Friary (MYO2204) was located between Castlegate and the River Ouse, founded c.1230 and including land formerly part of the Norman castle outer bailey. A section of the precinct wall (MYO2206) survives in the basement of the Friend's Meeting House. The Victoria County History for York (quoted in the HER), suggests that the city wall, including Davy Tower, at Tower Place (MYO1714) formed the southern side of the precinct wall. However, the precinct probably ran a little more to the north. Recent excavations on Tower Place (EYO4630) did not reveal remains of the original Franciscan Friary although masonry relating to later extensions was noted. King's Staith was constructed in 1366 and used for landing products such as corn, wheat, flour, salt, lime and coal. It remained the city's main wharf until the early 20th century.

Earlier, less formal wharves almost certainly existed. Possible waterfront remains were noted in the form of medieval timbers and a lava quern on Cumberland Street (EYO2057). King's Street was one of several 'water lanes' leading down to the Ouse waterfront. On the HER part of a limestone wall and floor surface are recorded as being found there (EYO3324). Excavations at 23 Clifford Street revealed a medieval burial while at 1-2 Tower Street a waterlogged pit was observed in addition to well preserved timbers on Cumberland Street (EYO2057). Part of the Coppergate area was flooded as part of the Norman castle defences. Other structures and occupation related deposits are known in the surrounding areas (EYO3481 & 3654).

Post-medieval – Early modern

Cumberland House (MYO1337) dates to the early 18th century and is the earliest surviving riverside commercial building, retaining its storage cellars accessible from King's Staith. In the 19th century huge improvements took place in the riverside area. The 'Water Lanes' (King Street, Cumberland Street, Lower Friargate) which led from King's Staith up to Castlegate were cleared of slums to create Clifford Street in 1881. The street was built in conjunction with Skeldergate Bridge. Piccadilly was extended in 1902 to Pavement via a new bridge and a raised roadway looking down onto the Merchant Adventurer's Hall.

The Friary was dissolved in 1538 and by 1852 was largely formal gardens to several private houses, including Castlegate House. To the north of the precinct wall, land was developed for residential and other uses, including a brewery, Dodsworth School and a friend's meeting house. The formal gardens to the east of St Mary's Church were attached to Thompson's Hospital on Castlegate.

Visible character

Four main phases of development: the Anglo-Scandinavian settlement; medieval river side activity; Victorian slum clearance and improvement; and, the late 20th century Coppergate Centre

Key views of Minster, River Ouse, and Clifford's Tower and the Eye of York

High number of listed buildings

Riverside setting

Largely quiet pedestrian area

Includes large 19th century civic buildings

Sub surface character

Ove Arup Development & Archaeology Study Research Zones: 3 and 9

Deposit Depth (where known): Ove Arup Archaeology and Development Study suggest archaeological deposits of a high quality and waterlogged in some cases exist in this area at depths of c.5.0m+. Made up ground is between 2.0m and 8.5m thick in the King Street area.

Excavations at 22 Piccadilly revealed Roman/medieval waterlogged deposits at 5.0m below ground level.

Roman deposits vary from 0.2m to 0.6m thick at the Coppergate excavations, 0.95m between 12 King Street and 2 Cumberland Street, 0.44m on Clifford Street and up to 1.28m thick at 22 Piccadilly.

Anglo-Scandinavian deposits are 1.0m thick between 12 King Street and 2 Cumberland Street, 1.0m and 1.16m thick on Clifford Street, 3.0m thick at the Coppergate excavations on Castlegate and 2.15m thick closer to Piccadilly.

Medieval deposits were noted as being 0.8m to 9.0m thick on Clifford Street, 1.05m on King's Street, 0.3m between 12 King Street and 2 Cumberland Street while c.3.2m of waterlogged silt deposits were recorded at 22 Piccadilly.

Post-medieval build-up deposits were recorded as 0.25m thick at 23 Clifford Street and 1.5m thick between 12 King Street and 2 Cumberland Street. Deposits from this period did not survive well in the Piccadilly or Coppergate area.

Period Survival: Roman deposits including burials and structures have been found within the area. Evidence for Anglian activity is sparse but the highest concentration of later Anglo-Scandinavian deposits in the city, exist in the Coppergate/Castlegate area. Medieval deposits are relatively common as in other parts of the city although later medieval and post-medieval archaeology has often been disturbed by later 19th century development.

Interventions (recorded on HER April 2013): There are approximately 45 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 included in the HER.

Significance

Overview: This area falls within the Ouse Waterfront (East Bank) and the Confluence Zone as identified by Ove Arup. Between Coppergate and the two rivers, deposits of very high quality dating to all periods are known to exist at an average depth of c.5m below ground level. The Ove Arup Archaeology and Development Study suggests natural ground levels at anywhere between 2.0m and 8.5m in the King's Street area. Waterlogged and dry Roman deposits are known throughout the area. On the higher ground, occupation evidence was recovered during the Coppergate excavations. This area is York's most significant in terms of Anglian (potential) and Anglo-Scandinavian archaeology. Extensive remains of the settlement of Jorvik were excavated during the re-development of the Coppergate area. This provided the basis for one of York's biggest tourist attractions – The Jorvik Viking Centre. Towards the waterfront, thick organic deposits of this period have been recorded. Archaeological evidence from the medieval period is abundant, especially relating to commercial waterfront and residential activities. The King's Staith was York's principal landing area on the River Ouse until the early 20th century.

Designations: The site falls within the Central Area of Archaeological Importance and the Historic Core Conservation Area.

The King's Staith area contains few architecturally or historically significant buildings of the highest rankings but a large number of Grade II listed buildings. There are 6 Grade I (Fairfax House, Castlegate House, mansions on Castlegate, St. Mary's Church and a small stretch of town wall), 5 Grade II* and 63 Grade II listed buildings.

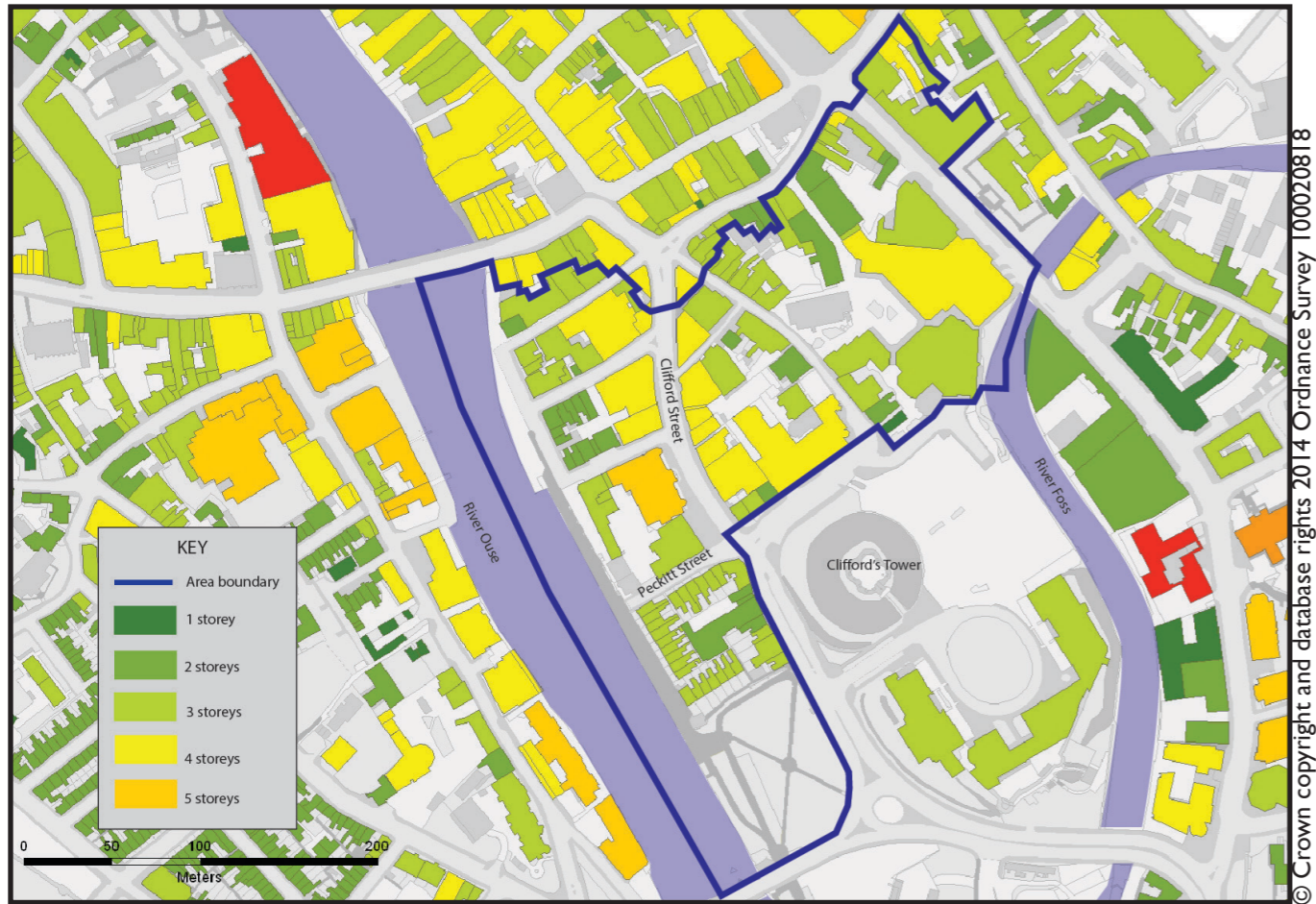
Streetscape components: Paving is a mixture of riven English Pennine Sandstone and pre-cast concrete flags (Marshall's Saxon paving). Natural stone can be found on Tower Place, Peckitt Street, Lower Friargate and Castlegate. Pre-cast concrete is dominant on Piccadilly, King Street, Friargate and Clifford Street but also occurs on Cumberland Street and St George's Field. Cumberland Street and Friargate are surfaced with granite setts. Otherwise, carriageways are commonly surfaced in asphalt.

Throughout the area, modern street lighting units, Edinburgh style waste bins, black bollards, green cast iron wayfinding posts and late 20th century bus stops and traffic signage are in use. Black, ornate, cast iron sign hangers on the side of buildings are visible on Coppergate. Coppergate shopping centre also contains black bollards preventing vehicle access to the shop frontage area.



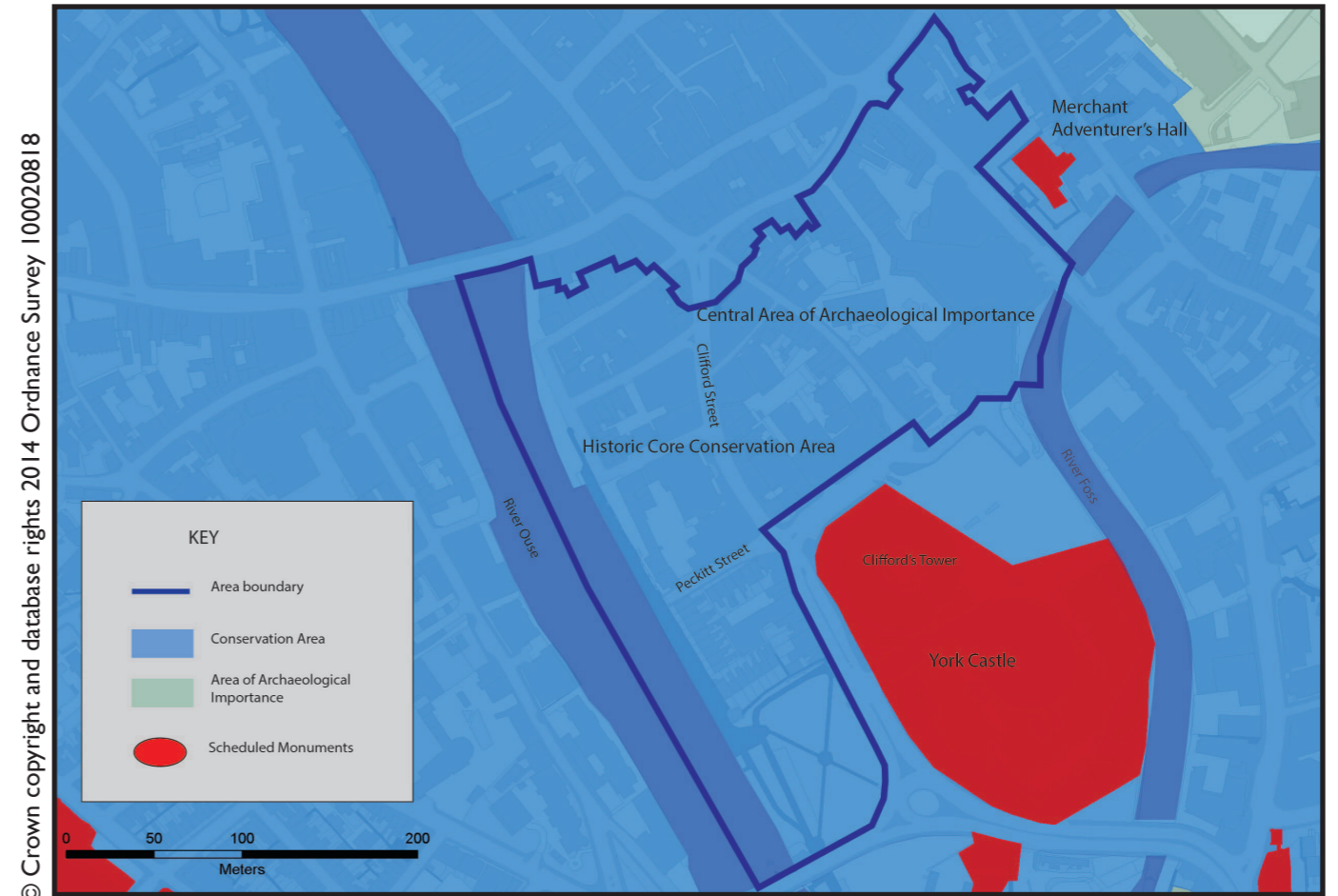
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Figure ground map with built environment shown as white on black.



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

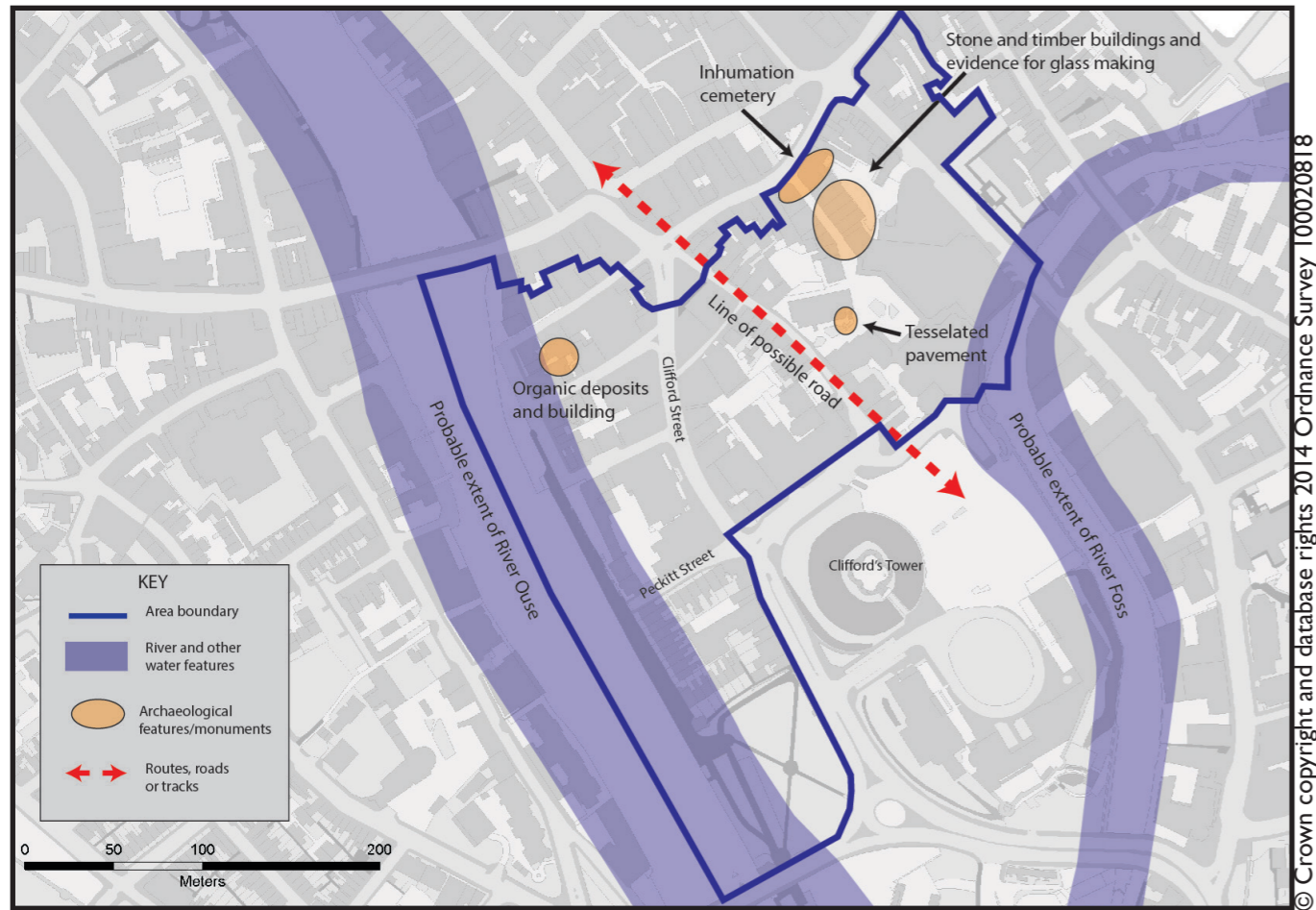
Below: Plan showing the construction dates of the buildings within the area.



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

Below: Plan showing the Broad Type characterisation of the area.

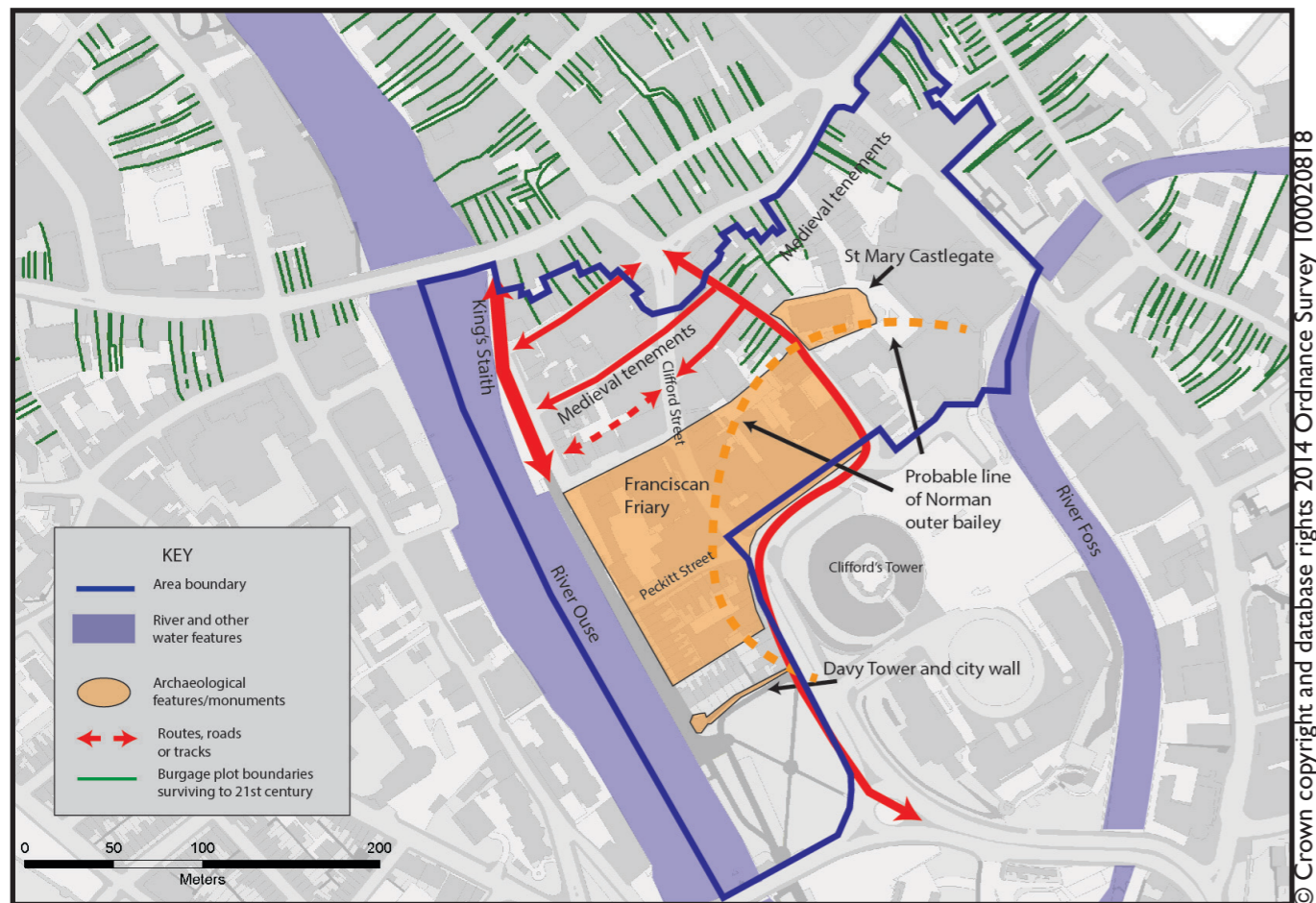




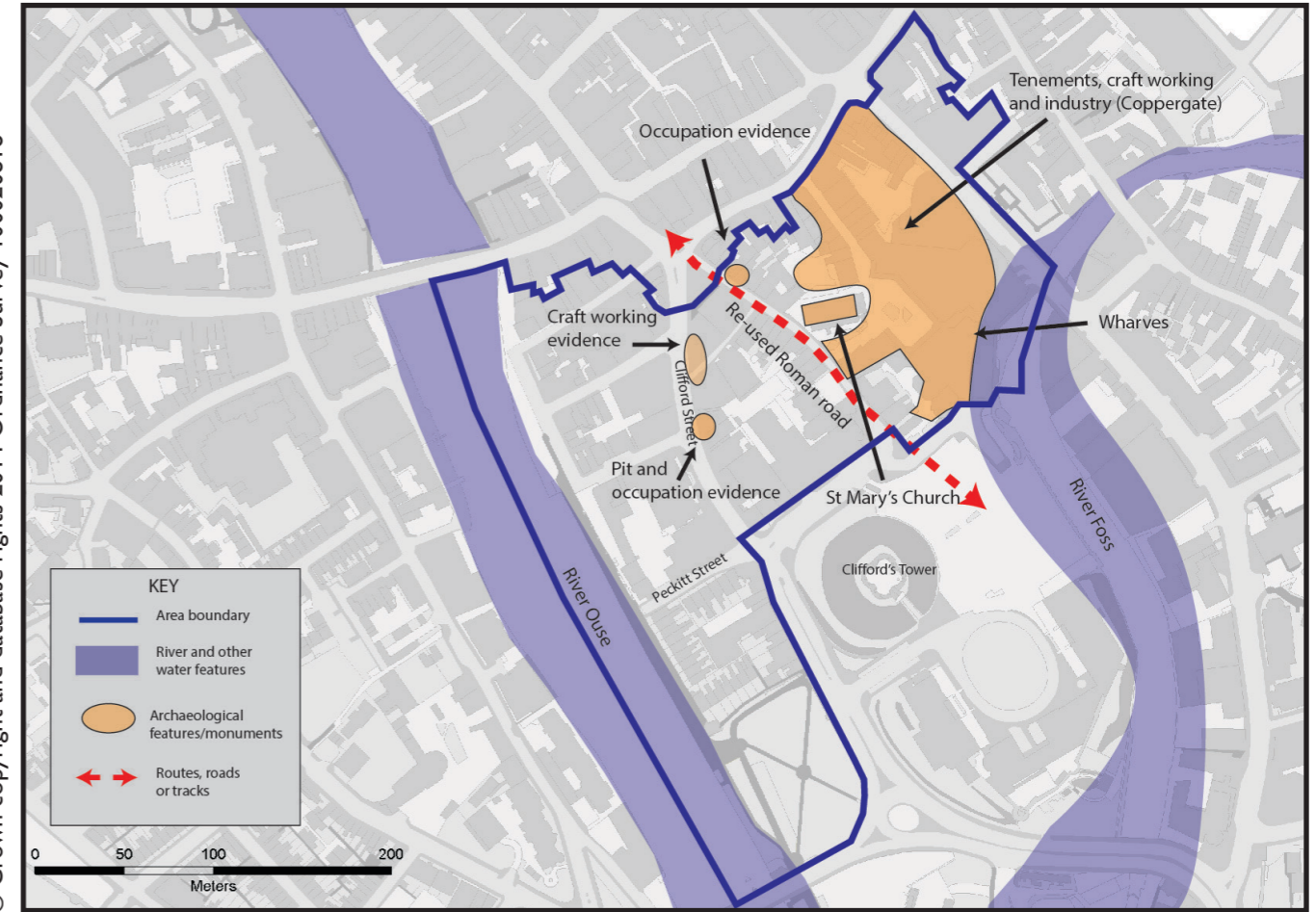
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Above: The Roman landscape.

Below: The medieval landscape.



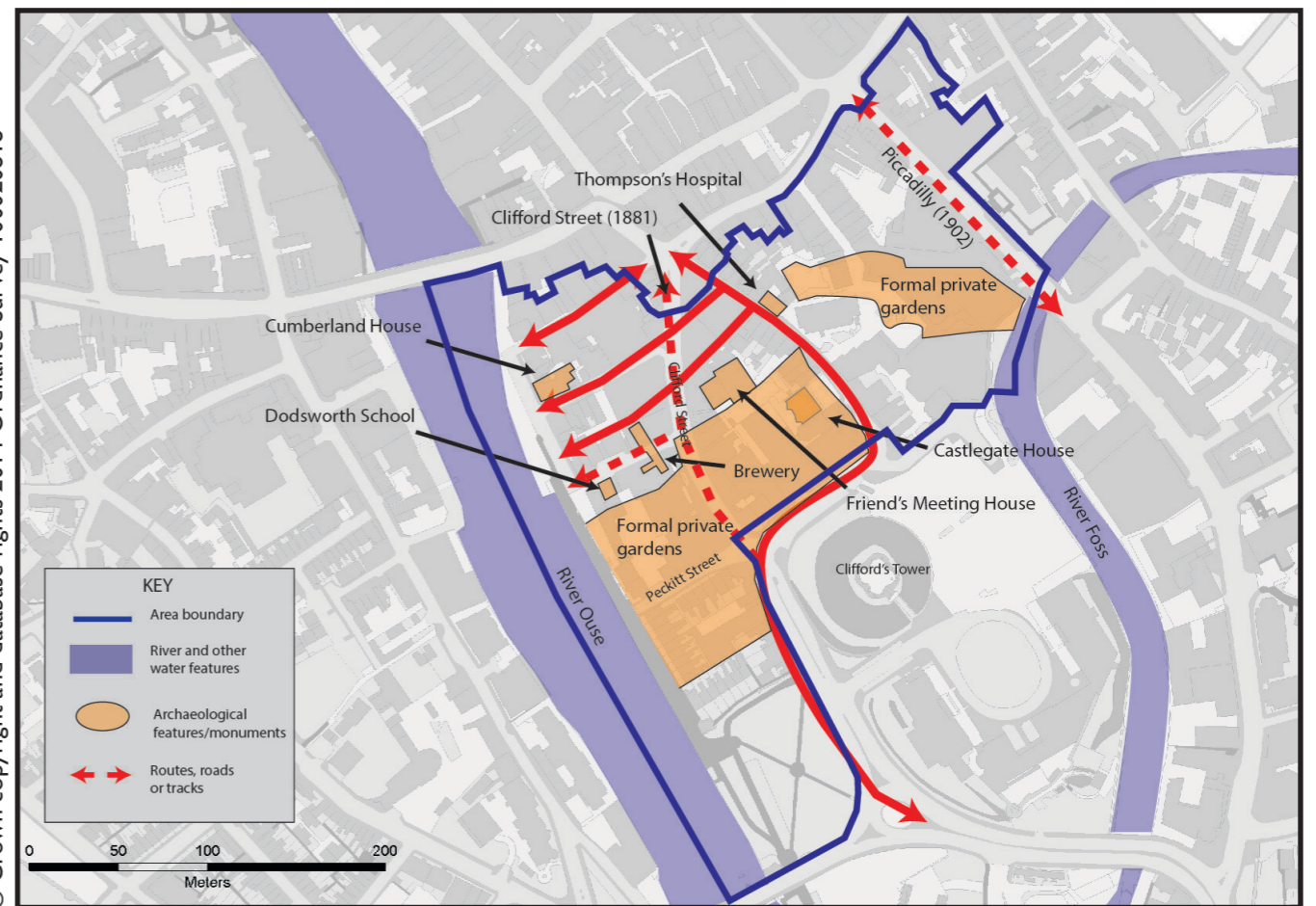
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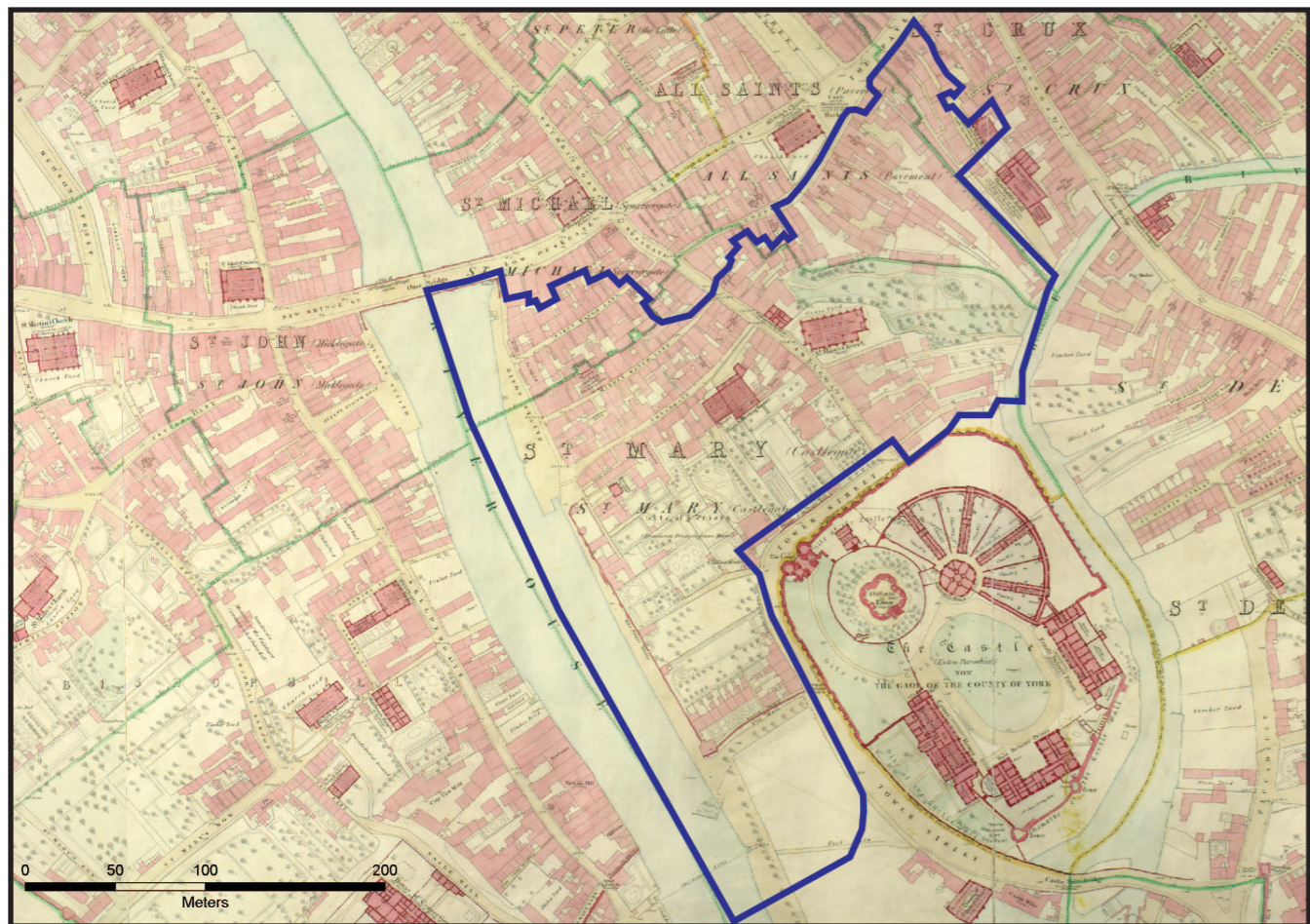
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Above: The Anglo-Scandinavian landscape.

Below: The post-medieval landscape.



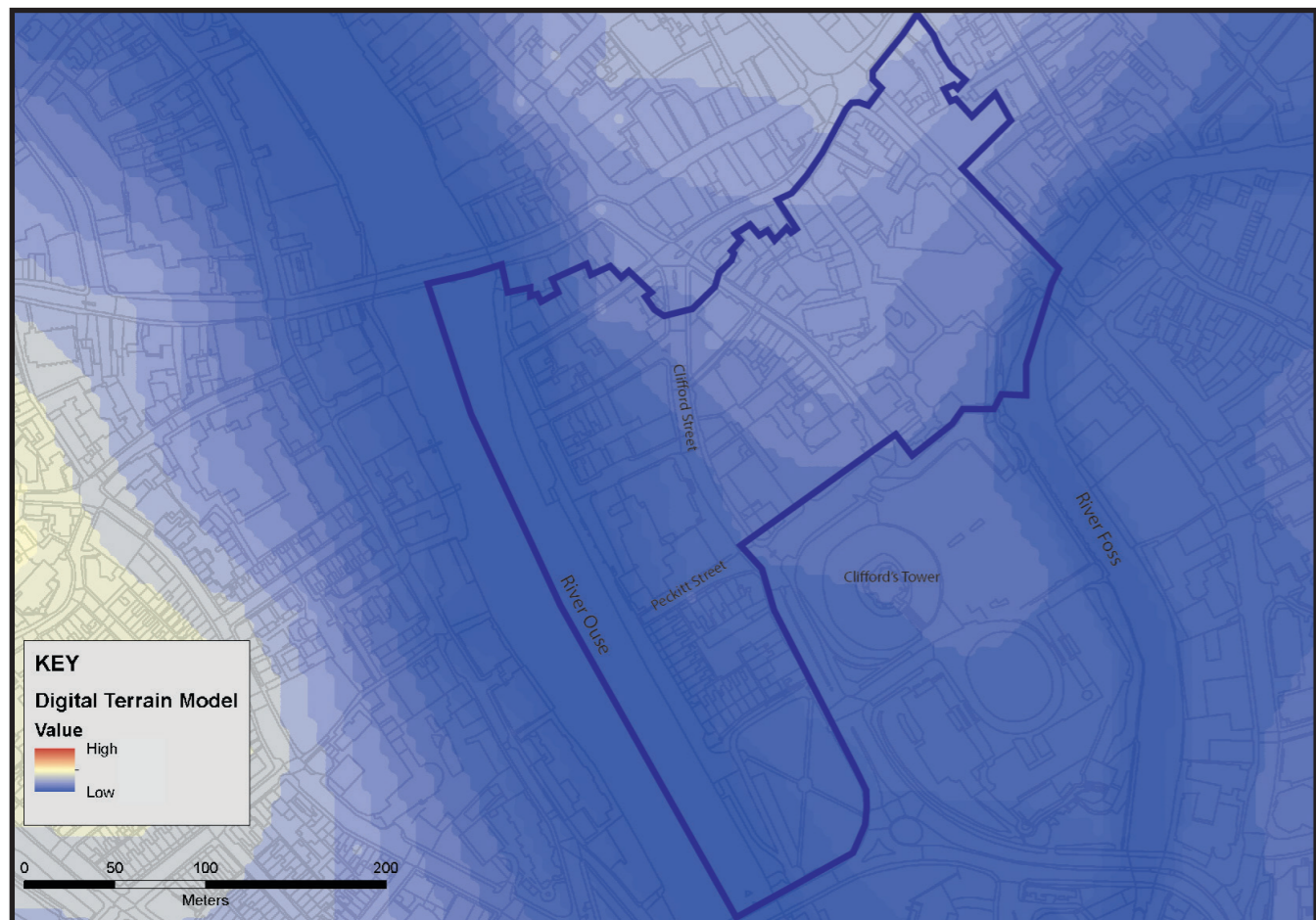
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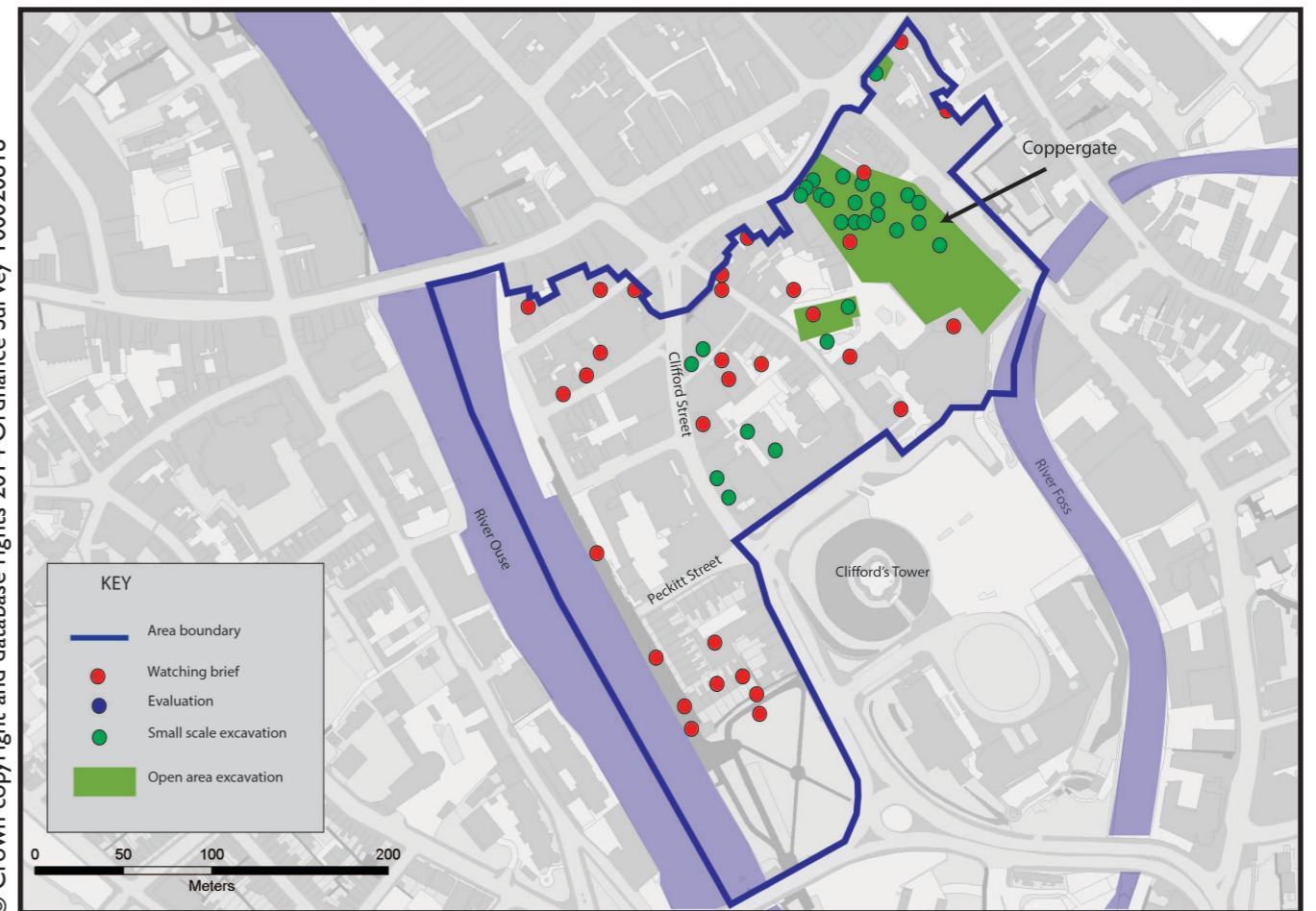
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Above: The 1852 landscape.

Below: The general topography showing the relatively low lying nature of the site with higher ground in the Coppergate area.



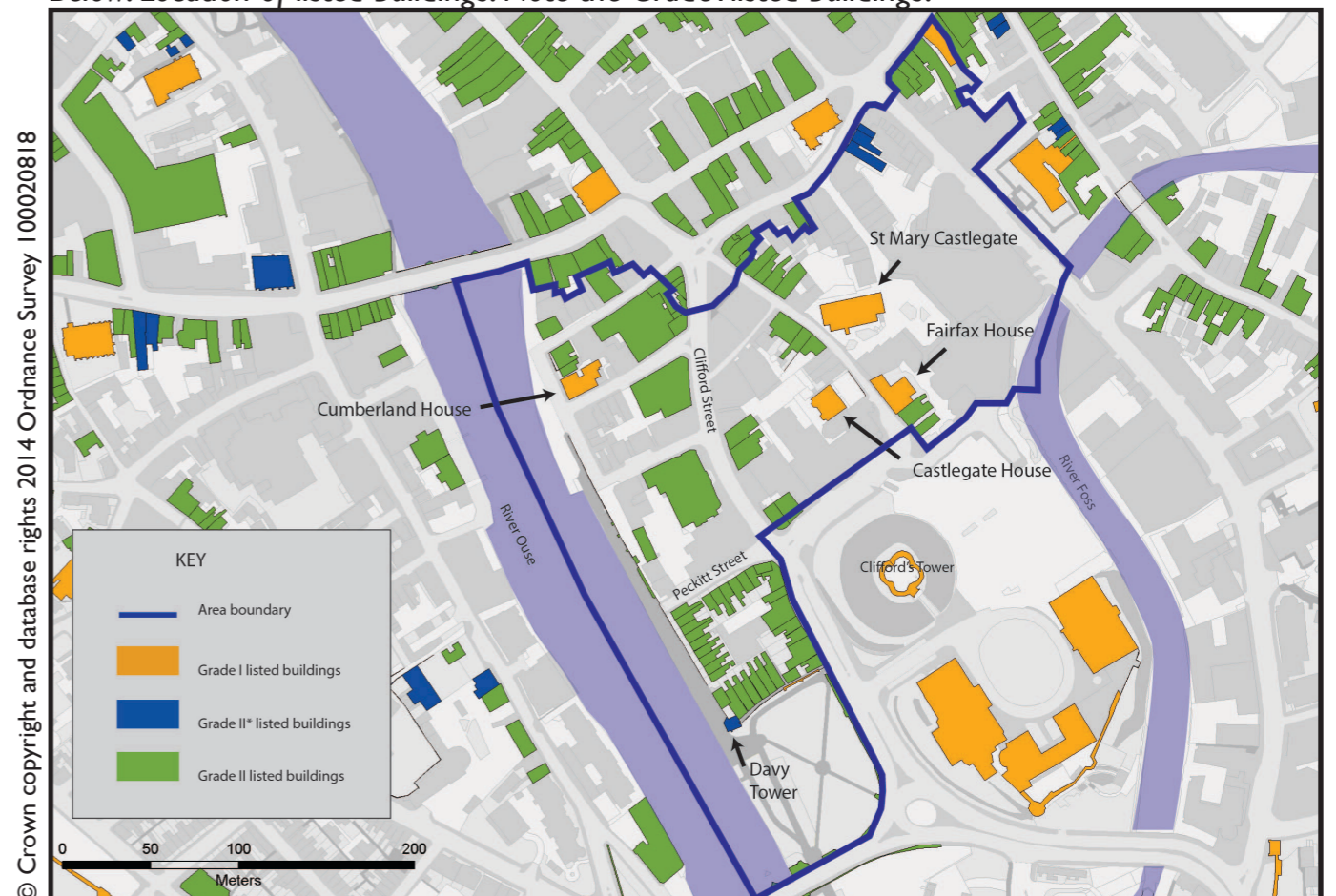
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Above: The location of archaeological interventions recorded on the City of York Historic Environment Record.

Below: Location of listed buildings. Note the Grade I listed buildings.



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Main Sources

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

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