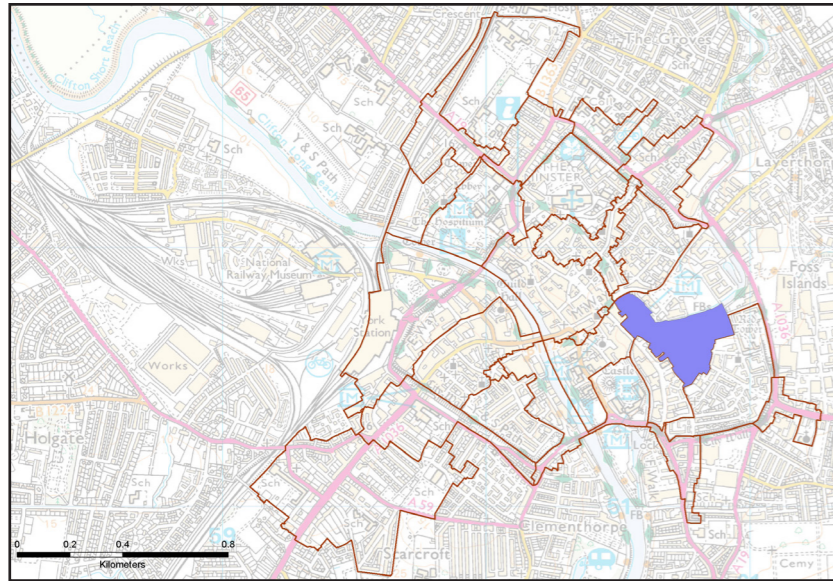


Character area 16: Outer Walmgate



Description

Although Walmgate has been within the city walls since the 14th century, today it appears as an entirely modern suburb. The post-war municipal residential blocks which replaced 19th century slums, can be found nowhere else in the city in such volume. Their varied arrangement contrasts with the traditional narrow and enclosed streets found throughout the rest of the city. This is also an especially green place with large amounts of Council controlled landscape.

Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal

Archaeological background

Roman

The area has produced some evidence for Roman activity. In the vicinity, an excavation on George Street/Dixon Lane revealed Roman inhumation burials. In 1997, an excavation at George Street/Margaret Street (EYO106) revealed a curvilinear gully which was rapidly backfilled, including fragments of hypocaust and tegula. This may indicate the presence of a substantial Roman building nearby. At Lead Mill Lane a 1970s excavation produced Roman pits, cobbled surfaces and a well (EYO1988).

There are three possible Roman roads traversing the area including Walmgate. The concentration of settlement evidence around the George Street area might suggest this route formed a principal route to the east but Walmgate is a strong contender, particularly in the light of later Anglo-Scandinavian settlement favouring this route.

Anglian – Anglo-Scandinavian

The main evidence of settlement comes from excavations at 118-126 Walmgate (EYO4926) and 104 Walmgate (EYO3300). Here, there was evidence of an Anglian date surface and Anglo-Scandinavian dumps, pits and surfaces up to 1m in thickness. These excavations also produced evidence of textile working in the form of bone tools, stone, fired clay and bone spindle whorls. Along the line of the city wall (EYO3146) stakeholes of Anglo-Scandinavian have been recorded suggesting an early date for the Walmgate defences.

The earliest reference to Walmgate is late 11th century when it is recorded as Walbegata, an Old Norse name. George Street was known as Nowtgail, also Old Norse.

Medieval

The Walmgate area was extensively developed through the medieval period. This included some guildhalls and a large number of churches hinting at the importance of the street at this time. Unfortunately only two buildings survive: the Bowes Morrell House (no 111) c.1400 and St. Margaret's Church (mostly 15th century in date).

It is generally considered that this low rate of survival is the result of the English Civil War siege of 1644. The Parliamentary army set up batteries on Lamel Hill and in St Lawrence's churchyard. From these locations they bombarded the Walmgate area and forced the Royalist defenders to withdraw inside the walls and set fire to the suburbs to the east to create a barrier. Streets that bound St. Margaret's churchyard, Paver Lane, Percy Lane and Navigation Road, are likely to be of medieval origin.

Walmgate was the last area to be enclosed by the city walls - sometime after 1345. Previously, a Norman or earlier earthwork had surrounded the area on the eastern side with a masonry gateway where the present one is. At either end, the walls terminated at the flooded River Foss. It was not until the late 15th century that the Red Tower was constructed.

Archaeological evidence dating to the medieval period is abundant. On Walmgate, medieval pits, stone built structures, surfaces and dumps were located in the late 1970s (EYO2356-9 & EYO2368). A limestone wall and ramparts (0.6m to 0.8m thick) associated with the city wall have been recorded at Thames House (EYO3928) and Willow House (EYO1983-85). In 1994 a complex set of well preserved waterlogged deposits relating to the interior of a 10th/11th century building were revealed during excavations at St. George's School on Margaret Street (EYO55). All later deposits had been destroyed when the sub-basement for the school was built. In the same area, in 1997 a possible late medieval yard was identified, which contained a stack of broken 15th century bricks (EYO106).

Excavations on George Street/Margaret Street (EYO106) revealed evidence of dumping. This investigation generally suggested a trend from fairly shallow archaeological deposits on the George Street frontage towards deeper, stratified archaeological deposits in the middle of the site, rising again towards Margaret Street.

At St. Margaret's Church, an excavation in 1998 (EYO127) revealed burials, some, a mere 1.0m below ground level. There was also evidence to suggest that the boundaries of this churchyard had moved on a number of occasions.

Post-medieval – Early modern

At the beginning of the 19th century, the area changed dramatically with a huge population increase leading to changes in street plan and the construction of terraced houses particularly in the area between the city walls and Margaret Street.

Walmgate was home to a sizable population of Irish immigrants whose spiritual needs were served by St George's Catholic Church. Many of these houses were overcrowded and by the 1930s were considered slums. They were cleared and replaced by post-war social housing estates followed by further development in the 1960s to the 1980s.

Visible character

Modern suburban character despite being within the city walls since the 14th century

High volume of post-war, low rise housing

Large amounts of Council controlled green landscaping

Visible Medieval monuments (Walmgate Bar and City Walls)

Sub surface character

Ove Arup Development & Archaeology Study Research Zone: 4

Deposit Depth (where known): Ove Arup Archaeology and Development Study suggests archaeological deposits at depths of c.3.0m+.

Evidence from excavations suggests deep, well preserved deposits at least 2.5m below ground level at Rosemary Place and between c.1.5m to 4.0m on Margaret Street. Medieval burials are known to exist around St. Margaret's Church as little as 1.0m below ground level.

Period Survival: Limited evidence of Roman and Anglo-Scandinavian activity including burials has been found within the area. Anglo-Scandinavian deposits between c.0.5m to 1.0m thick are known from the city walls and Walmgate areas.

Medieval deposits are more common ranging in thickness from c.0.6m to 1.2m including waterlogged material. Post-medieval and later archaeology has often been disturbed by 19th and 20th century industrial and residential development.

Interventions (recorded on HER April 2013): There are approximately 20 interventions recorded on the City of York Historic Environment Record (HER). Few of the interventions are recorded in any detail. See Appendix I for brief summary.

Significance

Overview: Outer Walmgate occupies relatively low lying ground which rises away from the River Foss, with the highest land in this area around Long Close Lane. This area falls within the South-East cown area between the River Foss and the town defences as identified by Ove Arup, outside of the legionary Roman fortress Eboracum. The archaeology of the SE town zone is somewhat unknown but deposits are likely to exist at least 3m below ground level.

With the information available on the HER it can be assumed that in some places, substantial stratified deposits survive within this area at varying depths between 1.0m to 4.0m+ below ground level.

Wet and dry archaeological deposits relating to the medieval period are the most common in this area, although limited Roman and Anglo-Scandinavian evidence has been found.

Post-medieval and later archaeology has often been disturbed by 19th and 20th century industrial and residential development. Many archaeological discoveries presumably went unrecorded during street improvements and construction works during the 19th and 20th centuries.

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

The Outer Walmgate area contains few architecturally or historically significant buildings due to its 19th century development and subsequent slum clearance. The medieval walls are Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM 30 & MYO1734) and are Grade I listed. The medieval church of St. Margaret's (MYO675) is also Grade I listed. There is one Grade II* listed building – Bowes Morrell House. A further 4 Grade II listed buildings are contained within this area.

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

Asphalt is used on several streets including Navigation Road, Percy's Lane, Long Close Lane and Hope Street. Pre-cast concrete flags can be found on Margaret Street and partly on Walmgate. Walmgate also contains natural stone flags. Carriageways are generally asphalt. Hope Street is of interest as it includes a wide pavement with a cobble margin between the footway and the carriageway. Front gardens and set back housing add to the feeling of space.

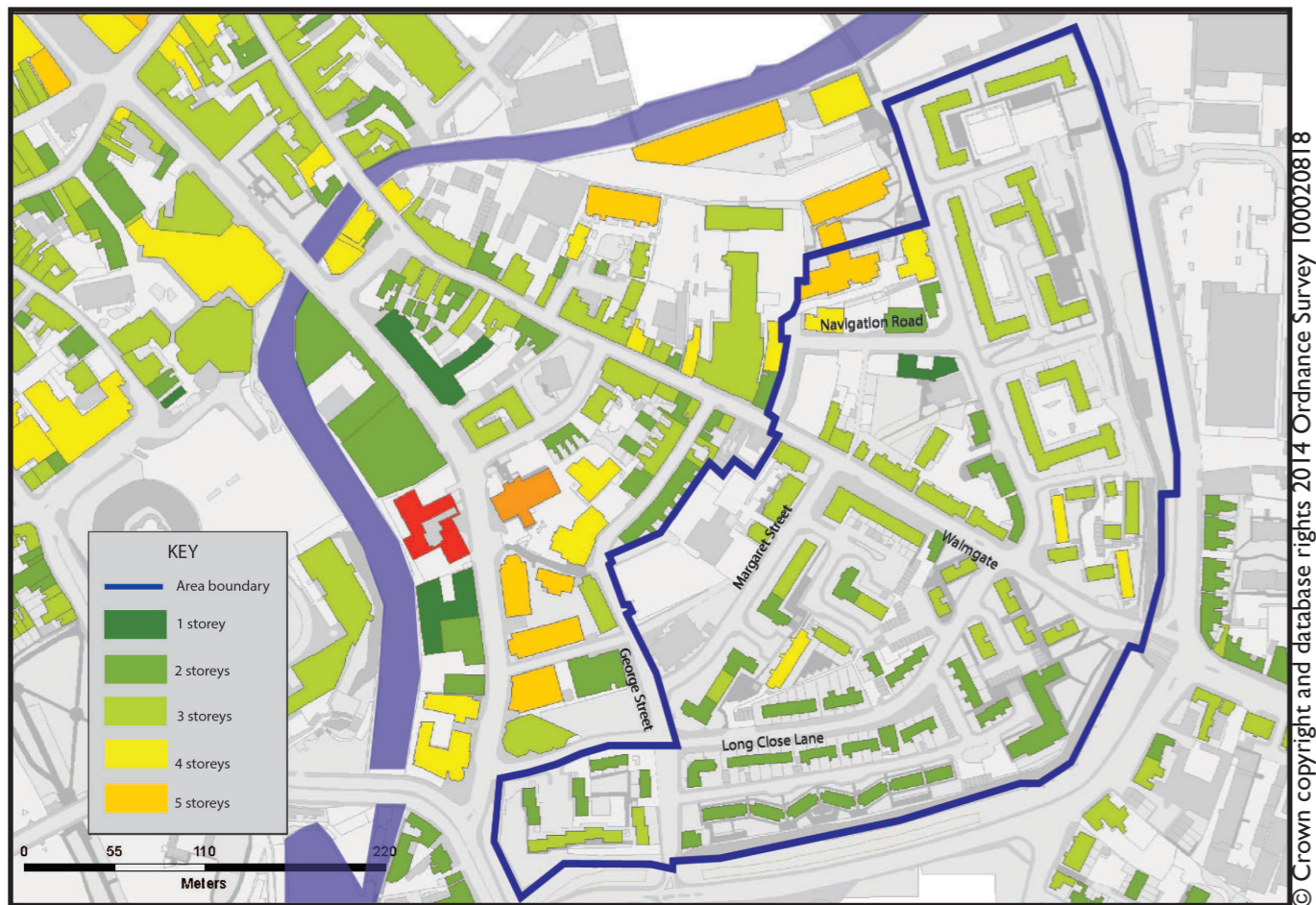
On Walmgate modern street lighting units, Edinburgh style waste bins, late 20th century traffic signage, phone boxes, cycle racks, bus stops and post boxes are in use. On Walmgate, several hard landscaped areas exist in front of post-war buildings, providing places to sit and gather in front of commercial buildings. Several trees have been planted in these areas.

Throughout Outer Walmgate contemporary lighting is in use although some mid-late 20th century examples exist on streets containing post-war architecture. Within the side streets some greenery can be found in the form of garden hedges and grass verges. On some streets such as Hope Street, grass verges have been removed to provide parking areas as has happened elsewhere in the city.

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

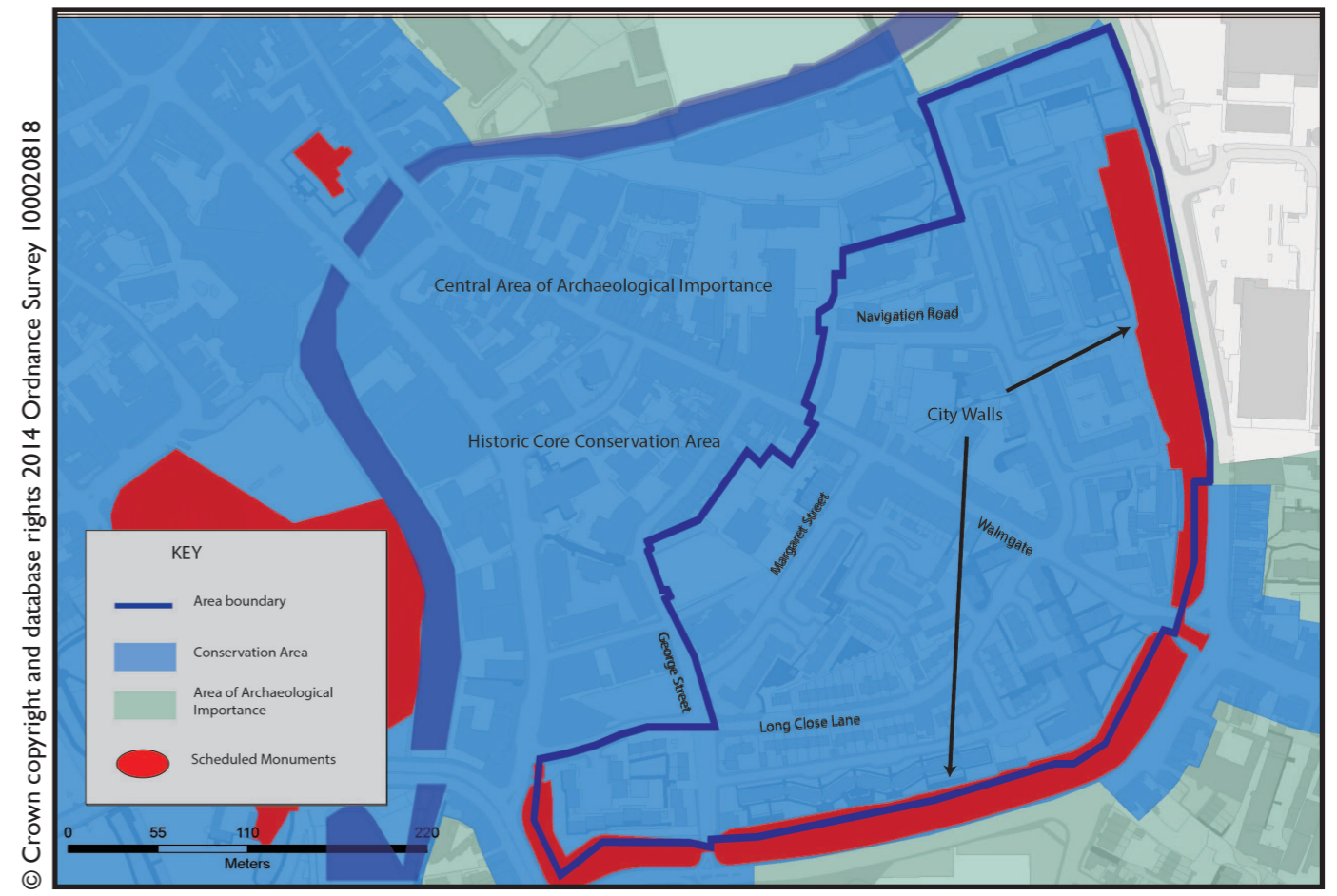


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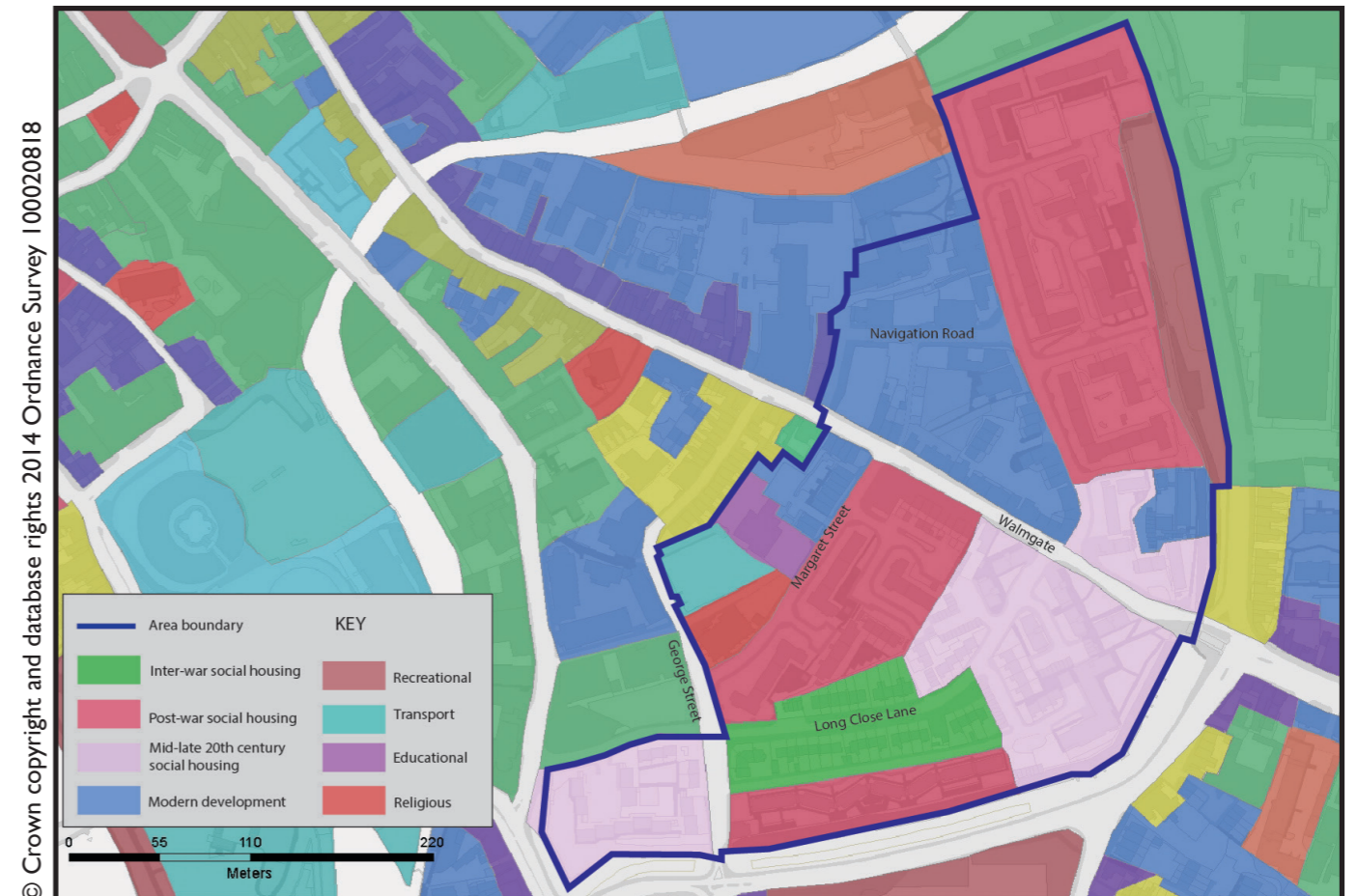
Above: Plan showing the heights of the buildings within this character area.

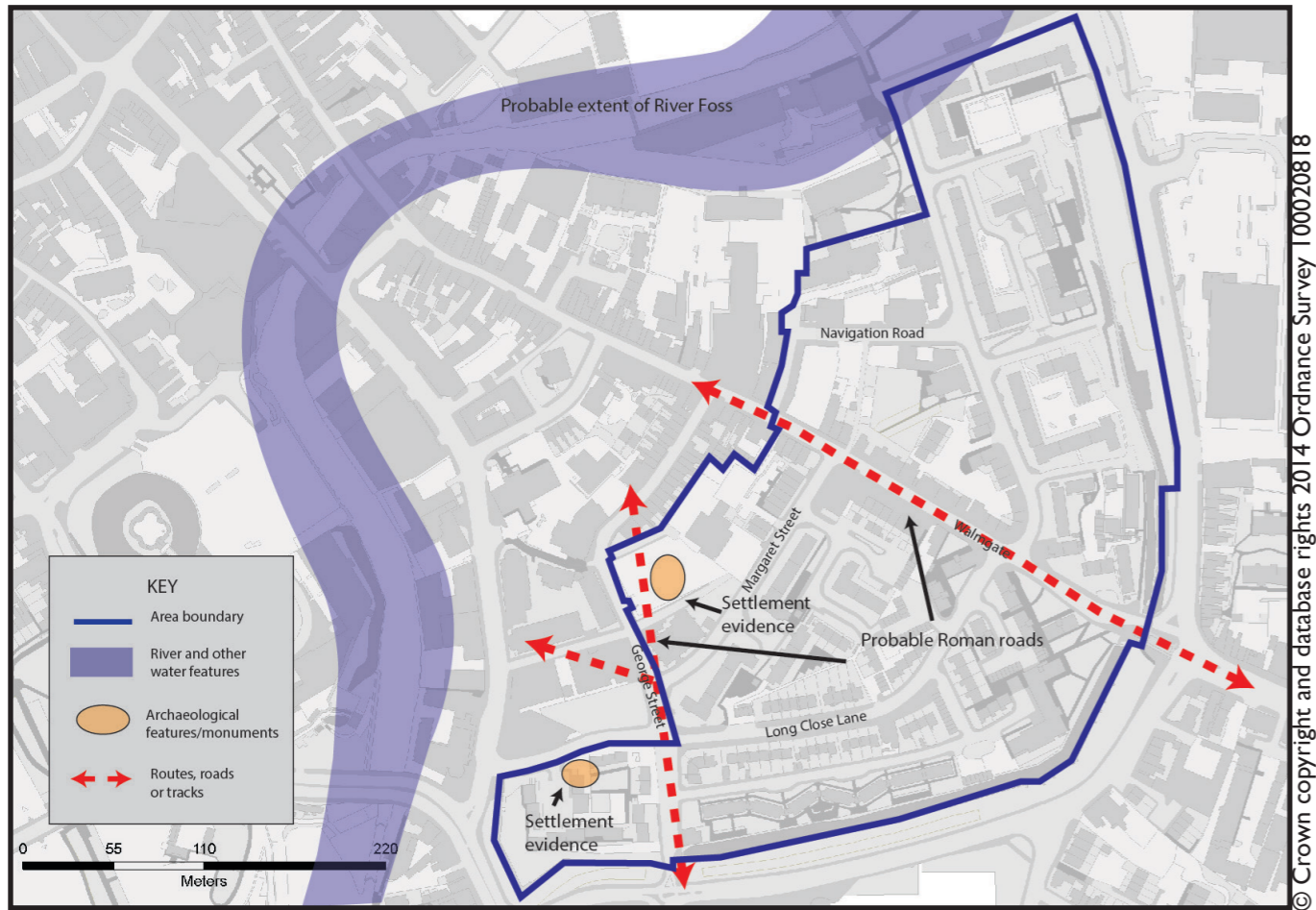
Below: Plan showing the construction dates of the buildings within the area.



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

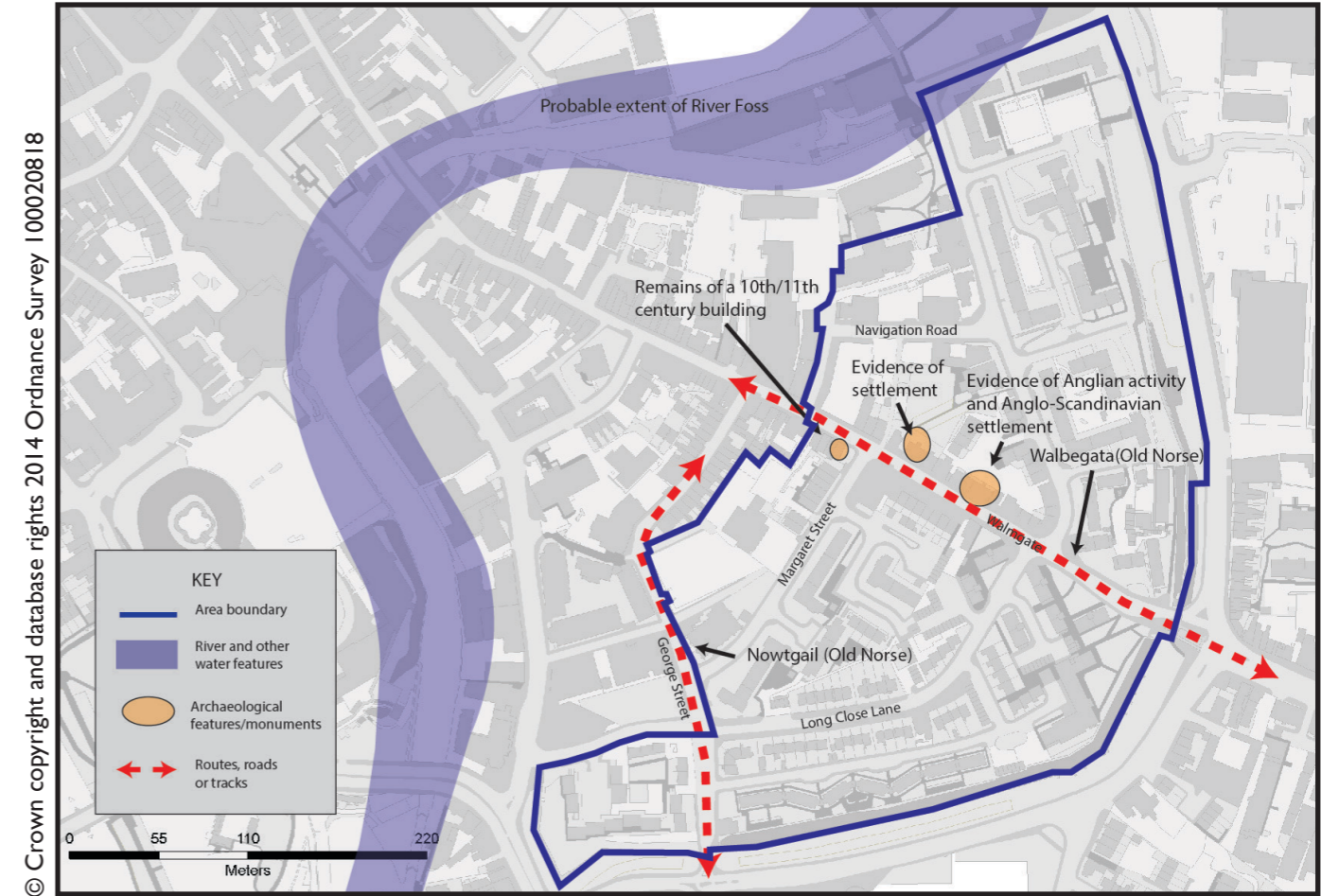
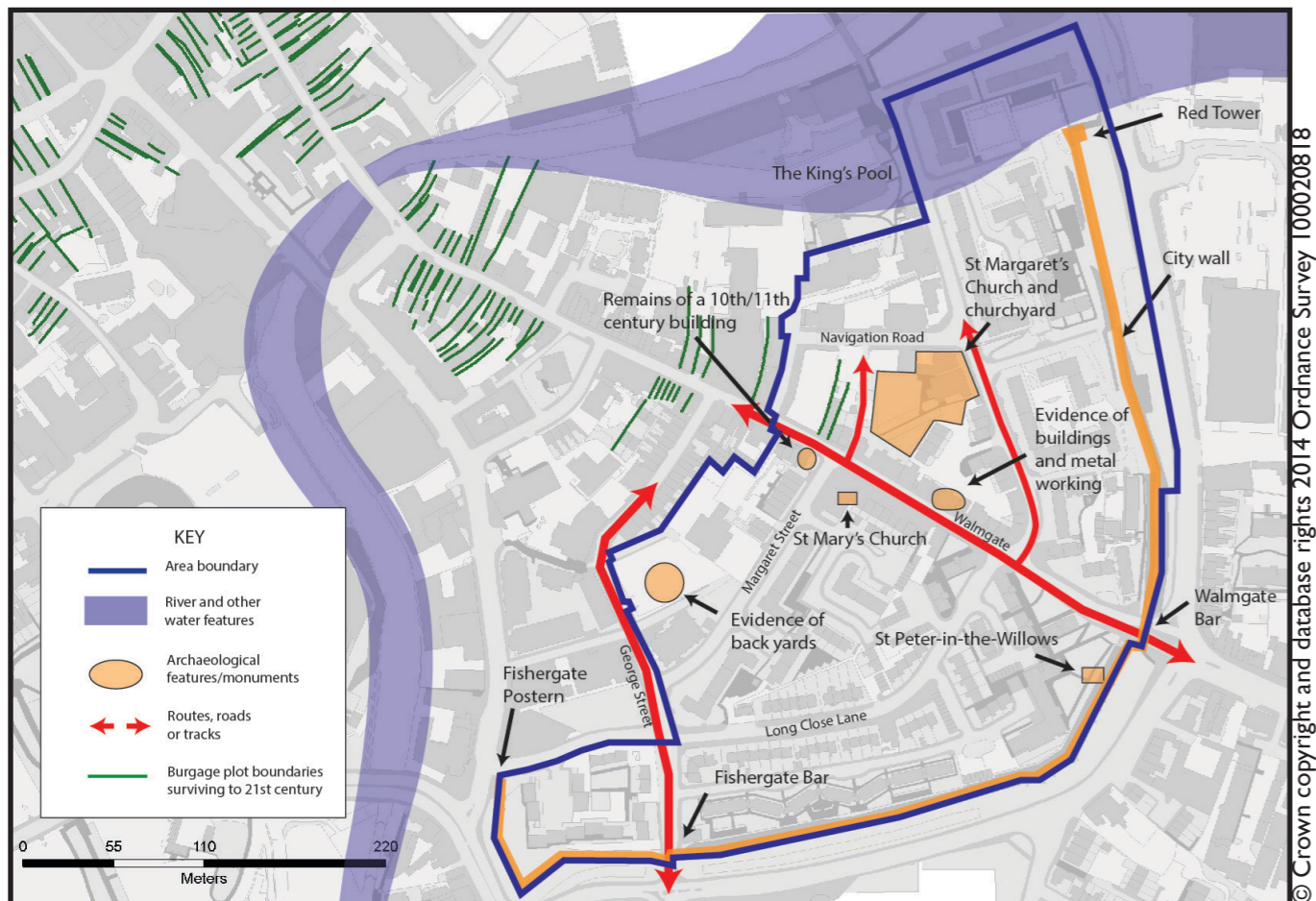
Below: Plan showing the Broad Type characterisation of the area.





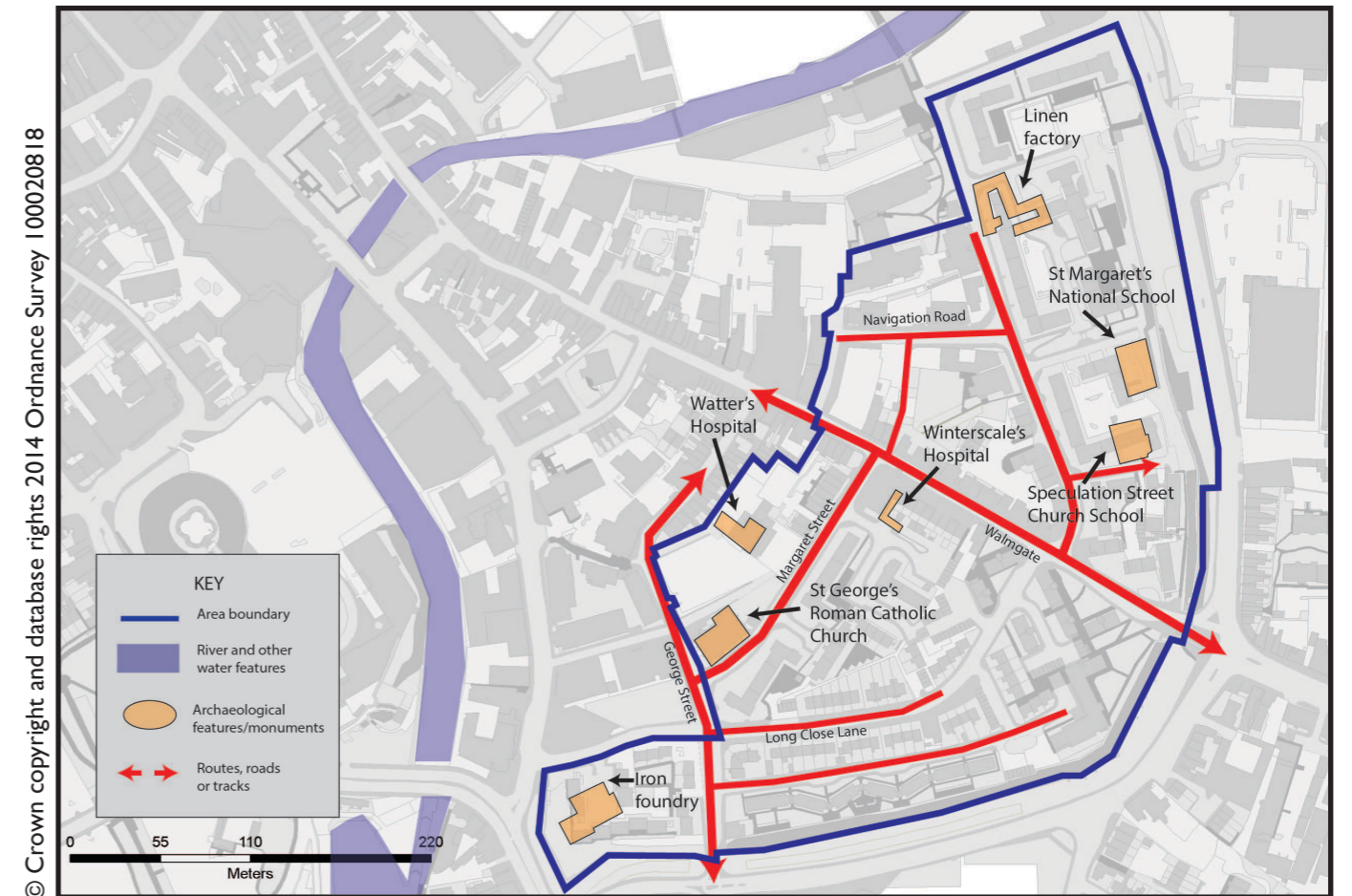
Above: The Roman landscape.

Below: The medieval landscape.



Above: The Anglo-Scandinavian landscape.

Below: The post-medieval landscape.

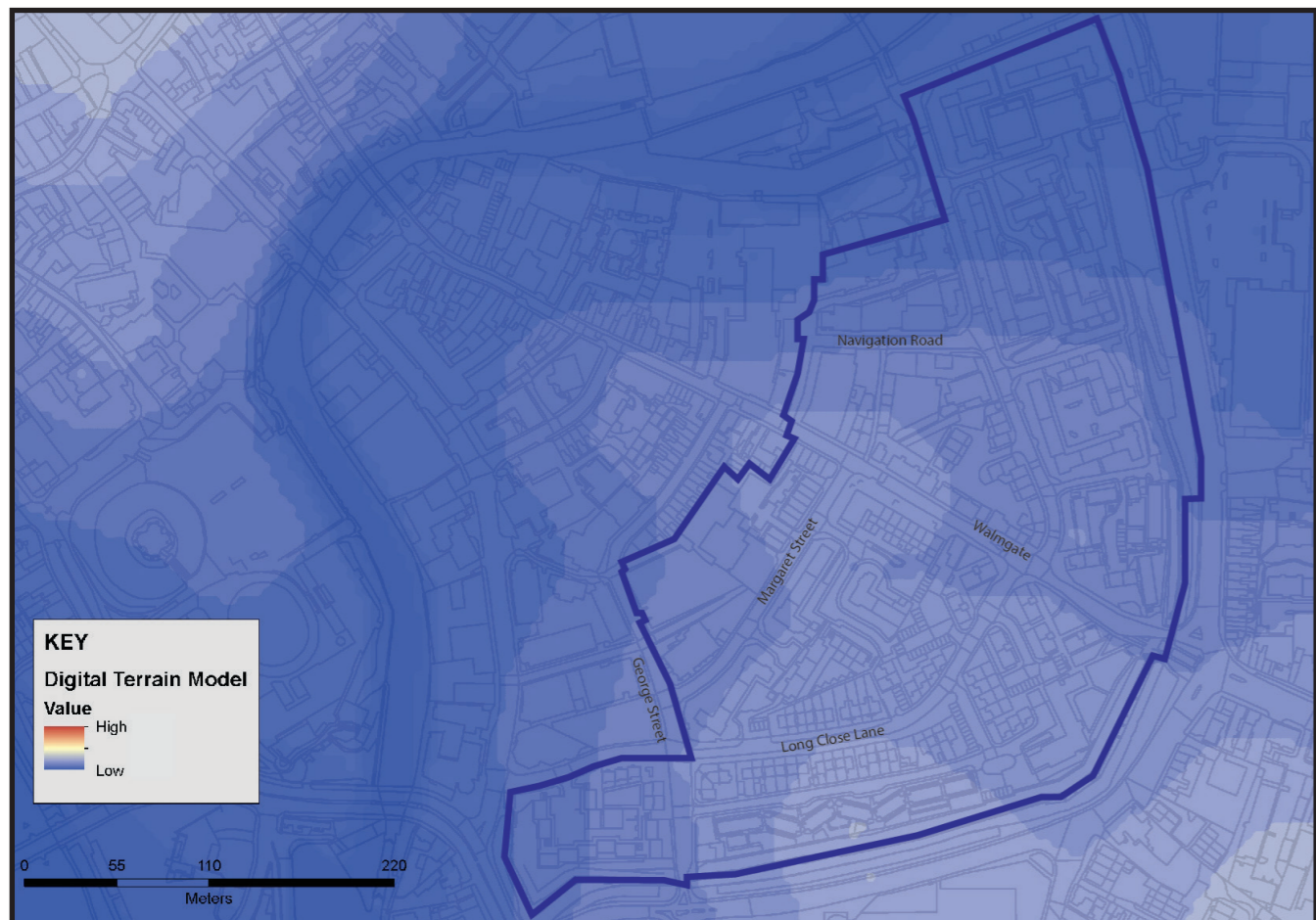




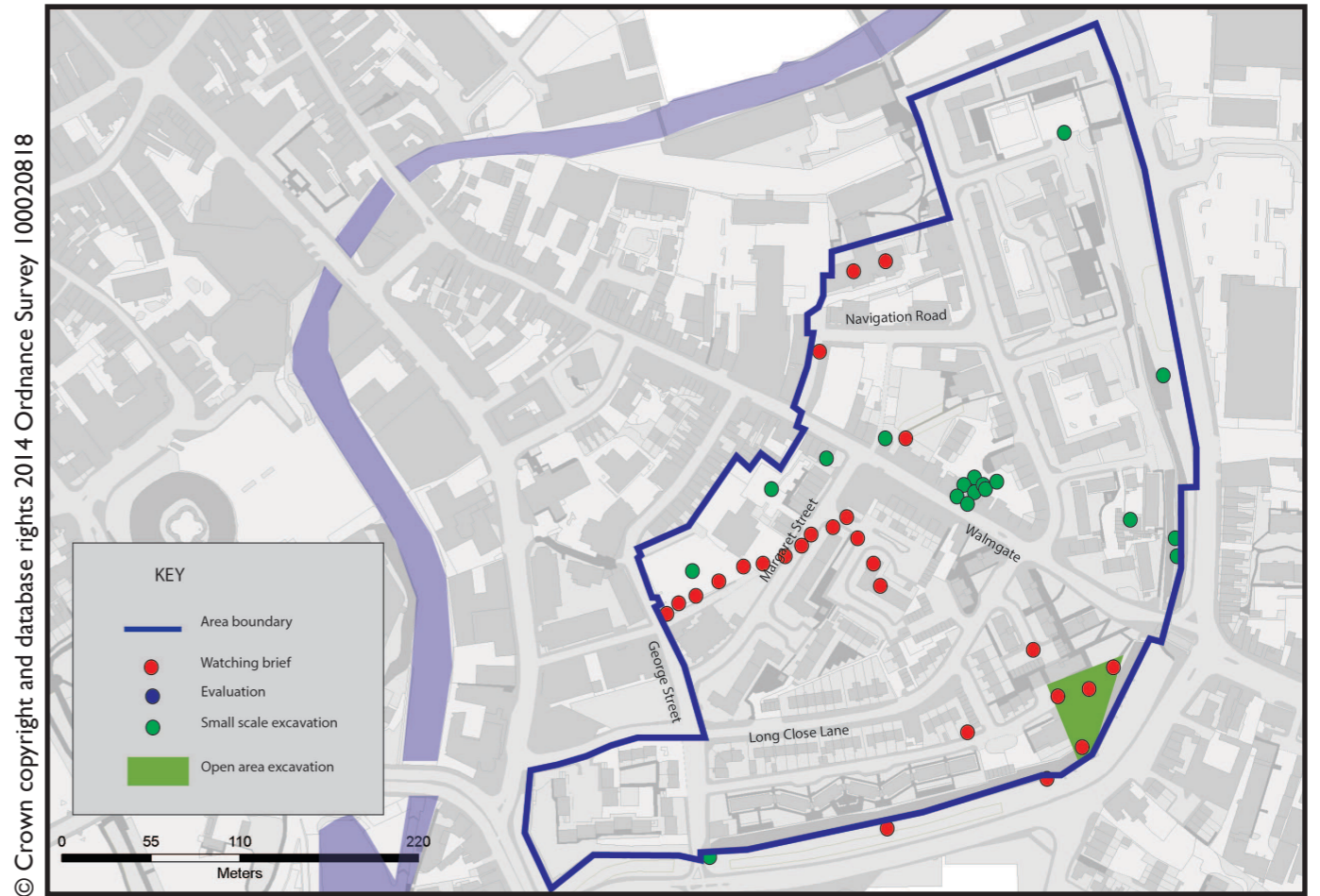
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Above: The 1852 landscape.

Below: The general topography showing the higher ground in the central area.



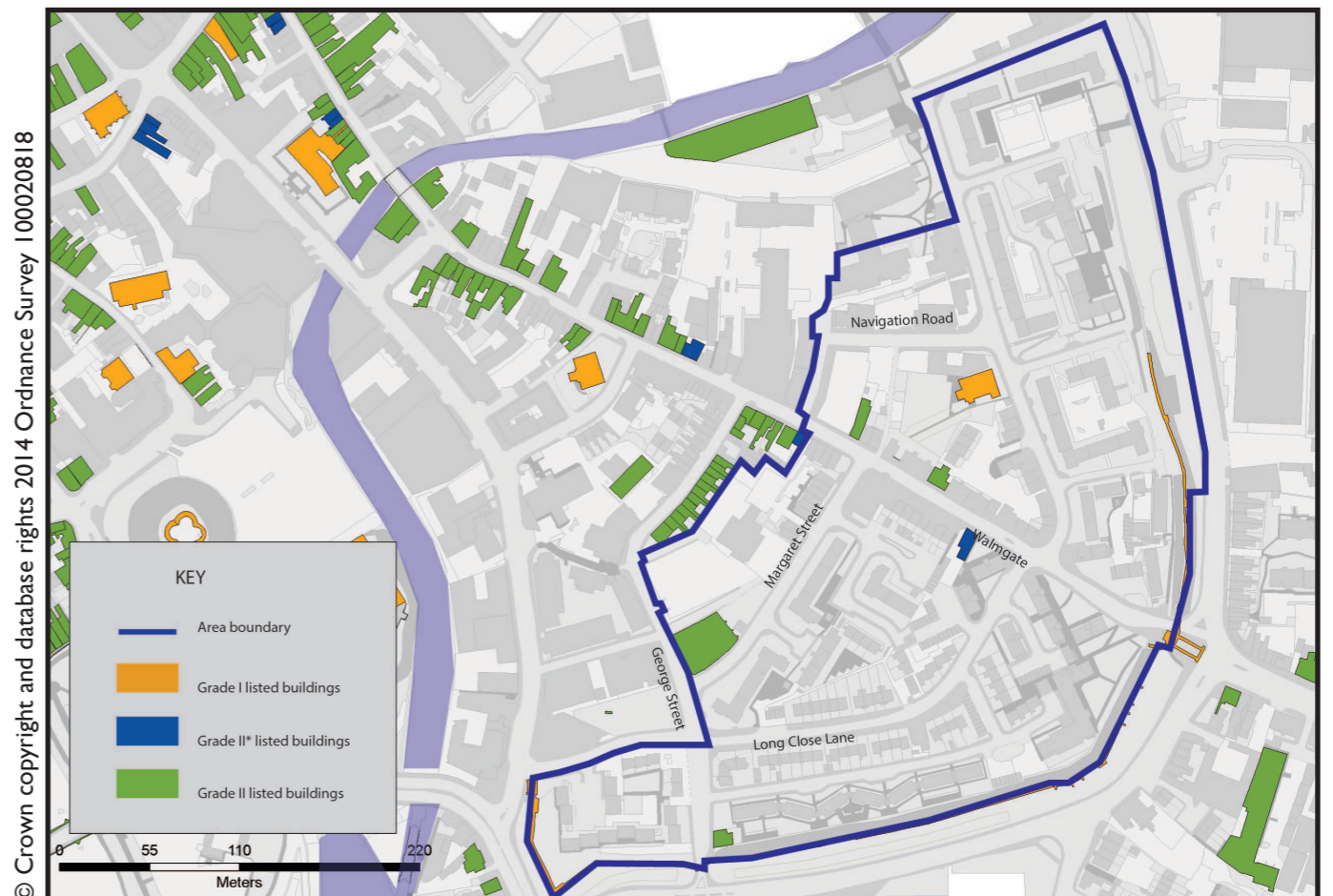
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Above: The location of archaeological interventions recorded on the City of York Historic Environment Record.

Below: Location of listed buildings. Note the Grade I listed St. Margaret's Church.



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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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York City Council Historic Environment Record (and grey literature report EYO106 and 127)

York City Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal- 16: Outer Walmgate

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