

# Our East Oxford

A Character Statement and  
Heritage Asset Register  
Survey for East Oxford

October 2014

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## Executive Summary

Our East Oxford is a document describing the valued character of the landscape and townscape of the East Oxford Victorian and Edwardian Suburb. It has been prepared to enhance understanding and enjoyment of the suburb's historic environment, to encourage the best use of the historic environment in future and to help manage change in the area through the planning process. It has been prepared as a part of the City Council's Historic Environment Record and will provide evidence to support implementation of policies CP1, CP8 and CS18 of the local plan.

This report was prepared as part of the process of developing a register of non-designated heritage assets for the City, for which East Oxford was chosen as the first of four pilot studies. However its use is not confined to the register and we hope it will provide a resource for anyone wanting to get to know the suburb better. In preparing the character statement the Council have sought to work closely with local residents who know the area well and are passionate about maintaining the quality of their historic environment. This has involved working with the local area forums, residents' associations and other local organisations. However, this process is never considered complete and the Council will continue to seek to engage other participants in the process of developing our understanding of the suburb's character and value.

From the start of the process of preparing this study a number of aspects stood out in the character of the suburb's landscape. These included the rich variety of historic themes that are represented in its buildings and spaces, the importance of communities and people to the suburb's identity and character, the distinct identity and quality of neighbourhoods within the area and the importance of green spaces (described as fingers running into and around the suburb).

The character statement has been set out to consider each of these aspects of the suburb's historic environment. Each section identifies specific themes within each aspect that are recognised as making a particular contribution to the history and character of the area or the cohesion and identity of its communities, as well as identifying neighbourhoods and green spaces with distinctive character and describing their individual development and characteristics.

In addition to describing the positive features of character within each of these subsections, existing designated heritage assets and potential non-designated heritage assets are identified that are related to each theme. Members of the public have nominated many potential heritage assets, whilst the City Council's officers noted others during their survey of the area. These have been identified in this 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the character statement without formal assessment of their suitability for inclusion on the register

against the City Council's adopted criteria. This will be undertaken after consultation by a review panel made up of local Councillors.

The character statement does not propose any new works, set new policies or create additional controls. The principle that it follows is to improve management of the environment in the long term by improving awareness, understanding and appreciation of the value that historic places and buildings contribute to the quality and character of the environment. It is hoped this will guide change to take greater account of local character and distinctiveness, whilst highlighting heritage assets as the keystones of a sense of place and community deserving investment to sustain and enhance their contribution to the quality of the environment.

Our East Oxford is intended to be an evolving document. A number of residents' associations and private individuals have already provided additional sections, including neighbourhood character statements that are appended via the Oxford Heritage Assets website. We hope that in time, others will wish to add to these, allowing the evidence base to expand.

## Introductions

### **About East Oxford**

East Oxford is a special place. It is a place that has provided both homes and employment for its community for more than 150 years. Within the densely developed streets are found the facilities for health, welfare, education and worship that its communities have provided for themselves. It is a place where people have come together both to celebrate and to protest. Although the streets are built up, it is surrounded by green open spaces that are highly valued by residents. Its architectural character is mainly Victorian and Edwardian but it is anything but monotonous, betraying a complex process of development. Most distinctive is the diverse community of East Oxford who have made this a culturally vibrant part of the city, valued for the diverse offer of its shops, services and places of worship and for the artistic creativity evident in the streetscene. Within the wider city, East Oxford has been, at times, a place on the edge, a suburb outside the city's administration, a place of strong views and direct action, but this has also included a caring side, where the suburb's people have cared for each other, protecting each other's businesses, homes and welfare. Nevertheless, the suburb has always been a part of the academic city of Oxford, a home to academics, students and workers in the Universities or those with businesses that depended on the trade that they

bring and this also contributes to its unique qualities and the vibrancy of life within it.

### ***This is a document for...***

*Our East Oxford is a character statement that has been prepared as a part of the City's Historic Environment Record. This provides an assessment of the character of the area to improve understanding and enjoyment of the history the place holds and to inform decisions about change and new development.*

We prepared this document in partnership with local residents to describe what makes East Oxford special and distinctive. It is an opportunity to celebrate East Oxford's landscape and environment, to share understanding about its special history and communities and to tell the stories that have made its buildings, streets and public spaces unique. It highlights historical themes that have shaped the area's character and seeks to define the distinctive neighbourhoods within the area, to identify features that contribute to the identity and quality of the historic environment. This highlights the benefits the environment provides for our local communities. There is also space to consider issues that currently affect its character, which might be resolved through future management of change.

We have highlighted potential heritage assets (the buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes) that are essential to the historic

character of the area and its aesthetic appeal; that provide a connection to the stories and people that have shaped it; that support the identity and integrity of communities; or that have the potential to tell us more about our past through careful study. By recognising these heritage assets and their significance to local communities we can endeavour to conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance and ensure that sustainable development enhances our quality of life by conserving and improving the quality of the historic environment.

### ***Our East Oxford is a resource to be used for learning and celebration***

Our East Oxford provides lots of information to help you understand how the suburb's environment has developed and how this has affected its character. We hope local people will use this to learn more about their neighbourhoods and to enjoy their historic buildings and places and, possibly, to share with others what they consider to be their community's heritage. There is so much still to be discovered ... we hope this provides a starting point for your explorations.

### ***Our East Oxford is a resource for planning for the future***

East Oxford has and will continue to adapt to changing needs of residents, businesses and visitors. This is the process that has created the

## Introductions

landscape we have today. To ensure that change is appropriate and will be sustainable and beneficial to the City and the local area the City Council's planning policies require that new development responds positively to the character of the local area and achieves a high standard of design, as well as seeking to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets.

*Our East Oxford* provides a resource for understanding 'character' in the suburb, which should be used to help develop proposals for change. It also helps to define ways in which designated and potential heritage assets contribute to the area's historic interest, the identity and cohesion of its communities, the character of its neighbourhoods and the quality of its environment.

Local Plan Policy CP1 requires new development to respect the character and appearance of the area and to set out a number of parameters that will be required to achieve this, including (among others) using materials appropriate to the site and its surroundings, retaining and protecting important landscape (and ecological) features, retaining important open spaces of recreational or amenity value, preserving or enhancing the special character and setting of listed buildings and conservation areas and preserving the sites and setting of scheduled monuments and sites of special local archaeological significance.

Policy CP8 expands these requirements to set out ways in which new development should strengthen, enhance and protect local character, including: being connected to and integrated with the wider area; being sited and with a mass and design that creates an appropriate visual relationship with the form, grain, scale, materials and details of the surroundings; building design that is specific to the site, respecting but not necessarily replicating local characteristics; and enhancing the style and perception of the area by retaining features which are important to it and removing features which detract from it. Our East Oxford should provide a starting point for understanding what the present characteristics of the area are to inform the design of proposals for new development.

The city's core strategy supports this approach, stating in Policy CS 18 that development proposals should respect and draw inspiration from the city's unique historic environment and responding positively to the character and distinctiveness of the locality. It requires that development should not result in loss or damage to important historic features or their settings, and should include proposals for enhancement of the historic environment, whilst views of the historic city centre's skyline will be protected in particular. *Our East Oxford* should will a source of inspiration for thinking about the historic environment within the suburb as well as identifying important historic features of the suburb that will need to be protected.

If you are planning a new development that will require planning permission in part of East Oxford, the Council will expect you to refer to this document as part of the City's Historic Environment Record to demonstrate how you have accounted for the character of the area in designing your proposals and how you have sought to sustain and enhance the significance of any heritage assets that may be affected.

### ***Our East Oxford is growing***

East Oxford will not stand still. It is and always has been a growing, developing place, changing to face new challenges and to meet new opportunities and this document should do so too. The present document is a first phase of recording and assessment that sets out the frameworks of themes that have been identified across the area in our work with local organisations and individuals. In some cases we have been able to go further by preparing fuller descriptions of the character of different areas, or by exploring the historical themes highlighted in greater depth. These fuller discussions will form extra chapters to the character statement, which may be added to over time. In other instances we have sign-posted routes to resources of further information that have been provided elsewhere by organisations and individuals within our community. We hope to continue adding to this record as a living document that grows as understanding and partnership in the management of this environment develops.

# Introductions

## *Finding your way around Our East Oxford*

*Our East Oxford* is divided into four main themes to help you find your way around and to consider the environment of the suburb in different ways. These draw out particular features of history, community, neighbourhoods and environment that contribute to the overall character of the suburb and the quality of its environment.

### East Oxford's History



### East Oxford Community



### East Oxford Neighbourhoods



### East Oxford Green Spaces



## East Oxford's History

### East Oxford's History

East Oxford stands out for its rich history and the many connected themes that have shaped its development, landscape and buildings. Below, we explore some of the aspects of east Oxford that seem to stand out and identify some of the heritage assets that illustrate them or provide a connection with these elements of the area's past.

Use the subject boxes to navigate the history of the suburb.

*Outside the city*

**Roads**

**Before the houses came**

...

**Housing**

**Building**

**Working and shopping**

**Going out and getting together**

**Health and Welfare**

**Religion**

*Education*

**Charity, Protest, Celebration and 'Public Art'**

**People who made an outstanding contribution**

# East Oxford's History

## Outside the city

### Key characteristics:

- The area was chosen as the location for health and welfare institutions and industries that were historically located outside the city.

The area of East Oxford existed for most of its recorded history as an area outside the boundary and jurisdiction of the town and city of Oxford. The status of being near but outside the city limits was influential to development in the area.

The foundation of St Bartholomew's Chapel (Bartlemas) as a hospital for sufferers of Leprosy in the 12<sup>th</sup> century took advantage of a location well outside the city; near enough to attract patronage, but far enough to avoid concerns over the effect of the colony on the spiritual and physical health of the local population.

The area's fields also provided an escape from the business of the city centre. Before the enclosure of the open fields, the area was known as a place for walking and relaxation in the city's rural setting. New College fellows returning from Ascension Day services at Bartlemas Chapel used a route known as Divinity Walk in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and up until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Warneford Asylum was opened in 1829 in a tranquil, isolated rural setting, which was regarded as beneficial for its patients' mental health, whilst near enough the Radcliffe Infirmary to maintain the institutions' association.

Oxford's New Workhouse required a large area of land when it was relocated to the Cowley Road in 1861, which wasn't available inside the city. The location also removed the poor from the sight of the citizens and from the vices and temptations of the city centre.

Some of the industry that developed in the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century may also have been considered inappropriate for more central locations, such as the brass foundry that stood on Stockmore Street, steam laundry off Leopold Street and brick works on Union Street.

**Oxford 's New Workhouse (later the Cowley Road Hospital) was built well outside the city in the 1860s. Its site is now the complex of NHS and community facilities at Manzil Way**

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## Designated Heritage Assets

Bartlemas Conservation Area, including listed chapel, farmhouse and almshouses

Warneford Hospital, Listed Grade II

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## Potential Heritage Assets

Divinity Walk – tree line marking Divinity walk route at Divinity Road

Workhouse Chapel (Asian Cultural Centre), Manzil Way

Aston's Eyot and the Kidneys

Long Meadow, Jackdaw Lane

Ss' Mary and John's School field, Meadow Lane

Fairfield House and Gardens, Parker Street

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# East Oxford's History

## Roads

### Key characteristics:

- A dense network of 19<sup>th</sup> century residential streets set between older arterial routes with little hierarchy due to the rapid process of development.

The development of roads radiating from the river crossing at Magdalen Bridge is likely to have been as old as the bridge itself; connecting the Anglo-Saxon town with nearby settlements including the villages of Headington, Cowley and Iffley. Both St Clement's and Cowley Road provided the start of routes to London. Cowley Road was superseded by Iffley Road as the London route through the reorganised brought about by the Oxford Mileways and Improvements Act of 1771. These long, straight routes have created a framework from which later development spread out.

Many other roads were laid out in the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century to facilitate the development of the suburb through speculative development. They are relatively narrow streets, designed to provide access to houses, rather than as long-distance highways. They form a dense web of interconnected residential streets often acting as cross routes between the main roads.

Morrell Avenue, with a number of smaller streets running off, was a late addition as part of a formally planned estate built by the City Council

during the years of 'garden city' planning. More recent developments have included the creation of small cul-de-sacs generally as redevelopment of former industrial land.

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## Designated Heritage Assets

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St Clement's and Iffley Road Conservation Area

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**Cross Street, one of the formally planned streets of the Provident and Industrial Land and Building Society's First Estate**



# East Oxford's History

## **Before the houses came ...**

### *Key characteristics:*

- Green spaces provide evidence of the fields over which housing development spread in the mid and later 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Trees and green space that provide evidence of the landscape of market gardens and

orchards that preceded housing development after the enclosure of the Cowley open fields.

- Areas of green space preserved to retain the green setting of important institutions (including Christ Church and the Warneford Hospital).

Until the 1850s large open fields and meadows covered much of the land in this area, with few

hedges or fences to break up long views across them. Over time the Oxford colleges, along with a small number of local families, had gained large holdings within these fields. The colleges were particularly influential in holding back the enclosure of this land, preferring to conserve the beauty of the outlook across Christ Church meadows to the green fields beyond the Cherwell. Even after the enclosure of the Cowley open fields in 1852, development for housing or industry was not always the first use to which the land was put. Large areas of the suburb were planted with orchards and market gardens, using the rich agricultural soils to supply the city's growing institutions and population. The colleges and University also maintained some of the land as open space, protecting the views over the meadows from the north west and creating the complex of sports facilities at the north end of Iffley Road to encourage their scholars to exercise their bodies as well as their minds.



**The Kidneys Nature Reserve has been restored after use as a rubbish dump to provide a sense of the green meadows that the suburb grew into in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.**

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### **Potential Heritage Assets**

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Aston's Eyot and the Kidneys

Long Meadow, Jackdaw Lane

SS Mary and John School field, Meadow Lane

Fairfield House and Gardens, Parker Street

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# East Oxford's History

## **Housing**

### *Key characteristics:*

- Streets of mainly Victorian and Edwardian terraced and semi-detached houses, varied architecture within the limitations of the contemporary architectural style and locally available materials.
- A densely built-up townscape with houses on narrow, regularly sized plots creating a rapid rhythm of frontages with a strong sense of enclosure.
- Occasionally houses stand out as having greater historic interest due to their design or associations with past occupants.

After enclosure the area provided an obvious opportunity to provide new housing outside the cramped city centre. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the city's existing suburbs, such as Holywell, St Thomas' and St Ebbe's were crowded and unhealthy areas, creating a demand for better housing in the suburbs. At the same time, the University was a rapidly growing institution, increasing the demand for housing for students and employees and increasing the economic vitality of the town, providing greater opportunities for tradesmen. Nevertheless, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the city was notorious for the strong seasonal influence of the university term times on the town's economy, which may explain



**A typical East Oxford Street of terraced Victorian and Edwardian house, built in small groups as speculative development**

some of the spasmodic history of house building across the area.

The development of industries, such as printing and brewing, provided greater consistency in the economy and further increased the demand for

## East Oxford's History

workers' housing. The suburb developed to meet these new housing needs and, later, to house workers' in the city's growing car manufacturing industry, based at Cowley.

Land was bought by large speculators such as the Oxford Industrial and Provident Land and Building Society (originally the Oxford Working Men's Benefit Society, founded in 1860), as well as organisations with more open political motives such as the National Freehold Land Society, which had strong ties to the Liberal party and the Conservative Freehold Land Society. Both developed estates in east Oxford, apparently to increase the number of landowners and, therefore, sympathetic voters.



**The Edwardian building style of houses on Jeune Street has been carefully copied by infill development**

The suburb's housing is highly varied with an eclectic mixture of architectural style and ornament within individual streets. Adjacent buildings were often constructed several decades apart in contrasting styles, although generally between 1860 and 1920. This is the result of its development by a great number of small-scale speculative developers, for which Oxford was well known in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A general consistency in scale and use of materials, particularly brick and the survival of regular patterns of window and door openings, helps to preserve a sense of unity within the street scene. Nevertheless, in some areas a small number of builders did have a major influence on the development of the area, creating streets with particularly distinctive character, such as the gothic inspired Regent Street and Edwardian Jeune Street.

The suburb was considered to have been a home of the 'respectable working class', although there is clearly considerable variety across the area from the large detached and semi-detached villas lining Iffley Road and Stanley Road to smaller terraced artisan cottages in the streets between Magdalen Road and Howard Street. The provision of homes for students as lodging houses with resident landlords/ladies is recorded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century census records for the area, particularly in the larger houses along Iffley Road. The use of houses as shared residences by several individuals helped immigrant communities to find a foothold in Oxford in the

mid and later 20<sup>th</sup> century and, more recently has swelled the accommodation available for students, although this has been seen as detrimental to the affordability of accommodation for families and resulted in a more transient population with less interest in the character of the area.

Given the prevalence of housing as a building form across the suburb it is unusual for individual properties to stand out as heritage assets. It is more likely that the features of scale, materials and design will support the positive historic character of the surrounding area. Nevertheless a small number of houses do stand out as having a particular historic or architectural interest that is of both local value and, potentially, with a greater significance than the general positive local character.

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### Designated Heritage Assets

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St Clement's and Iffley Road Conservation Area

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### Potential Heritage Assets

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Individual houses that stand out or that have been proposed as heritage assets within each of the East Oxford Neighbourhoods are identified within the neighbourhood descriptions below.

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# East Oxford's History

## **Building**

### *Key characteristics:*

- Former builders' yard sites indicated by wagon arches and utilitarian buildings.
- Consistent use of locally made bricks.

Building has been an important industry in itself for East Oxford. The area contained numerous small builders' yards often attached to the home of a builder. Some can be identified where a wagon arch continues to provide access to land at the rear or by surviving workshops such as that at the rear of No. 60 Warwick Street.

The home of one of East Oxford's most successful builders, William Walker can be seen at No. 46 Hilltop Road, which was built to resemble a Georgian Manor. Walker was a director of Benfield Loxley who built William Morris' Cowley Car Factory, amongst other notable buildings across the city, and was elected Mayor of Oxford in 1952.

The Cowley Road Brickworks occupied a large site on the north side of Cowley Road in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and supplied many of the suburb's builders. Its site is now occupied in part by East Oxford Primary School, and by the recently vacated Travis Perkins' builders' yard.

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## **Potential Heritage Assets**

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Early 20<sup>th</sup> century builder's workshop at rear of No. 60 Warwick Street

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**Wagon arch on James Street**

# East Oxford's History

## **Working and shopping**

### *Key characteristics:*

- Small industrial/employment sites with late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century utilitarian architecture set within or behind residential streets.
- Cowley Road as an historic shopping street with architecture (including shop fronts) illustrating its development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Magdalen Street as a small secondary area of Victorian and early 20<sup>th</sup> century shops, now supporting a small community of specialist retailers and cafes.
- Evidence of former corner shops and occasional surviving business occupied premises as part of residential streets.

East Oxford has always been a working suburb. The trade directories of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century record numerous home based laundresses, seamstresses and tailors, as well as more unusual trades such as a cricket ball and bat manufacturer, a fireworks agent and a tripe dresser. The suburb also included space for larger businesses. Many streets have and continue to include small industrial premises. Examples during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries included the brass foundry on Temple Street, the Steam Saw Mill on Stockmore Street

**The survival of this historic shopfront on Hertford Street reveals the past use of the building contributing to the history in the streetscene**



and a brewery on Cowley Road where Jeune Street now lies.

Some of the products made in these backstreet workshops would have been sold in the shops that developed along the Cowley Road. This is now one of the city's main shopping areas. The process of transformation from a ribbon of residential development to a high street can still be appreciated where single-storey shops were added to the front of older houses set-back from the road, whilst others had their ground floor converted into shops with the insertion of a shopfront and the loss of the front garden, creating a broader area of road and pavement.

The consolidation of Cowley Road as a high street is recognisable in the construction of large

commercial buildings, such as the former Co-op stores, now the O2 Academy, and the block at Nos. 106 – 110 (built as part of a Conservative Club to designs by Henry Wilkinson Moore) and banks, such as Nos. 141-145 Cowley Road, now a franchise of a national coffee chain. Other 'department stores' were created by combining several earlier houses into a single property. Both Cowley Road and Magdalen Road host a large proportion of independent and specialist retailers giving it a special character, described as the 'alternative Oxford'. The special character is partly due to uncertainty over the future of part of the Cowley Road during the mid and later 20<sup>th</sup> century when plans for the Oxford Inner Relief Road and the development of the Cowley Shopping Centre, prevented owners from investing in property and kept rents low. This

# East Oxford's History

created opportunities for small, independently owned and experimental retailers to establish themselves.

It is also true that East Oxford has always attracted new arrivals to the City, creating markets for goods and products that are not provided by national chain stores and allowing new communities to make their contribution to the street's character. Shops and businesses with a co-operative or community focused ethic

have developed here, reflecting the local community's political activity.

The cultural diversity of the local community has been expressed in the range of different shops, particularly selling foods reflecting the tastes and specialisms of different communities. As one member of the local community told the authors "see those shops on the Cowley Road? They are my community's history for the last sixty years".

Shops have not been confined to Cowley Road.

**The former Co-operative building was constructed to provide a covered shopping area with several shops at the ground floor level as a purposeful addition to Cowley Road's commercial frontage**

Many street corners hosted small shops throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, often including small bakeries and more general grocery shops. Magdalen Road has had a

mixture of residential and commercial frontages for some time, and provides an area for independent and often specialist retailers. The old family run hardware store at Silvester's, at the corner of Magdalen Road and Hurst Street, is a much-loved local institution. However, in recent years there has been a notable fall in the number of shops operating across the area, with many small corner shops converted to housing.

During the later 20<sup>th</sup> century the Cowley Road also became home to the Blackwell's Publishing Company, who occupied The Old Music Hall.

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## Designated Heritage Assets

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Notable shopfronts in the St Clement's and Iffley Road Conservation Area

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## Potential Heritage Assets

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Shopfront at No. 118 Cowley Road

Shopfront at No. 39 Magdalen Road

Former Co-operative stores at No. 190 - 194 Cowley Road (O2 Academy)

Former Conservative Club and shops at No. 104 - 110 Cowley Road (George and Delilah and Majliss Indian Restaurant with offices above)

Shopfronts at Nos. 211 – 215 Cowley Road

The Old Book Binders, No. 9 Green Street

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## East Oxford's History

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The Old Oxford Co-operative Boot Repairs  
Factory, St Mary's Road

The Old Furniture Factory, Randolph Street

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# East Oxford's History

## ***Going out and getting together***

### *Key characteristics:*

- Public houses of different ages illustrating the development of beer selling and the social activity of the community.
- Music and dance halls and meeting spaces with historical connections to community organisations and political activity.
- Arts venues run by community organisations
- Public art in the street scene

As well as home and work, East Oxford's landscape and buildings have provided for the recreation of the community. Many streets hosted a public house or tavern in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and many of these survive as landmark buildings that have provided a place for the community to socialise. They also illustrate the history of beer selling and its perceived status. They include simple houses with a front room converted to provide a bar (e.g. The Library, Cowley Road or The Fir Tree, Iffley Road), or others that were extended to provide larger premises with a showy Edwardian pub frontage

housing development (such as the Chester Arms, Chester Street or Donnington Arms, Howards Street). Later examples, designed in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, resemble older country inns, providing a more upmarket image of going out in established residential communities: see the Rusty Bicycle, Hurst Street and The Big Society, Cowley Road - formerly the Elm Tree (Grade II listed) and the Black Swan, St. Mary's Road, as examples.

There has been a strong trend of closure of public houses in the past five years, due to falling revenues from keg beer and increased supermarket alcohol sales. Nevertheless a significant number of East Oxford pubs have bucked this trend, by providing more specialised experiences such as specialist wine or real ale or high quality food.

The Cowley Road has also provided a focus for entertainment venues since the area's communities became large enough to support them. Circus Street and Alhambra Lane, at the northern end of Cowley Road, take their names from Newsome's Alhambra Travelling Circus who used the site before it was bought for housing land in the 1850s. In 1896 a music hall named the Lyric was opened in the former Conservative Club hall on the Cowley Road. It was later renamed the East Oxford Theatre and provided entertainments that included variety performance including a mixture of music, comedy and theatrical presentations with some early films. It



**19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century public houses like the Black Swan on Crown Street have traditionally provided the meeting places of East Oxford's neighbourhoods, as well as contributing to the area's architectural interest**

(see Oxford Blue, Marston Street and James Street Tavern), as well as purpose built public houses constructed as an integral element of wider

## East Oxford's History

was converted into a cinema in 1912 as the Palace Picture House. Just to the north, the Ultimate Picture Palace (or Electra cinema) was built in 1910 by the owner of the Elm Tree Public House, presumably to attract additional patrons. Following its restoration in the 1970s it now provides a specialist art house and independent films cinema.

The co-operative stores on Cowley Road were built in 1907 and included a dance hall above, which served as an important place for the community to come together and socialise. In addition to dances the hall was used by a wide range of local groups, including children's groups, trades unions and political parties. Since the early 1990s it has developed as a specialised music venue, subsuming the former arcade of shops below. The several church halls across the area have also been important venues for socialising and live music and community drama.

The Regal Cinema, stands right at the southern edge of the historic East Oxford suburb, where Cowley Road runs off towards Temple Cowley and the style of houses visibly changes to those built in the years after the First World War. The Cinema was built just before the Second World War, at a time when the area's population had already grown considerably due to the development of the Cowley car works. It has been another valued place of entertainment locally and has been listed as a particularly fine example of the architect Robert Cromie's work.



**The Old Music Hall on Cowley Road was designed by one of Oxford's most well known local architects, was built as the Conservative party's Club in Oxford and then became both a music hall providing entertainment for East Oxford's community and then one of Oxford's earliest cinemas**

Both the Pegasus Theatre, Magdalen Road and East Oxford Community Centre, Cowley Road are institutions that have been built up by the people of East Oxford to provide opportunities for arts and entertainment and to share culture within their community. Out of institutions like

these the area developed the Cowley Road Carnival, which has become a much-loved local event, in which members of the local community share and celebrate their music, dance, art and food. The celebration has even spilled over onto the buildings and the area now stands out for the

# East Oxford's History

presence of art on buildings and in the public realm.

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## Designated Heritage Assets

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Public houses in the St Clement's and Iffley Road Conservation Area – including the Cape of Good Hope, The Cricketer's Arms, The Fir Tree and The Magdalen Arms

The Elm Tree Public House (currently 'The Big Society') Listed Building Grade II

The Ultimate Picture Palace Listed Building Grade II

The former Regal Cinema (now the Christian Life Centre), Magdalen Road

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## Potential Heritage Assets

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Former Co-operative Hall at No. 190 - 194 Cowley Road (O2 Academy)

The Old Music Hall at No. 108 at Cowley Road (including offices above Nos. 104 – 110 Cowley Road)

East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street

The Cowley Retreat Pub, Cowley road

Corridor (formerly The New Inn), Cowley Road

Donnington Arms, Howard Street

The Black Swan, St Mary's Road

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The City Arms, Cowley Road

The Chester Arms, Chester Street

The Rusty Bicycle, Hurst Street

The James Street Tavern (formerly The Red White and Blue), James Street

Oxford Blue (formerly the Swann Inn), Marston Street

The Temple Lounge (formerly the Temple Bar), Temple Street

The Prince of Wales Public House, Charles Street

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# East Oxford's History

## Health and Welfare

### Key characteristics:

- Buildings and sites representing a range of different health and welfare institutions that document the development of care by both the public authorities and private charities, particularly religious institutions.

The tradition of East Oxford as a place of care and healing has a surprising antiquity. In the north west, just outside the city gates, St Edmund of Abingdon's well was a place of pilgrimage in the Middle Ages due to reports of its miraculous healing waters. Perhaps the location was also of value in attracting travellers arriving at the entrance to the city from the east. Bartlemas Hospital and Chapel have also been noted above. These were founded by King Henry I using a site well away from the city walls, but near enough that inmates could walk to the city to beg for alms. The presence of a natural spring and stream may also have influenced the location chosen for the colony, as the disease was associated in the medieval mind with uncleanness. The position next to a main road would also have been important in providing an opportunity to elicit donations from passing travellers. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century the hospital effectively became an almshouse. During the early modern period other almshouses were located in St Clement's, of which those at Stones

Court remain, including the block constructed in 1700 as a hospital.

As mentioned above, the Oxford New Workhouse was located on the north side of the Cowley Road, again apparently occupying a site located outside the limits of the city. It had 'casual wards' added for tramps in the early 1880s and served as a hospital during the First World War and. The Oxford MP Frank Gray stayed in the workhouse whilst travelling in disguise as a tramp in 1931 and described it very favourably. The workhouse became a Public Assistance Institution in 1929 and was transferred to the NHS in 1948, after which it was mainly used as a geriatric hospital, continuing to provide care for the infirm poor of the area under the direction of the ground breaking doctor Lionel Cosin. The day-hospital he established at the Cowley Road Hospital was the first of its kind in the world and has had an international influence on geriatric care. The large green space that formed the Cowley Road frontage to the hospital has now been largely infilled with buildings of associated use, including a large health centre, the St. Bartholomew Medical Centre and the Restore charity who provide training, employment and rehabilitation for people with mental health problems. What remains provides continuity with the green meadow that led up to the workhouse and hospital and is now a valued amenity as public open space on Cowley Road. The workhouse was almost entirely demolished in the 1980s except for the chapel, which has

been retained and now serves as the Asian Cultural Centre.

Other care provision in the area during the 19<sup>th</sup> century included the Provident Dispensary established by the Cutler Boulter charity on Marston Street. This was originally one of two in the city, although the other (at Gloucester Green) has been demolished. Patients were expected to



**The East Oxford Dispensary Building on Marston Street**



## **The Goldie Building of the former Nazareth House Children's Home on Cowley Road, now a part of Oriel College**

meet the cost of their care, but might be subsidised by the local poor law relieving officer. The building has a distinctive appearance, which makes it stand apart from the other residential buildings in the street including the use of heavy stone detailing to the window surrounds and a stone doorcase with emphasised key stone to the double front door. Nazareth House, built in 1875 on the north side of Cowley Road, was another home for the infirm and elderly, run by a Roman Catholic Sisterhood. The remaining structures of the children's wing, Larmenier

House and the surrounding garden wall and enclosed garden provide evidence of the history of the complex.

An Anglican Sisterhood founded St John's Home, Leopold Street in the 1870s (with support from Father Richard Meux Benson) for the care of people with terminal diseases. It is now a home for elderly people in need of long-term care and includes the main hospital building by Buckridge with an extension by the Gothic revival architect J. L. Pearson and a chapel by Sir Ninian Comper, which was added in 1906 (both are Grade II listed buildings). All Saints' Sisters of the Poor manage it. In the later 20<sup>th</sup>

century the Sisterhood also provided land for the foundation of Helen House, the world's first dedicated hospice for children.

This has subsequently been joined by Douglas House, a 'respite' for young adults with life limiting illnesses.

Recent additions to this landscape of care are facilities to help the homeless. These include the 'The Porch Steppin' Stone Centre' on Magdalen Street and Julian Housing, who own a number of houses in the area and provide second stage housing to help homeless people to move forward with changes in their lives and towards permanent independent housing.

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## **Designated Heritage Assets**

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Bartlemas Conservation Area, including listed farmhouse, chapel and almshouses

Warneford Hospital Listed Grade II

St. John's Home and Chapel, St Mary's Road, Listed Grade II

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## **Potential Heritage Assets**

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The former New Workhouse Chapel (now the Asian Cultural Association Centre), Manzil Way

The former Provident Dispensary, No. 4 Marston Street

The former Home of Compassion, Nos. 91 - 97 Howard Street

Goldie Wing, formerly the children's wing, and Larmenier House along with gardens and boundary walls of Nazareth House, Rectory Road Halls of Residence, Rectory Road

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# East Oxford's History

## Religion

### Key characteristics:

- A range of sites and buildings representing East Oxford's history of supporting a community with diverse religious beliefs.
- A focus of sites and buildings associated with religious communities, including convents and friaries, notable for large Victorian buildings for communal living, chapels and high brick walls enclosing grounds.



This tiny chapel at the rear of houses on Marston Street provides evidence of one of the area's historic religious communities.

- Religious buildings with landmark presence due to their architectural quality and interest, which help to reinforce the group identity of their communities.

East Oxford has a surprisingly rich religious



**The Church of Ss Mary and John is a focal building in the suburb of East Oxford. It is part of the legacy of Father Richard Meaux Benson**

## East Oxford's History

history given its status as a working class suburb. Oxford has been a centre of religious education since the Middle Ages and was of particular importance in the 'High Church' Oxford Movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, attracting many religious communities. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century meeting the suburb's residents diverse religious needs resulted in construction of a variety of church buildings serving the mixture of denominations (Church of England, Catholic, Methodist, Unitarian, Congregationalist and Christadelphian). Mission buildings were also created to bring religion to the people, often acting as centres of Christian philanthropy.

In the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of Christian religious communities established themselves in east Oxford, either as new foundations or as daughter houses of communities established elsewhere. Few neighbourhoods in Britain can have boasted such a high density of convents and friaries as East Oxford in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among these was the Anglican Society of Saint John the Evangelist who played a very prominent role in the area's development. Father Richard Meux Benson, with two other Anglican Priests, founded this in 1867. They helped set up schools, clinics, welfare services, such as 'lying-in' clubs, coal and clothing clubs, and soup kitchens amongst others initiatives. The Society's church and accommodation buildings were located on Iffley Road and Marston Street and are now used by

St  
**The Roman Catholic Church of Ss Edmund and Frideswide is a focus for the Catholic community of East Oxford**

Stephen's House, a theological training foundation and private hall.

A number of female Anglican communities were drawn to the area in association with the SoSJE, including the Community of St John

The Baptists (the Clewer Sisters), who occupied a mission house on Magdalen Road, The Sisterhood of the Holy Childhood, who were also based at Marston Street and whose chapel survives behind the terraced cottages they inhabited, All Saints Sisters of the Poor, who came to the area with the foundation of St John's Hospital (now St John's Home, St Mary's Road), the Sisters of the Love of God, The Sisters of the Compassion and the Sisters of St Peter.



Catholic communities also came to the area. A small Jesuit community had been present in St Clements since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Sisters of Nazareth, set up a home for old people and children on Cowley Road in 1875. Despite demolition of part of the buildings in 1999, allowing construction of the James Mellon Hall of Residence for Oriel College, the surviving facades of Larmenier House (probably built in the 1870s), the Goldie Wing, built in 1901/2, and the high brick boundary wall surrounding the grounds continues to add to the architectural interest of

## East Oxford's History

the Cowley Road streetscene and provide evidence of the institution's past. It provides another illustration of the history of health care and welfare in East Oxford. The James Mellon Hall, adjacent, was built in matching red brick and of a similar scale and sensitive placement and design that helps the two buildings sit together despite the evident difference in their architectural styles.

The building of Ss Edmund and Frideswide Church on Iffley Road in 1911 provided a new focus for the Roman Catholic community. In 1928 its care was transferred from the Jesuits to the Capuchins, who had set up a small hall of residence for scholars in two Victorian houses on the opposite side of Iffley Road. The Capuchins (or 'Greyfriars') built a new Friary building next to the Church in 1930, to designs by the Oxford architect Gilbert T. Gardiner.

The Jewish community of Oxford has both grown and declined considerably since the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, with periods of growth resulting from the opening of the railway line, the acceptance of non-Christian students to the University and an influx of refugees in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. A Chabad House was established on the Cowley Road in 2001 and a Mikvah added to the building in 2006 providing an East Oxford focus for the City's Jewish community.

The later 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the suburb was of immigration from further afield, including the

arrival of Islamic communities of south Asian origin. Three separate mosques have been built in East Oxford, each representing the distinct identity of its congregation. They include the Bangladeshi Mosque in Cowley Road, The Stanley Road Madina Masjid and the Central Oxford Mosque at Manzil Gardens. Both the latter, have origins in the Oxford Mosque Society on Bath Street.

East Oxford also has a Buddhist community with a teaching centre (Thrangou House) that has existed since 1981 at a number of sites including a house on Bullingdon Road. It is currently located on Magdalen Road.

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### Designated Heritage Assets

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Church of St John the Evangelist, Iffley Road  
Listed Grade I

Presbytery of Church of St John the Evangelist,  
Iffley Road, Listed Grade I

St Stephens House and attached cloisters,  
Marston Street, Listed Grade II

Church of SS Edmund and Frideswide, Iffley  
Road, Listed Grade II

SS Mary and John's Church, Cowley Road,  
Listed Grade II

Cowley Road Methodist Church Centre, Cowley  
Road, Listed Grade II

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Church Hall of SS Mary and John Church,  
Cowley Road, Listed Grade II

Other religious buildings in the St Clement's and  
Iffley Road Conservation Area including the  
Christadelphian Church, Tyndale Street and  
Greyfriars Hall and College, Iffley Road

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### Potential Heritage Assets

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The Old Vicarage, Cowley Road

Magdalen Road Church (formerly Magdalen  
Street Mission Hall), Magdalen Road

Former buildings of Nazareth House, now  
Rectory Road Halls of Residence, Oriol College,  
Rectory Road

East Oxford Central Masjid

St Alban's Church, Charles Street

Old Church Hall (formerly Church of the Divine  
Love), Percy Street with adjacent house (No. 60  
Percy Street)

Convent of the Incarnation, Parker Street

Chapel at the rear of Nos. 9 and 10 Marston  
Street (formerly the Sisters of the Holy  
Childhood)

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# East Oxford's History

## Education

### Key characteristics

- A number of historic educational buildings with a Victorian architectural character representing the development of education for local children both through the aid of religious institutions and by secular organisations.
- Large Victorian school buildings set within residential areas, which have also supported other community activities.

The provision of schooling in East Oxford during the 19th and through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been closely associated with the area's religious landscape. Apart from 'dame-schools' provided



**The former Infants and Girls' School St Mary's School established by Father Benson in 1868**

within people's own homes, the earliest schools in the area were Sunday schools associated with churches and chapels and the middle class schools provided with the assistance of the Society of St John the Evangelist. The 'middle class' referred to was the stage of education (between elementary and high or grammar) rather than the social standing of the pupils. These were located on Iffley Road (boys) and in Marston Street (girls) and were already in existence in 1867. In that year a purpose built school building for a boys' National School was opened at Princes Street – now the East Oxford Community Centre. National schools were supported by the Church of England's National Society for Promoting Religious Education. In 1868 an infants and girls school was founded on land provided by Father Benson (now part of Saint John's Home and the Convent of All Saints' Sisters of the Poor). The small school building, which was also used as a reading room in the evenings, still stands on St Mary's Road. A National School for Girls was built on the west side of Cowley Road (opposite the boys' school) in 1910, but was demolished in the 1970s. Another girls and infants school was built to the south on the Cowley Road but was also demolished in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The National Schools had competition from those who wanted to provide education without affiliation to the Church of England. A 'British School for Non-Conformists' (established with funding from the British and Foreign School



**The East Oxford Primary School, built in 1898 by the Local Board**

Society<sup>1</sup>) was built in 1882. Management of the

<sup>1</sup> Their full title was the British and Foreign School Society for the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of Every Religious Persuasion

## East Oxford's History

school was transferred to the Local Board in 1898, who promptly condemned the school buildings and had new buildings constructed at Union Street (the present East Oxford Primary School).

Nevertheless the Church of England continued to provide an important source of education as East Oxford expanded. The Robin Hood area (between Magdalen Road and Howard Street) was served by St Mary's Road School (which continued to take infants and junior girls) and by a boys' junior school in St Alban's Church

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### Designated Heritage Assets

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The Comper School Building, formerly SS Mary and John's School Infants Building, Hertford Street Listed Grade II.

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### Potential Heritage Assets

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East Oxford Community Centre (formerly St John's Boys' Junior School), Princes Street

Former St Mary's School (now part of St. John's Home, St Mary's Road)

East Oxford Primary School, Union Street

Irving Building, Ss Mary and John's Primary School, Hertford Street

Former Sunday School at Cowley Road  
Methodist Church Centre (Jeune Hall), Jeune Street

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provided by John Irving from 1893 (Irving would have been a youthful 21 year old school master in 1893). The Parish of Ss Mary and St. John supported both from 1894. In 1896 both Junior School's moved to the new St Mary and St John's School on Hertford Street. The building was expanded within just three years. In 1904 the infants moved to the same site, with a new school building designed by Sir Ninian Comper (described as an 'infants' palace'). John Irving remained the headmaster of the school until his retirement in 1932.

These school buildings continue to be of importance to the community, providing facilities both for education and activities that bring the community together, such as the highly successful East Oxford Farmers' Market. They contribute to the Victorian and Edwardian character of the suburb, providing variety in the scale and detailing of architecture.



**The Irving Building at Ss Mary and John's School, Hertford Street**

# East Oxford's History

## **Charity, Protest, Celebration and 'Public Art'**

### *Key characteristics:*

- Art as part of the design of Victorian and Edwardian buildings.
- Public halls and other venues and open spaces that have provided meeting places for public protest, celebration and community enterprise and art projects.
- Murals of artistic value depicting features of local culture, providing year round evidence of Carnival.
- Understated public art, such as the Cowley Road pavement jewellery and mosaics in Ss Mary and John's Churchyard.

Over the past century East Oxford has been associated with celebration and political activism, charity and counter-culture. Why this part of Oxford in particular became such a centre for activism has many reasons. Partly it is due to the presence of meeting places like the Co-op hall, the open space at Manzil Gardens, East Oxford Community Centre or Transport House (The Oxford headquarters of the Transport and General Workers' Union at No. 46 Cowley Road), where organisations traditionally met, sometimes to begin marches to the city centre. The Labour party's Oxford HQ was at Cowley Road in the 1950s and 60s along with headquarters of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers and

Oxford Trades Council. The mixture of working people with trade union membership and students may also have encouraged political activism. The need to defend the rights of individuals has been important in allowing a culturally mixed community to live together. In the 1960s East Oxford people protested outside

and, later, occupied a hair dressers' who had imposed a 'colour bar'. East Oxford Community Centre was later the home of Oxford Committee for Community Relations.

The uncertainty over the fate of shops in the proposed route of the inner relief road may also have been influential in creating low rentals that



**Mural on Cowley Road illustrating the sporting heritage of East Oxford**

## East Oxford's History

allowed charities to find premises in the area. Shops with an ethos of social responsibility are seen as part of this counterculture and include the long running Uhuru, which hosted the women's groups, creating the Oxford Women's Community Centre in the 1980s.

Art is a part of the environment in many places, often unappreciated in the decorative detailing of buildings or the planned layout of designed landscapes, such as the tree-lined boulevard of Morrell Avenue. Public Art, art commissioned for display in public places for the enjoyment and edification of the general public, is a feature of many parts of the city. However, in East Oxford it has a livelier and more public character with building owners and others using buildings to create murals that display the community's enjoyment of their environment, their cultural diversity and their political activism. Some of these were created as a result of the Cowley Road Carnival. Graffiti is always controversial and illegal spray painting and tagging is positively discouraged by the Council, however for many years the Council and others have provided graffiti walls for legitimate street art, whilst several building owners in the area have either permitted street artists to use their property or have commissioned murals, such as the Angkor Wat Temple that decorates the side of the Vietnamese Restaurant on the corner of Cowley Road and Stockmore Street.

Fusion Arts' pavement jewellery project involved the creation of 58 brass ingots set into the pavements of Cowley Road. Each bears a design, which together illustrate the unique history and evolution of the area. They are now a well-loved feature of Cowley Road with many people taking the effort to follow the whole trail.

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### Potential Heritage Assets

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Former Co-operative Society Building (now O2 Academy), Cowley Road

East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street

Cowley Road murals

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# East Oxford's History

## ***People who made an outstanding contribution***

- A number of buildings and memorials commemorate the achievements of individuals who made a major positive contribution to the character and identity of East Oxford.

Among East Oxford's people there are those whose activities have had an immense impact on the landscape of the suburb. Foremost amongst these appears to have been Father Richard Meux Benson, (1824-1915) referred to affectionately as the 'Bishop of East Oxford'. Father Benson became Vicar of St James, Cowley in 1850 and instigated the building of the



Iron Church on Stockmore Street in 1859 to serve the rapidly growing population in the north of his parish. He became the first vicar of the new Parish of Cowley St John 1869, and purchased the land between Cowley Road and St Mary's Road for a church and churchyard. In 1866 he founded the Society of Saint John the Evangelist as a community of Anglican Priests, based at Marston Road. Benson was a man of considerable energy caring for both his community's spiritual, physical and economic needs helping to set up many of the area's welfare organisations, schools and clubs. He also attracted many other religious communities to the area.

A quite different storey is that of William Morris (later Viscount Nuffield, 1877 – 1953) who spent his early years at No. 16 James Street. After less than a year's apprenticeship to a bicycle-seller and repairer and in 1893, at the age of just 16, Morris set up his own business repairing bicycles from the family home. The business was a success and he soon opened a shop in Oxford High Street,

**The Churchyard of St Mary and St John's Church provides an area dedicated to the memory of many of the suburbs people, including several of its religious communities**

graduating onto designing and building motor-bicycles by 1901. From these beginnings Morris built up the highly successful Morris Motors car company, with successive factories at Cowley, which drew tens of thousands of workers to East Oxford, transforming the suburb, both in its size and in the cosmopolitan make-up of its population.

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## Designated Heritage Assets

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No. 16 James Street, Listed Grade II

Ss Mary and John's Church, Listed Grade II

St Stephen's House and attached cloisters,  
formerly Society of St John the Evangelist,  
Marston Street, Listed Grade II

Church of St John The Evangelist, Iffley Road  
Listed Grade II\*

Presbytery of the Church of St John the  
Evangelist, Iffley Road, Listed Grade II

St John's Home and attached Chapel, St Mary's  
Road, both listed Grade II

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## Potential Heritage Assets

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East Oxford Community Centre (formerly St  
John's Boys' School

Ss Mary and John's Churchyard, Cowley Road  
(including the Cowley Fathers Memorial)

Former St Mary's School, St John's Home, St  
Mary's Road

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## East Oxford Community

The heritage of the suburb may be valued locally for its connections to people and events passed or its ability to illustrate or provide evidence about the past, as well as its contribution to the aesthetic character of the area. However, it also has a social role in bringing communities together. Certain buildings and places may have been built specifically as places to meet, socialise or worship and so have social or communal value. Others may have developed



such values over time or through reuse that has now become a part of their significance. Recognising how these places bring the community together is important to sustain the vibrant and integrated life of our communities.

### Community Centres

*Key characteristics:*

- Community centres that have taken older buildings and provided new uses that build community cohesion by providing

**East Oxford Community Centre, formerly St John's Boys Junior School. The building has provided a vibrant home to art, music and more the community since the 1970s and is one of Oxford's cultural landmarks**

opportunities to share culture, encourage artistic expression and celebrate together.

East Oxford contains three community centres. The

Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre, Princes Road and the Asian Cultural Centre, Manzil Gardens are both specialist centres serving particular groups who have specialist needs. The Chinese Community and Advice Centre assists the "Chinese community in Oxfordshire by providing independent quality advice and services, enabling them to gain equal access to public resources, improve their quality of life and integrate into society." This reflects the role East Oxford Community's have played in helping new arrivals to integrate with the city's society. The Asian Cultural Centre was created in 1989 and acts as a cross community centre, bringing Asian communities in East Oxford together with other residents. It also provides Asian themed activities for the wider community, including yoga classes, as well as acting as a venue for citizens advice, immigration advice, a mixed African and European choir, martial arts clubs and a soup kitchen amongst other organisations and activities.

The East Oxford Community Centre has been noted above. The centre was created by a community group when St. John's Boy's School was closed and has a particular focus on the arts acting as both a live music venue (with very popular reggae and folk evenings) as well as running community art projects which started in the 1970s with Bloomin' Arts and is now carried on by Fusion Arts.

## East Oxford Community

Other buildings have held a similar function in the past as places for meeting and bringing the community together, either through social or political activity, including the former co-operative hall on Cowley Road (The Carling Academy) or the former Conservative Club (now the Old Music Hall). Others include church halls, such as the listed hall of SS Mary and John's Church, Cowley Road.

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### Designated Heritage Assets

Church Hall of Church of SS Mary and John, Cowley Road, LB II

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### Potential Heritage Assets

East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street

Asian Cultural Centre, Manzil Way

The former Co-op hall (now the O2 Carling Academy), Cowley Road

Old Music Hall, Nos. 104 – 110 Cowley Road

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### **Carnival**

#### *Key characteristics:*

- A tradition of carnival now spanning several decades that has become a recognised feature of the area's identity, and provides

opportunities for the community to celebrate their cultural diversity and shared identity,

The present Cowley Road Carnival has taken place since 2001, growing rapidly into an event



**Colourful dancers at Cowley Road Carnival in 2010** (image by Ceridwen reproduced under Creative Commons Licence from [geograph.org.uk](http://geograph.org.uk))

through art, dance music, costume and food.

that attracted 66,000 people in 2011 from a much

## East Oxford Community

wider area moving a large part of the activity from Cowley Road to South Park. Carnivals have actually been held in Oxford since the 1980s, organised by a group called Caribbean Focus, who often used Cowley Road as part of their route. The possibility to dress up, play music, dance and sell party food makes Carnival an exciting way for local people to share their culture with each other.

Cowley Road Carnival has now taken place in all but one year since the launch of the event in 2001 on the first Sunday in July, with the principal of celebrating the vibrant and cosmopolitan diversity and creativity of this part of Oxford. In 2001 it was just one of a range of initiatives intended to improve the physical, social and economic wellbeing of an area of the city that had a negative reputation associated with poverty, substance misuse and low level crime or anti-social behaviour.

Carnival began on Manzil Way, off Cowley Road in 2001 with government funding through a social regeneration programme coordinated by East Oxford Action. In 2001 it attracted a few hundred people. When the East Oxford Action programme came to a close, Carnival was sustained by an independent community charity, Cowley Road Works, which began work in early 2009. Carnival has grown as a free, community-led event attracting schools and local groups to the procession. People of all ages and cultures attend and participate. As a result it has become

established as an important date in the Oxford calendar, helping to raise a positive profile for East Oxford.

### **Religious buildings**

#### *Key characteristics:*

- Buildings used for worship and the activities of religious groups and denominations to further their mission that use architecture and art to express the distinctive identities of these groups within the community and add to the quality and distinctiveness of the area's townscape.

The mosques, churches and other religious buildings of the suburb have a special role in bringing together communities of worshippers and providing the facilities they need to pray together and to further their mission. They have not been without controversy, however, as several now attract congregations from outside the area who tend to have a significant impact on traffic and car parking on high days. These buildings and their associated halls also provide important venues for other community activities, including concerts and after schools classes.

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### **Designated Heritage Assets**

See above – East Oxford's History: Religion

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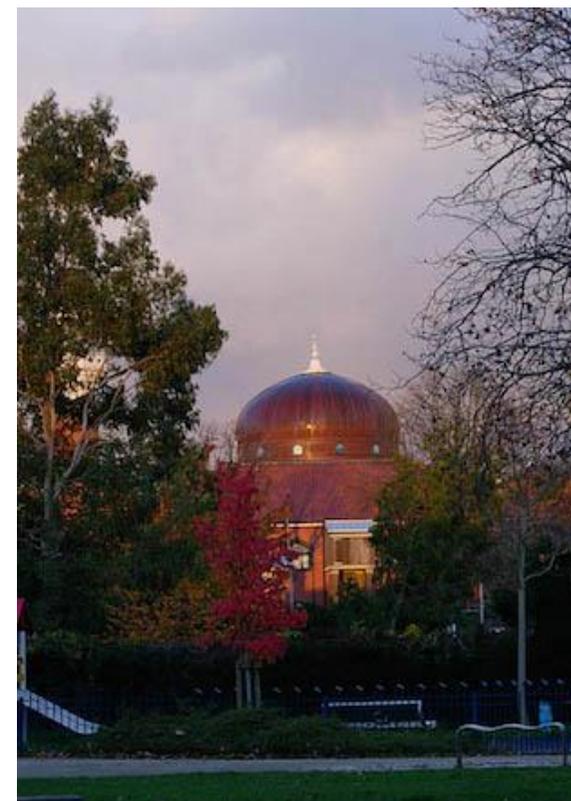
### **Potential Heritage Assets**

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See above – East Oxford's History: Religion

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**The Central Oxford Mosque from Cowley Road. Each of East Oxford's mosque's provides an important symbol of identity for the area's Muslim communities as well as a place to come together, worship and learn (© Copyright Cashen and licensed for reuse under Creative Commons Licence)**

## Schools

### Key characteristics:

- School buildings within residential areas that provide continuity for communities that have grown around them and provide facilities for the community to come together and build cohesion.

Many members of the community have grown up in the area and attended its schools and are now bringing up their own families up in the same institutions. As institutions with longevity, schools play a special role in bringing communities together, with children from diverse backgrounds growing up together and sharing their cultures. Whilst meeting at the school gates has helped to bring communities together, school buildings and sites are also used for other functions, including community meetings, markets and after school clubs, which bring people together.

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### Designated Heritage Assets

See above – East Oxford’s History: Education

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### Potential Heritage Assets

See above – East Oxford’s History: Education

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## Shops, pubs and cafes – “That’s our history”

### Key characteristics:

- A distinctive array of shops and businesses that reflect the area’s cultural and ethnic diversity, as well as its distinctive independent, entrepreneurial, ethical and communal character.
- Public houses that have traditionally provided a focus for social activity (including live music) and building community cohesion.

The vibrant and diverse array of shops of Cowley Road and elsewhere in the area reflects the mixed ethnic community of the suburb. Specialist shops provide an opportunity to supply a community’s more particular needs, acting as a small focus of community activity, as well as helping to share culture with others. The area also supports a high proportion of specialist retailers who are able to supply niche markets.

Pubs have traditionally had an important role in the community as a place to come together, often organising events that draw more people in encouraging meetings. Indeed, community organisations like the Order of Foresters and the Oddfellows who provided welfare support for their members often met in pubs, which took their names from them. In East Oxford’s more mixed community, cafes also have an important role as meeting places. The Excelsior Café has been particularly valued by the community, largely due

to the care shown for customers by the long term owners and for the refusal to ‘update’ the café (or its menu).

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### Designated Heritage Assets

See above – East Oxford’s History: Working and Shopping/Going Out and Getting Together

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### Potential Heritage Assets

See above – East Oxford’s History: Working and Shopping/Going Out and Getting Together

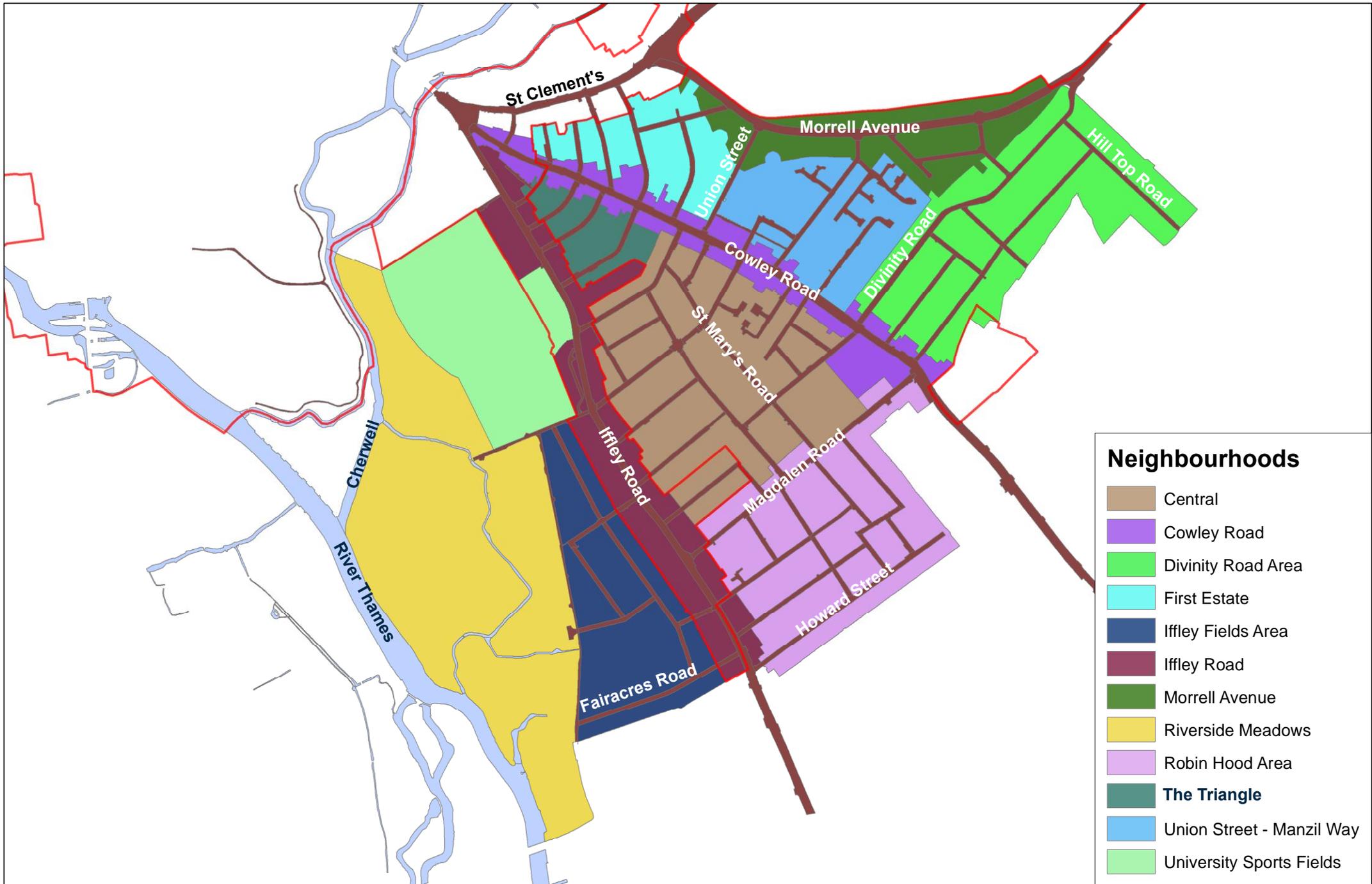
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**The James Street Tavern, James Street, has architectural due to its early conversion for use as a public house and is valued by the local community as a venue for live music**

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

East Oxford is made up of numerous 'neighbourhoods'. Some streets are distinct neighbourhoods in themselves with a character and identity that we readily recognise; The Cowley Road and Iffley Road are two examples. Elsewhere, several streets share a common character or identity, such as the Divinity Road Area or Iffley Fields and form larger recognised neighbourhoods. Some of these areas are identified by local community groups as having a particular identity, whilst others are, perhaps, more subtle subdivisions of the wider East Oxford that reflect the influence on character of different stages in its development. In each area we have identified heritage assets that make an important contribution to local character. Brief descriptions of each area are set out here. Working with local residents and community groups we have prepared fuller descriptions of several of these character areas, or streets within them, which now form separate appendices to Our East Oxford that can be downloaded from our website.



# East Oxford's Neighbourhoods

Scale: 1:7,573

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# East Oxford Neighbourhoods

## **Cowley Road**

This is the commercial and social heart of the East Oxford suburb. The street is normally a busy and noisy place with shoppers using the street's distinctively diverse array of shops, cafes and pubs. The buildings are highly mixed including a high proportion of Victorian and Edwardian terraced and semi-detached houses, many with inserted shopfronts or single-storey shop extensions, as well as more purpose built commercial buildings such as the former Co-op arcade, public houses and supermarkets. There are a greater number of houses remaining in the area between Rectory Road and the Plain, which one local resident described as a having an urban village community spirit. A hub of larger and more architecturally ambitious buildings surrounds the junction with Jeune Street including the Old Music Hall, the former Elm Tree public house and Ultimate Picture Palace and the Cowley Road Methodist Church. The road is generally narrow and tightly defined by the building line with areas of greater openness provided by the open spaces at Manzil Gardens and SS Mary and John's Churchyard, near the southern end. It now provides a wide range of services for the local community but has seen a considerable rise in the number of bars, restaurants and takeaways in recent years, which is considered by local people to have detracted from the breadth of its offer and value to the local residential community.

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### **Designated Heritage Assets**

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Cowley Road Methodist Church – Listed Grade II

The Big Society (formerly the Elm Tree) Public House – Listed Grade II

Church of SS Mary and John – Listed Grade II

Church Hall of the Church of SS Mary and John – Listed Grade II

St Clements and Iffley Road Conservation Area

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### **Potential Heritage Assets**

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Rectory Road Halls of Residence, Oriel College, Rectory Road (Formerly Nazareth House)

East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street

Corridor (formerly The New Inn), No. 119 Cowley Road

The Cowley Retreat Public House, No. 172 Cowley Road

The O2 Academy (former Co-operative Building), No. 190 Cowley Road

Nos. 211-215 Cowley Road

SS Mary and John's Churchyard, Cowley Road (including the Cowley Fathers Memorial)

The Old Vicarage, No. 276 Cowley Road

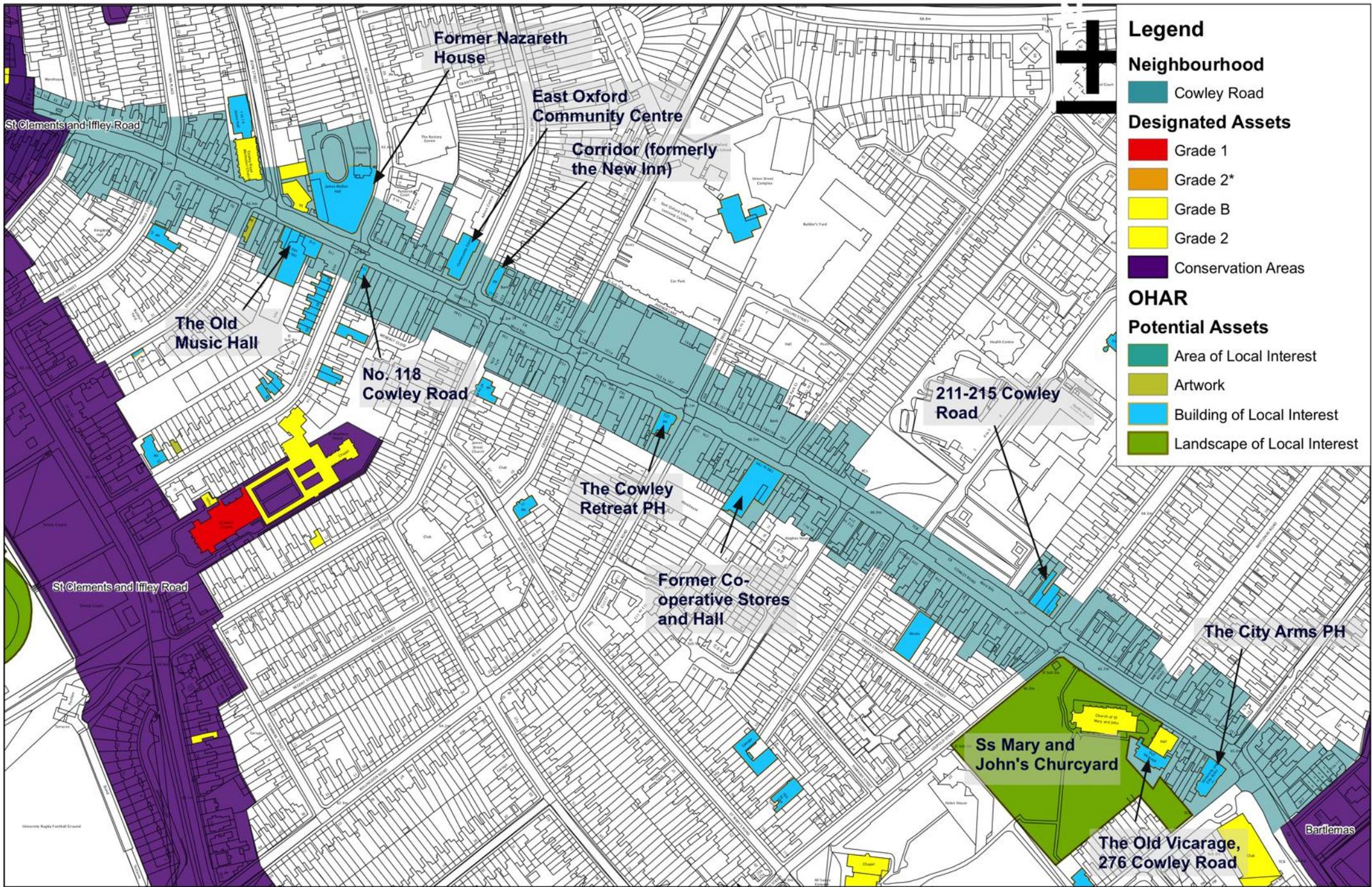
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University and City Arms, Public House, Colwey Road

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**Legend**

**Neighbourhood**

- Cowley Road

**Designated Assets**

- Grade 1
- Grade 2\*
- Grade B
- Grade 2
- Conservation Areas

**OHAR**

**Potential Assets**

- Area of Local Interest
- Artwork
- Building of Local Interest
- Landscape of Local Interest

**Our East Oxford Cowley Road Neighbourhood Potential Heritage Assets**

Scale: 1:2,381  
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# East Oxford Neighbourhoods

## **Iffley Road**

Iffley Road was partly realigned in 1771 when it became the New Road from Oxford to London via Henley. With the enclosure of the Cowley open fields it appears to have been taken up enthusiastically by the Victorians as a middle class residential road, with large houses built on both sides, generally of three storeys with small front gardens. Their architecture is generally Victorian Gothic but with considerable variety including some Neoclassical and Arts and Crafts influences. Other more unusual styles seen include the striped polychromatic brickwork



frontage of Nos. 85-94 Iffley Road with rounded bays creating an Art Deco style, or the Flemish Renaissance style (with large and elaborate 'Dutch' gables) at No. 60 Iffley Road and Neo-Georgian at the Cricketers Arms at the corner of Circus Street (designed in 1938 by G. T. Gardner).

Iffley Road is considered to have two areas of distinct character. A more open area in the north extends from The Plain down to Jackdaw Lane, with buildings to the west set back and retaining stretches of the screening tree line planted by Christ Church, as well as a substantial stretch of frontage to the University Sports Complex. This has provided an attractive green outlook from the road in the past, although at present the long timber fence running along this boundary is considered to detract from the appearance of the road and the quality of views from it and adjoining streets. The churchyard of St John the Evangelist's provides a green gap in the east frontage. South of Jackdaw

Lane Iffley Road is more intensely built-up and shares some of the character of North Oxford, including buildings by the prolific local architect Henry Wilkinson Moore. It is also tree lined, creating an attractive leafy environment. In the 1850s the Conservative Land Society built two villas designed by James Castle just south of Stanley Road (Nos. 237 and 239 Iffley Road) as examples of what might be achieved on their Stanley Road estate. They stand out for their Italianate style and provide evidence of this facet of the area's development history. The numerous houses of architectural interest in this area are described in greater detail in *The St Clement's and Iffley Road Conservation Area Appraisal* and in Malcolm Graham's *On Foot in East Oxford*, (1987).

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### **Designated Heritage Assets**

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- Church of St John The Evangelist, Iffley Road – Listed Grade II
  - Presbytery of the Church of St John the Evangelist, Iffley Road – Listed Grade I
  - St Stephen's House and adjacent cloisters – Listed Grade II
  - No. 137 Iffley Road – Listed Grade II
  - Church of SS Edmund and Frideswide – Listed Grade II
  - St. Clement's and Iffley Road Conservation Area
-

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

### ***East Oxford's First Estate (Tyndale Road - Princes Street)***

This is the estate No. 1 developed in the 1850s and 60s by the National Freehold Land Society who had the intention of widening the electorate by enabling people to buy property and build houses (see above). A series of streets run off Cowley Road, some running to dead ends and others to St Clements or Cross Street. These streets are narrow and densely developed with small Victorian houses of highly varied design and materials (though generally in brick), reflecting their construction by numerous small independent builders with little oversight. They have small front gardens creating a green character, although these have been large enough for conversion to car parking in the past, reducing the greenery of the streetscene. The variety in design provides a wealth of architectural details, including occasional gothic revival and classical features that are unusual on such small buildings. These include Gothic arched windows picked out in poly-chrome brickwork, and other decorative use of contrasting colour brick, include brick laid in Flemish bond with redbrick stretchers and yellow headers. More classical features include substantial stone lintels with raised key stones. Italianate semicircular arched heads to windows and polychrome brick-work suggest later infilling developments. Survival of six-over-six pane sash windows provides evidence of the early date of construction of some buildings (these were not

generally used after the mid 1860s) such as Nos. 54 – 63 Princes Street (recorded as Claremont Terrace in 1878). Sash windows with narrow margin panes are an unusual ornate feature that adds to the distinctiveness of the area. Polychrome tiled garden paths provide another feature of Victorian character that is well represented in the area. Occasional larger buildings are represented including small chapels and an early 20<sup>th</sup> century junior school at Cross Street. The Ultimate Picture Palace on Jeune Street is a rare surviving example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century cinema that has been restored and maintained to a very high standard. Jeune Street stands out as an area of later development with a more consistent architectural scheme, suggesting its development by a single builder during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This followed the demolition of a brewery and public house called the Elm Tree that stood on Cowley Road. The pub was replaced by a magnificent Arts and Crafts style public house (now the Big Society).

An issue through much of this area is the demand for car parking spaces, resulting in the loss of boundaries and greenery from front gardens.

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### **Designated Heritage Assets**

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The Ultimate Picture Palace, Jeune Street – Listed Grade II

St Clement's and Iffley Road Conservation Area

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### **Potential Heritage Assets**

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Jeune Hall, Jeune Street, formerly Sunday School of the Cowley Road Methodist Church

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**Houses with a mixture of detailing dating from the 1850s and 1860s at Princes Road**



East Oxford's First Estate Neighbourhood

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

### ***The Triangle; East Oxford's Second Estate (Circus Street - Marston Street)***

The No. 2 Estate was developed in the 1850s and 60s by the National Freehold Land Society (among others). However, some plots remained undeveloped into the 1890s, whilst the redevelopment of the Victoria Steam Sawmill in the 1910s and the Iron Church in the 1920s created blocks of later architectural style. Circus Street was created slightly earlier as an access road from Iffley Road to Alhambra Lane, which was built as a service road to the properties fronting onto Iffley Road. There is greater consistency in this area than in the estate to the north of Cowley Road with numerous small brick cottages built as terraces on Circus, Temple, Stockmore and Marston Streets. The buildings vary between streets but with areas of consistency within each street.

The cottages on Circus Street are the plainest, built at the rear of the pavement with very simple detailing, although No. 10 Circus Street breaks above the roofscape rising to 3 storeys. Despite the lack of ornamental detailing, the Circus Street cottages are given a lively character by the use of painted render and brick, with each property picked out in a different pastel shade. The curving line of the road and strong building line foreshortens views along it and provides a strong sense of enclosure.

Temple Street and Stockmore Street houses are generally larger and stand back from the road with front gardens defined by low brick walls. The buildings have decorative stone detailing, including the structure of single and two-storey bay windows. Roofs are crowned by ornamental ridge tiles. Many retain their architectural detailing, including traditional vertical sliding sash windows. No. 10 Stockmore Street is notable for the hand painted sign of Cox's Chimney Sweep's who owned the house in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and have continued to have a family connection ever since.

Marston Street has the most diverse architecture in the estate including houses at Nos. 49 and 51 Marston Street by H. G. W. Drinkwater, which have box bay windows with low moulded brick arches and small pediments over first floor windows. The long terrace at Nos. 55 – 63 Marston Street by G. T. Sessions for the Oxford Industrial and Provident Land and Building Society stands out for its gothic detailing and three-storey frontage providing significant presence in the streetscene. On the south side of the road, the former mission house of the

Society of Saint John the Evangelist, built in 1868 with its rooftop Gothic revival chapel and bell tower with spire makes an important landmark (listed Grade II). Further east on the street, the green painted stone fronts of Nos. 9 and 10 Marston Street are very distinctive and have a history as the home of the Sisterhood of the Holy Childhood with a former chapel at the rear. The Provident Dispensary at No. 4 Marston Street is notably different from surrounding housing with heavy stone detailing to windows



**Marston Street stands out as one of the most architecturally varied streets in the Triangle**

# East Oxford Neighbourhoods

and the front door.

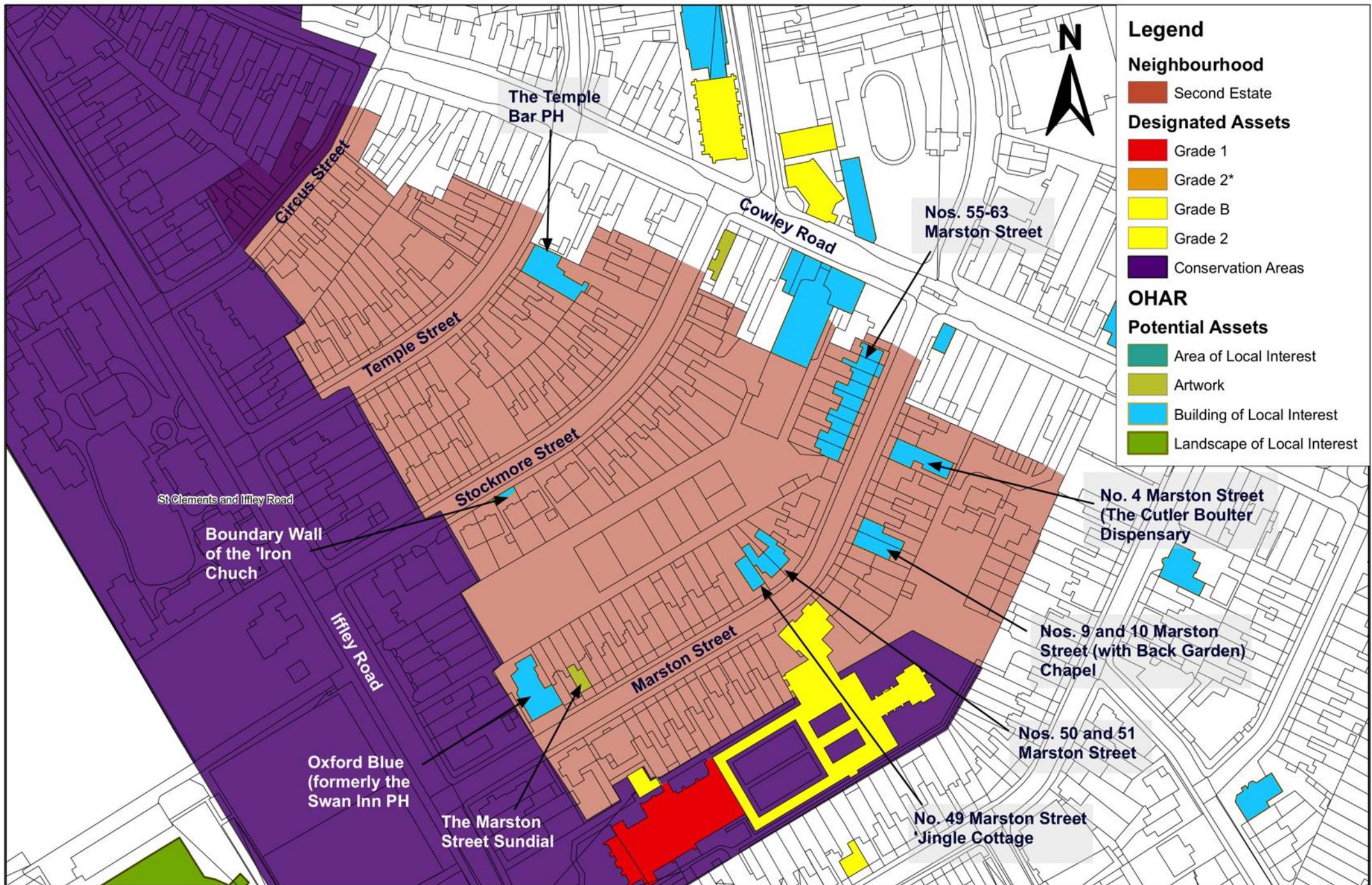
All of these streets are affected by traffic cutting through from Cowley Road to Iffley Road although this has been alleviated by redesign of the Cowley Road junction on Marston Street. Parking along the roads has been noted as having an intrusive impact on views and might benefit from some formal planning, which might also introduce some greenery to the streetscene. Marston Street has been noted as a particular focus of houses in multiple occupation, among the impacts of which is the near permanent presence of letting agents advertising boards along the frontage and the neglect or paving over of front gardens, to reduce the cost of maintenance.

<b>Designated Heritage Assets</b>
St Stephens' House – Listed Grade II
St Clements' and Iffley Road Conservation Area
<b>Potential Heritage Assets</b>
Temple Lounge, Temple Street
Garden Wall at No. 40 Stockmore Street
No. 4 Marston Street (The former Providence Dispensary)
Nos. 9 and 10 Marston Street with 'back garden chapel'

Oxford Blue, Marston Street (formerly the Swann Inn)
No. 49 Marston Street (Jingle Cottage)
Nos. 50 and 51 Marston Street
Nos. 55 – 63 Marston Street



The gently curving streets and rows of terraced houses and other buildings create quiet streets with intimately enclosed spaces and unfolding views in the Triangle



The Triangle; East Oxford's Second Estate

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

### **Central East Oxford (James Street - Magdalen Road)**

This large area was allocated to the Hurst family in the Cowley enclosure award. The Oxford Working Men's Benefit Society (founded in 1860) bought a large part of the Hurst family's land to set out St Mary's Road (they were later renamed as The Oxford Industrial and Provident Land and Building Society). The Stanley Road area was bought by the Conservative Land Society for their development of larger villas (much of which lies in the St Clements and Iffley Road Conservation Area). Father Benson's purchase of land between Leopold Street and Magdalen Road created the unit of land now occupied by St John's Home, the convent of All Saints' Sisters of the Poor and Helen and Douglas House, with high stone boundary walls that provide a contrast to the dense grain of frontages on surrounding streets. The buildings of the home are generally of a much larger scale than those found across the area also creating a strong contrast. Magdalen Road marked the area's southern limit (recorded as 'Cross Road' on the enclosure award map).

The area was sold off in house plots to speculative builders who bought several plots at a time and so has a distinctive character of mixed individually designed house interspersed with terraces of up to 6 houses of one design. James Street was a focus of early development recorded on the 1878 Ordnance Survey map,

with simple cottages with doors and windows picked out in contrasting colour brick. Many had canted bay windows added later, which provide articulation to the street frontage. James Street is notable for the use of Gothic and semi-circular arched windows as well as the presence of larger double fronted houses, creating an attractive element and reflecting the date of construction in the 1850s or '60s, before the area's architectural character had become more fixed. This is



**James Street was the earliest part of the central East Oxford neighbourhood to be developed. The variety in the style of architecture and types of houses, suggests that the character of the suburb wasn't established at this time**

supported by the occasional survival of six-over-six pane sash windows (an older format), whereas properties on other streets are more likely to have two-over-two pane windows (a style introduced in the mid 1860s), where these have survived. Early rows of cottages were also located on Magdalen road, and the north side of Randolph Street (where they are well preserved but simple).

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

The long streets running parallel to Iffley Road (Hurst Street and St Mary's Road) and a dense

network of surrounding street were almost fully developed by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They



**St Mary's Road, like Hurst Street, has a more consistent character with the long, straight street line with groups of houses of matching design built by speculative developers, although there are frequent interruption of one-off-designs or buildings of other uses**

were filled by a mixture of terraced and semi-detached properties that now create a tightly enclosed environment, where glimpsed views to greenery through gaps between buildings are rare but very welcome. The use of the locally produced red and yellow brick is notable across the area, whilst the changing height and orientation of buildings creates an interesting roofscape. Other than replacement of traditional timber windows and doors there has been only limited alteration of buildings to the front, maintaining the area's late 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural character to a high degree.

Industrial sites that provide evidence of the past trades and economy of the area are interspersed with the houses and add to it's architectural interest. Many of these have been lost to redevelopment for housing (including student hostels), resulting in a decline in this aspect of the area's character. The traces of former street corner shops can be identified, suggesting a time when there was more activity within the streets, whilst an interesting commercial area survives on Magdalen Road with small, independent businesses including café's and specialist shops (see Robin Hood Area below). The former post office at No. 103 Hurst Street (now Jahazi Worldwide Travel and Money Transfer) is notable for preserving a late 19<sup>th</sup> century shopfront along with its commercial use.

The builders of the area maintained a consistent building line with narrow front gardens that

# East Oxford Neighbourhoods

provide opportunities for greenery in the streetscene. A

common complaint, however, is that use of properties as houses in multiple occupation by absentee landlords results in the neglect of these front garden spaces resulting in a loss of character from the streetscene and general reduction of its visual amenity. The street pattern has created a generally tranquil area, in which fast traffic is not possible and where the short side streets soon shed the noise of the busier main roads to either side.

Regent Street is notable for the use of two-storey bay windows in a matching style along a large part of its frontage with gabled dormers above providing a three-storey scale and a consistent architectural element that creates a sense of unity and rhythm in views along the street. Aston Street is notable for having a group of more ornate Edwardian houses on its north side with two-storey box-bay windows with sash windows in intricate designs, and ornate bargeboards to gables above, as well as having intricate carved stonework over doors. Greenery in front gardens in Aston Street softens the appearance of the environment and contributes to the narrow feeling of the space, which is emphasised by the very narrow entrance from Hurst Street.

The intrusion of parked cars in views is a notable negative feature and has an adverse impact on the use of pavements due to the narrow width of

**Individual streets in this area have a strong and distinctive character of their own, such as Regent Street, with its large gabled attic**

the roads. This may be improved through the recent introduction of a

controlled parking zone across much of this area. Use of streets by motorists as a route between the main roads is seen as a negative feature and exacerbates the issues of negotiating the area that result from the narrow road width and on-street parking.

### Designated Heritage Assets

No. 16 James Street – Listed Grade II

St John’s Home, St Mary’s Road – Listed II

Chapel at St John’s Home, St Mary’s Road – Listed Grade II

### Potential Heritage Assets

The James Street Tavern, Nos. 47 and 49 James Street

The Black Swan Public House, No. 11 Crown Street

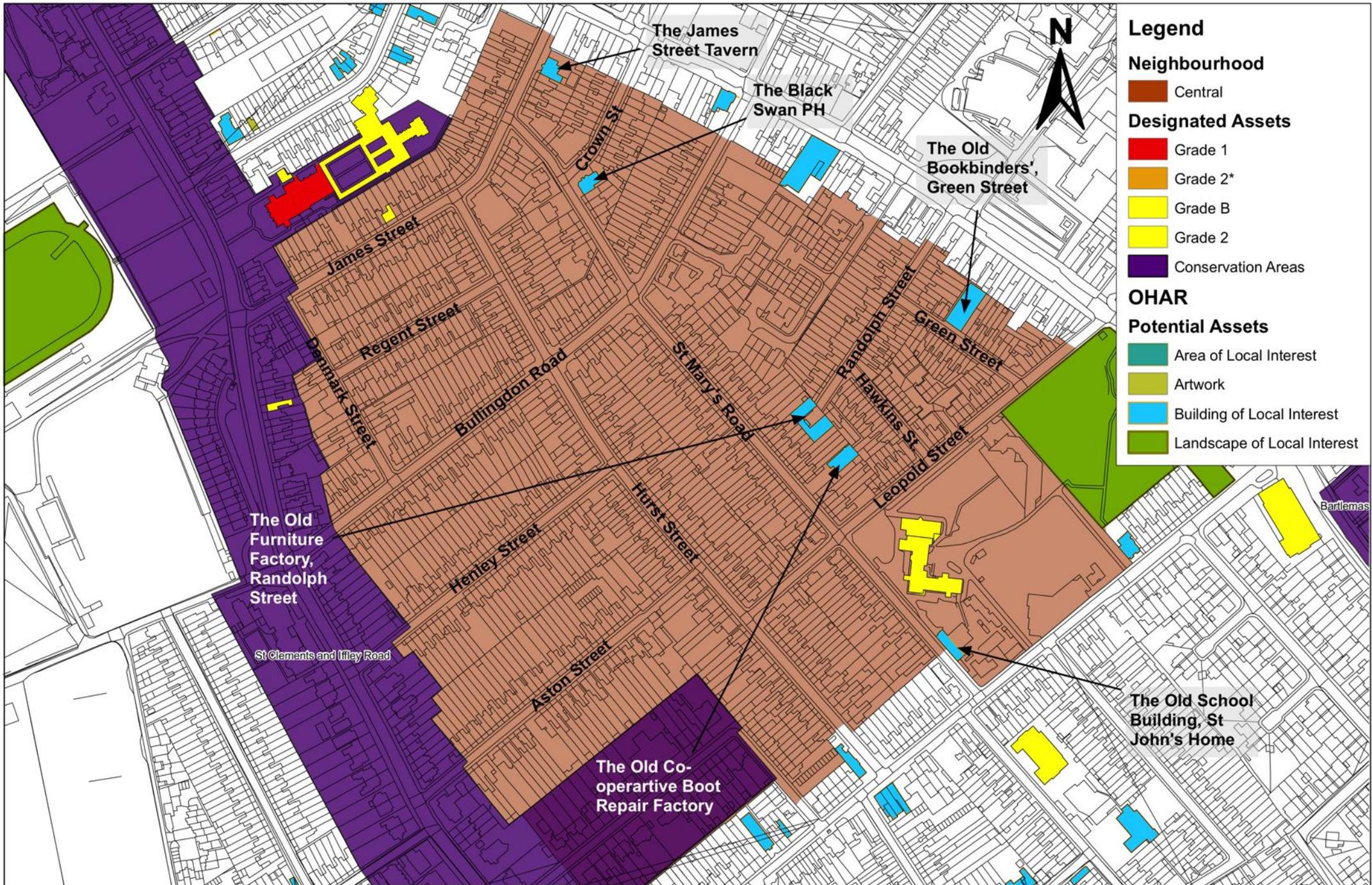
Former ‘Boot Repairing Department’, No. 104 St Mary’s Road

Former Bookbinding Works, Green Street

Former Furniture Factory, Randolph Street

Former St Mary’s Infants and Juniors School, St John’s Home, St Mary’s Road





East Oxford Central Neighbourhood

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

### ***Union Street to Manzil Way***

This area, to the north east of Cowley Road and lying between well defined residential areas at Princes Street, Morrell Avenue and Divinity Road, contains townscape with a more varied character. It includes land in public health and educational uses, as well as older residential streets and more recent housing in cul-de-sacs. Union Street Car Park, serving Cowley Road District Centre, takes up part of the area. A large employment site (the former Travis Perkins Yard) off East Avenue has been granted planning permission for mixed use development as student housing and offices. Offices and a sports hall are located on the south side of Collins Street. The East Oxford Central Mosque and the Asian Cultural Centre are both located in this area, which also includes areas of formal public open space.

The streets running back from Cowley Road provide structure to the area, with narrow, linking routes running between them. Terraced Victorian houses of low two-storey scale provide strong frontages at East Avenue and the south western ends of Union Street and Chapel Streets. The colour and pattern of brickwork is highly varied (including red, buff and painted brick, including patterned bonds or with contrasting colour stringcourses) in the houses along Union Street, although they are similar in form, suggesting contemporary development by several different builders. Those at East Avenue have greater

consistency in detailing; including consistent use of stone lintels over window and door openings and use of single-storey canted bay windows, which create a sense of unity in the street scene. Houses stand just back from the road with narrow front gardens defined by low brick walls. The gardens are too small to be subject to pressure for use as car parking and so are well preserved, whilst a scheme to create formal parking bays on one side of the street has helped to control the visual impact of parking. At the south west end of East Avenue houses on one side of the street stand at the rear of the pavement, creating a more intimate feel and narrowing the road at its junction with Cowley Road. The strong building lines on East Avenue and Union Street channel views towards the greenery of South Park to the north east, providing an attractive visual link from the narrow and enclosed spaces to green and open spaces beyond Morrell Avenue.

The open space of the car park on Union Street creates a more open feel. The car park is undistinguished in its landscaping but does allow views to the large late Victorian buildings of East Oxford Primary School to the north east.

The Primary School includes the large (two-storey) main building, which was



**Uniform Victorian terraced housing at East Avenue**



**The East Oxford Central Mosque at Manzil Way**

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

built in 1900 in mixed red and yellow brick with a fired-clay tile pitched roof (originally built to an 'H' plan but later extended) and a smaller single storey infants' school building (now the adult learning centre). These buildings provide a larger scale in the environment whilst maintaining the simple late Victorian architectural character of the area.

The open area at the Cowley Road frontage of Manzil Way is an important public open space that includes a children's playground. It provides a last remnant of the open land that formerly fronted the Oxford Union Workhouse (later Cowley Road Hospital), which lay just to the north east. The new NHS buildings to the north of this space are of a substantial scale and overlook this space, whilst the dome and minaret of the mosque are an eye-catching feature glimpsed up Manzil Way and reflecting both the spiritual identify of one part of the area's community and the wider cultural diversity of the area. The lower buildings of Restore to the east and further mid 20<sup>th</sup> century NHS buildings further up Manzil Way are not distinguished architecturally but have a low scale or set-back from the street. The Asian Cultural Centre, beyond the mosque, is a small Victorian Gothic chapel, indicating the former presence of the workhouse.

The cul-de-sacs of modern two-storey housing at Cosin Close and Nye Bevan Close are built with complex 'stepped' frontages including a mixture

of building orientations and clad in eye-catching polychrome brickwork, often laid to produce decorative banding and diaper patterns. This creates a lively scene and a distinctive enclave that has a strong sense of place. Parking is provided in marked bays or 'on-plot' and so has less impact on the streetscene. The houses form the focus of short views through the area, while the straight section of the southern part of Cosin Close creates a framed view of the Mosque, which is built in similar materials.

### Potential Heritage Assets

Main building, East Oxford Primary School, Union Street

East Oxford Central Mosque, Manzil Way

Asian Cultural Association Centre, Manzil Way



**The former workhouse chapel is now an Asian Cultural Centre, helping communities to share their cultures in East Oxford**



**East Oxford Primary School also provides an important focus for the community as well as a landmark building in this neighbourhood**



Union Street to Manzil Way

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

### ***The Robin Hood Area (Magdalen Road - Howard Street)***

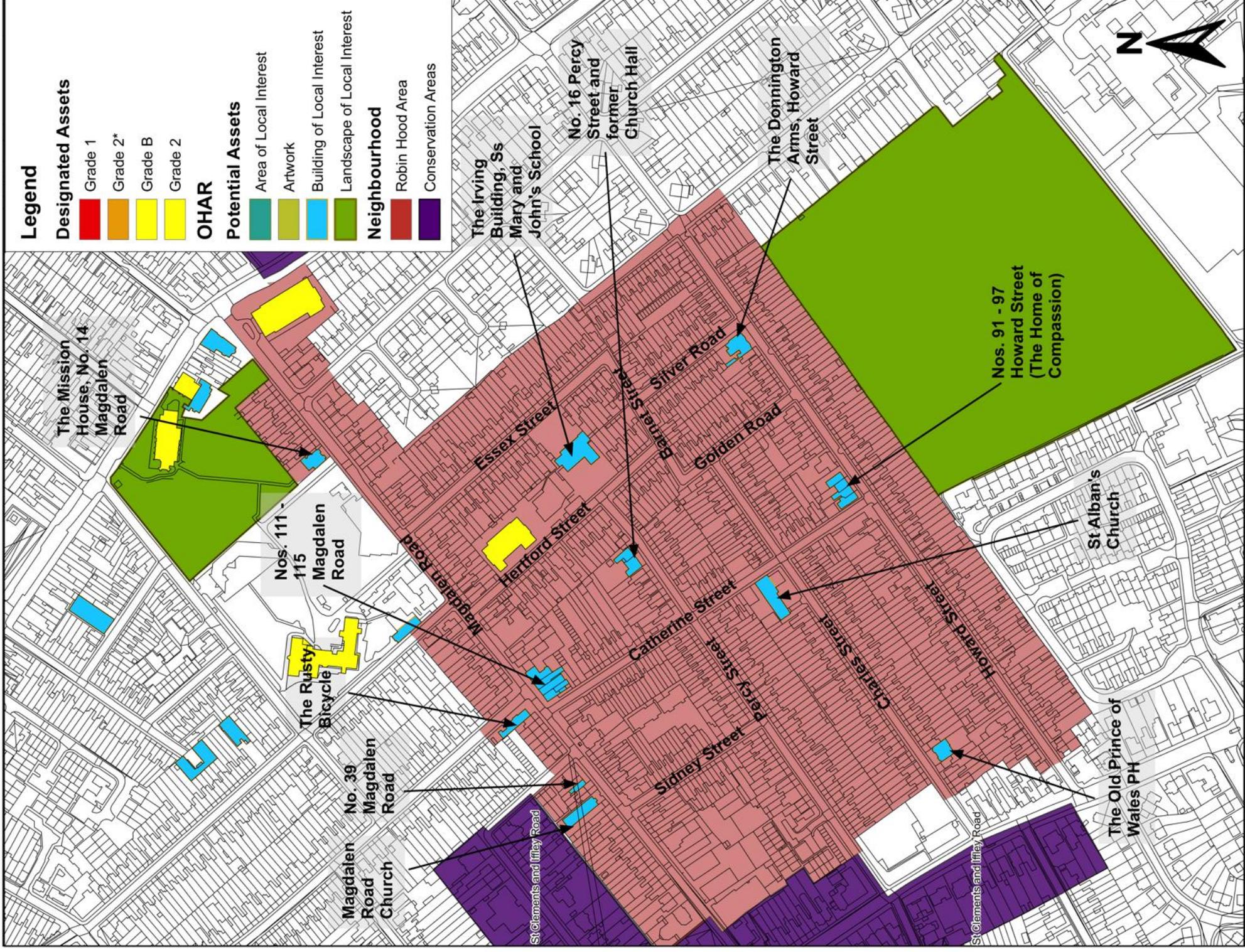
These narrow streets contain small but often highly detailed yellow and red brick terraced cottages that were built in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods (with some earlier mid-19<sup>th</sup> century houses. The earliest would appear to be the stone fronted cottages at Nos. 91-97 (odds) Howard Street. The land was laid out by a number of different proprietors including Sidney Smith, who received the Fairacres Estate through the enclosure award, and William Howard, as well as the competing business men John Galpin and Walter Gray (both of whom served as Lord Mayor of Oxford in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century). Galpin was the Secretary of the Oxford Building and Investment Company, whilst also being the manager of the Oxford and Berks Brick Company and co-owner of a timber business. Grey accused Galpin of offering loans from the Investment Company to builders to buy his bricks. When Galpin's businesses went into liquidation in 1883 Gray was made liquidator and moved into Galpin's offices in New Inn Hall Street. The odd series of junctions between Hertford Street, Essex Street, Golden Road and Silver Road meeting along Barnet Street mark the meeting point of these two competitors.

The narrow width of the roads, offset corners and junctions and strong building lines create intimate enclosed sections of streets, that have a maze-like quality around Golden Road, Silver Road,

Barnet Street, Hertford Street and Essex Street. The long terraced rows generally have very plain and uniform roofscape, with detail added at the crest by ornamental ridge tiles and chimney stacks. The scale of building is generally low, only breaking through two storeys in the late Victorian school buildings on Hertford Street, giving these buildings added prominence, although their set-back within a large playground prevents them from having a dominating impact on the street. The Church of St Alban the Martyr maintains the low scale, with a long low frontage to Charles Street animated by an arcade of segmental arched windows. The majority of houses have single-storey canted bay windows that provide some detail to the street elevation, whilst many have detailing around window and door openings, including contrasting coloured brick or stone dressings. Houses on Barnet Street have unusual elongated corbels to the eaves. Shops on street corners add to the detail of frontages, with small shop windows and traditional shopfronts, as well as providing additional activity in the area. Two public houses are notable for providing architectural interest through the use of the Jacobean Revival style, with prominent transom and mullion windows and attention to the detail of brickwork. The houses generally have narrow front gardens, which provide greenery in the streetscene and appear to have largely resisted the pressure for conversion for car parking, possibly because they are generally too small to accommodate a

car. Numerous examples preserve tiled front garden paths, which add historic and aesthetic detail to the area.

<b>Designated Heritage Assets</b>
Comper Foundation School Building, Hertford Street – Listed Grade II
Regal Cinema, Magdalen Road – Listed Grade II
<b>Potential Heritage Assets</b>
Magdalen Road Church, Magdalen Road
Shopfront of No. 39 Magdalen Road (Oxford)
The Rusty Bicycle, No. 32 Magdalen Road
Nos. 109 – 115 Magdalen Road
The Mission House, No. 14 Magdalen Road
Irving Building, SS Mary and John's Church of England Primary School, Hertford Street
The Donnington Arms, No. 147 Howard Street
Church hall and house at No. 60 Percy Street
Church of St Alban the Martyr, Charles Street
Nos. 91 – 97 (odds) Howard Street (former Home of Compassion)
The Prince of Wales public house, No. 6A Charles Street



**Legend**

**Designated Assets**

- Grade 1
- Grade 2\*
- Grade B
- Grade 2

**OHAR**

**Potential Assets**

- Area of Local Interest
- Artwork
- Building of Local Interest
- Landscape of Local Interest

**Neighbourhood**

- Robin Hood Area
- Conservation Areas

The 'Robin Hood' Neighbourhood

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## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

### **'Iffley Fields' Area (Stratford Street – Fairfield Road)**

This area was developed as two estates over fields and meadows on the edge of the floodplain of the Rivers Thames and Cherwell. The Fairfield Estate in the south was developed on gently sinuous roads surrounding the earlier Fairfield House, whilst the Iffley Road Freehold Building Estate was set out on a grid of straighter roads. The two now mesh together seamlessly as a quiet residential area of substantial and highly detailed late Victorian and Edwardian homes.



After Fairfield House, built in the 1830s, the earliest development is located on Chester Street, where smaller terraced cottages and a public house with matching materials and detailing provide an intimate human scale. Further south, larger houses with forward facing gabled returns over two-storey bay windows become the norm. These are often ornamented with intricate bargeboards whilst the stonework of stringcourses and door and window surrounds is often elaborately moulded, whilst added detail includes decorative fish scale tile hanging and half-timbered gables.

**The Chester Arms is part of a group of buildings on Chester Street that mark the earliest part of the development of the Iffley Fields Neighbourhood. IT continues to be an important focus for the community.**

Despite the prosperous character of the neighbourhood there are signs of local commerce and industry in the area, including the former builders' merchants warehouse at the rear of No. 60 Warwick Street, former corner shops and a bakehouse on the corners of Chester Street and Warwick Street/Stafford Street. The grounds of the Convent of the Incarnation, formerly the gardens of Fairfield House (the home of Charles Giles Bridle Daubenny, a curator of the Oxford Botanic Gardens amongst other university professorships), provide a green heart to the area. Warwick Street and Argyle Street are notable for their channelled views to the city centre, including the spire of the Church of St. Mary and the dome of the Radcliffe Camera at the heart of the University. Bedford Street has a notable view out to the floodplain of the River Thames and to Hinksey Hill beyond. The green edges of the area include recreation grounds on Meadow Lane and school playing fields that have preserved small fields, bounded by hedgerows. The open spaces of the Kidneys and Aston's Eyot are publicly accessible green open space with a semi-natural character next to the River Thames, whilst the allotments on Meadow Lane provide semi-public green space that is also highly valued for providing a green setting to Fairfield Road. In addition to Victorian and Edwardian style housing there is a discrete scatter of more modern buildings across this area including an unusual small suburban house by the internationally significant architect Erno

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

Goldfinger (the inspiration for Ian Fleming's Auric Goldfinger) and the simple but attractive modernist church of the Seventh Day Adventists at Chester Street by local practice Oxford Architects.

### Designated Heritage Assets

St Clements' and Iffley Road Conservation Area

Ss Edmund and Frideswide's Roman Catholic Church – Listed Grade II

### Potential Heritage Assets

Convent of the Incarnation, Parker Street (formerly Fairacres House and grounds)

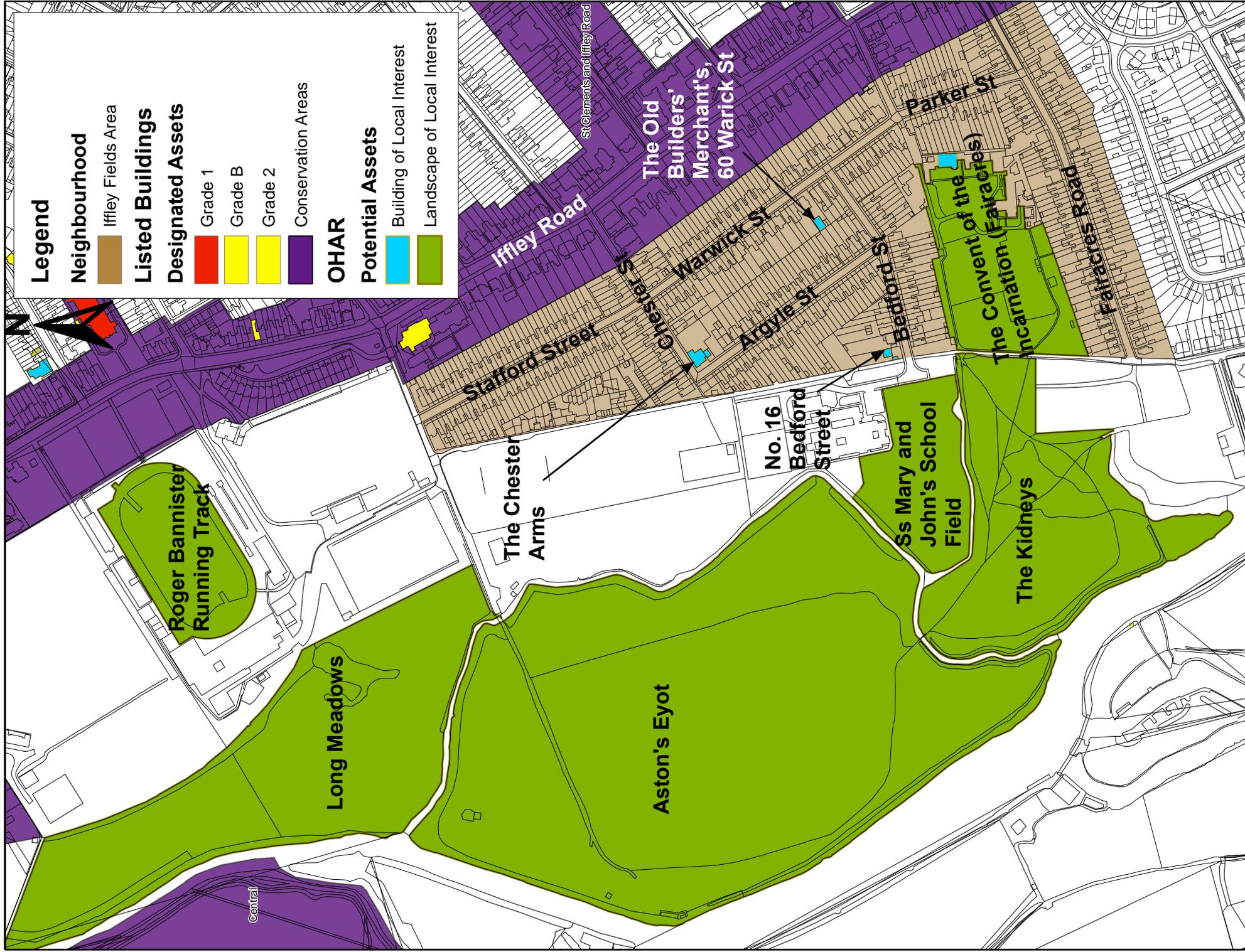
Workshop at the rear of No. 60 Warwick Street

No. 16 Bedford Street (The Motz House)

The Chester Arms, Chester Street



**Well detailed Edwardian houses indicate the development of this area for the city's more prosperous workers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century**



**Legend**

- Neighbourhood**
  - Iffley Fields Area
- Listed Buildings**
- Designated Assets**
  - Grade 1
  - Grade B
  - Grade 2
- OHAR**
  - Conservation Areas
- Potential Assets**
  - Building of Local Interest
  - Landscape of Local Interest

**The Iffley Fields Neighbourhood and East Oxford Riverside Meadows**

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## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

### ***The Iffley Road Sports Grounds***

This area was created through the allocation of land to Christ Church in the Cowley Enclosure Award of 1853. The College intended it to maintain the green outlook from their property across the Cherwell. It is likely they used part of this area as a cricket field soon after this date (certainly by 1876 when the first edition of the 25" Ordnance Survey map was published) replacing the lost informal cricket fields at Cowley Marsh. The college planted a line of trees along the edge of their property to screen views of the inevitable development of housing along the other side of Iffley Road. These were a valued

part of the Iffley Road scene for many years. Over time this land has developed as a more general sports complex including tennis courts, hockey/football pitch, cricket practice nets and squash courts. The University acquired part of this land for a running track in 1876, after using land at Marston Road that was subject to flooding. This was the location of Roger Bannister's world record 4-minute mile run in 1954. This has also expanded to include other sports facilities including a grand stand, sports hall, Eton and Rugby fives courts, and a competition standard swimming pool, amongst others. In the 1890s the University Rugby Football Club purchased the remaining plot of

land fronting Iffley Road (directly south of the running track) from the college, to create a dedicated club pitch and pavilion/club house. They shared their pitch with the University

**The Roger Bannister Running Track at the University Sports Complex, Iffley Road**  
(photograph by Steve Daniels)



Association Football Club until 1921, when the latter moved to the inside of the adjacent running track. An AstroTurf pitch was created for the University Hockey Club on land west of the Rugby Club's field in 1997. The Christ Church sports fields and Rugby Club grounds are now generally hidden from Iffley Road by housing development at Roger Bannister Close and the grounds and buildings of the Fulford House Halls of Residence. The University's Iffley Road Sports Complex has a longer front to Iffley Road, which should provide views over green space from the road. However, use of close-boarded fencing along this frontage is seen by local residents as an unfortunate modern addition, creating a bland frontage, which, it is hoped, is only temporary. The sports fields provide a green, open character interspersed with mature tree lines that run along their edges and framed by associated buildings and stands.

#### **Designated Heritage Assets**

St Clement's and Iffley Road Conservation Area

#### **Potential Heritage Assets**

Roger Bannister Running Track, Iffley Road Sports Complex

# East Oxford Neighbourhoods

## ***The Divinity Road Area***

The Divinity Road Area includes streets of late Victorian, Edwardian and early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses that were built over land forming part of the properties of Donnington Hospital and Southfield Farm.

The Bartlemas Estate, comprising the lower parts of Divinity and Southfield Roads, Bartlemas Road and Warneford Road, was laid out in 1891 by the Oxford Industrial and Provident Land and Building Society. In 1902-1905 the same society set out a second estate (the Southfield Estate) including the top part of Divinity and Southfield Roads, with Minster Road and the western part of Hill Top Road as cross streets. The south eastern part of Hill Top Road was set out in 1910 as the Southfield Hill Estate and developed over the next twenty years.

Long streets of housing for prosperous workers run up the slope of the hill with a strong sense of enclosure created by closely spaced buildings. Shorter cross streets and the bends in Divinity Road provide more intimate, spaces with views foreshortened by buildings at either end. The buildings are, generally, red or buff brick two-storey houses (some with contrasting colour brick banding and framing of openings) built as a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced with two-storey bay windows, stone detailing to windows and doors, steeply pitched natural slate roofs and decorative ridge tiles.

Small front gardens were originally defined by low redbrick boundary walls, which supported cast iron railings, although many have been replaced in other, less sympathetic materials or removed entirely. The gardens provide a green character that softens the appearance of harder urban materials and provides some privacy, whilst tiled garden paths add further decorative

detail with historic interest. Many houses retain traditional timber framed vertical sliding sash windows and fielded panel doors providing a strong sense of architectural integrity.

Despite the generally harmonious architectural character, there is considerable variety between houses resulting from their development by a number of different builders (though with a large number developed by the builders William Gray and Kingerlee), with some plots developed several decades after their neighbours. In addition, there is some distinction between the three estates reflecting the chronology of their



**View up Divinity Road showing typical houses (© Ceridwen reproduced under Creative Commons License)**

development. Use of box bay windows with large gabled returns above, cladding with part brick and part white-painted render and use of ornate timber detailing and a more consistent building height is characteristic of the area developed as Southfield Farm Estate.

The properties in the Southfield Hill Estate are notable for having broader plots, with houses generally set further back from the road providing a greater level of greenery in the streetscene. It includes some very large houses including No. 45 (now subdivided), which stands well back from the road with a large, mature timbered



**A View along Hill Top Road showing the Green Environment of the Southfield Hill Estate development and the later part rendered frontages of Houses in the Southfield Estate**

garden to the front and No. 46, the Neo-Georgian home of William Charles Walker, with an even larger garden behind containing trees that contribute to the green outlook of many surrounding properties. The influence of the Arts and Crafts and Vernacular Revival movements are seen in more extensive use of white-painted roughcast for cladding in the later parts of the development particularly at Hill Top Road and in the Arts and Crafts inspired terrace at Nos. 15 – 21 Minster Road.

The elevation of the upper ends of the streets provide views channelled by the strong building lines westward over the greenery of the Thames Valley to the hills to the west. The views down

Divinity and Bartlemas Road are noted for the green mid-ground provided by the Ss Mary and John's churchyard and (as well as the architectural interest of the church itself).

The path that formerly led up the hillside, which was used as part of the route of All Soul's Fellows from their Ascension Day Service at Bartlemas Chapel (known historically as Divinity Walk) can still be traced in the line of mature trees that run along the rear boundaries of houses on Divinity Road and the roads to the north.

The Divinity Road Area Residents' Association have prepared a character statement for the area in partnership with the City Council, which

provides further detail including identification of the distinctive feature of each of the streets in the area.

Potential Heritage Assets
No. 46 Hill Top Road
No. 8 Hill Top Road
Tree Lines of Divinity Walk, Nos. 71 – 205 Divinity Road (rear gardens)



**Divinity Road Neighbourhood**

# East Oxford Neighbourhoods

## ***The Morrell Avenue Estate***

Morrell Avenue is one of several estates of municipal housing built in Oxford following the First World War and the Housing, Town Planning &c. Act 1919 (also known as the Homes for Heroes Act), which empowered local Council's to raise money to buy land for housing development. The Avenue and adjoining streets were developed over part of the Morrell's Cheney Farm, which was acquired for their estate in 1876. The majority of the farmland to the north was protected as open land through the creation of South Park, providing a highly valued green setting, which is now part of Headington Hill Conservation Area.

The quality of the housing stock is particularly notable, which may reflect more generous housing subsidies for Council house building available just before the Great Depression of 1931 – 33. Its quality also reflects the high status that was expected for Council housing at this time – the cost of a Council House in the 1920s was still beyond the reach of many working people. The houses were built between 1929 and 1931 to designs by Kellett Ablett (of the City Engineers Dept.). They occupy plots facing onto the central route of Morrell Avenue, which climbs the hillside in a gentle tree-lined curving route with grass verges separating footpaths from the carriageway, as well as a number of side streets accessed via junctions where houses are carefully aligned to provide continuous active

frontage and the broad pavements and narrower carriageways provide a safe and comfortable environment for both pedestrians and road users.

The buildings are a mixture of terraced and semi-detached houses (possibly

reflecting the desire in garden city planning to provide a mixture of housing

types). They were built to a number of repeated designs with detailing including colour-contrasting brick plat-bands and quoins and simple classical doorcases or 'aedicula' of engaged pilasters supporting flat door hoods. The houses have hipped or pyramid roofs of brown fired clay or concrete tile and are clad in a uniform range of brick colours and painted render with brick detailing providing a sense of unity. Where they have been well preserved, the quality of brickwork over windows and the arched entrances to tunnels to rear gardens is of a particularly high quality.



**High quality council houses at Morrell Avenue built between 1929 and 1931  
(© Lewis Clarke Reproduced under Creative Commons Licence)**

## East Oxford Neighbourhoods

Nos. 177 –219 (odds) and Nos. 120 – 146 (evens) Morrell Avenue with Nos. 1 and 2 Stone Street have more impressive stone doorcases and lintels with raised keystones that are very distinguished and provide a stylistic link with houses in the Gypsy Lane Estate to the north. A number still retain the three light sash windows, which would have been a conservative detail when built, reflecting the Neo-Georgian style of the stonework used. They are built in a single colour brick, increasing their unified character although there is some variation in the use of single-storey bay windows that avoids the creation of a monotonous frontage. They also stand a little further back from the road than houses to the west, providing additional green space in the front gardens, which are well cared for. Given the steep slope of the hill at this point, front and side roof slopes are prominent in views and currently maintain a high level of uniformity. The avenue of trees running up the curving line of Morrell Avenue provides a series of unfolding channelled views along the road and a strong sense of enclosure at the higher, east end of the road.

A glimpsed view of the minaret of the East Oxford Central Mosque seen at the entrance to East Avenue is a notable feature providing some additional aesthetic value to the area.

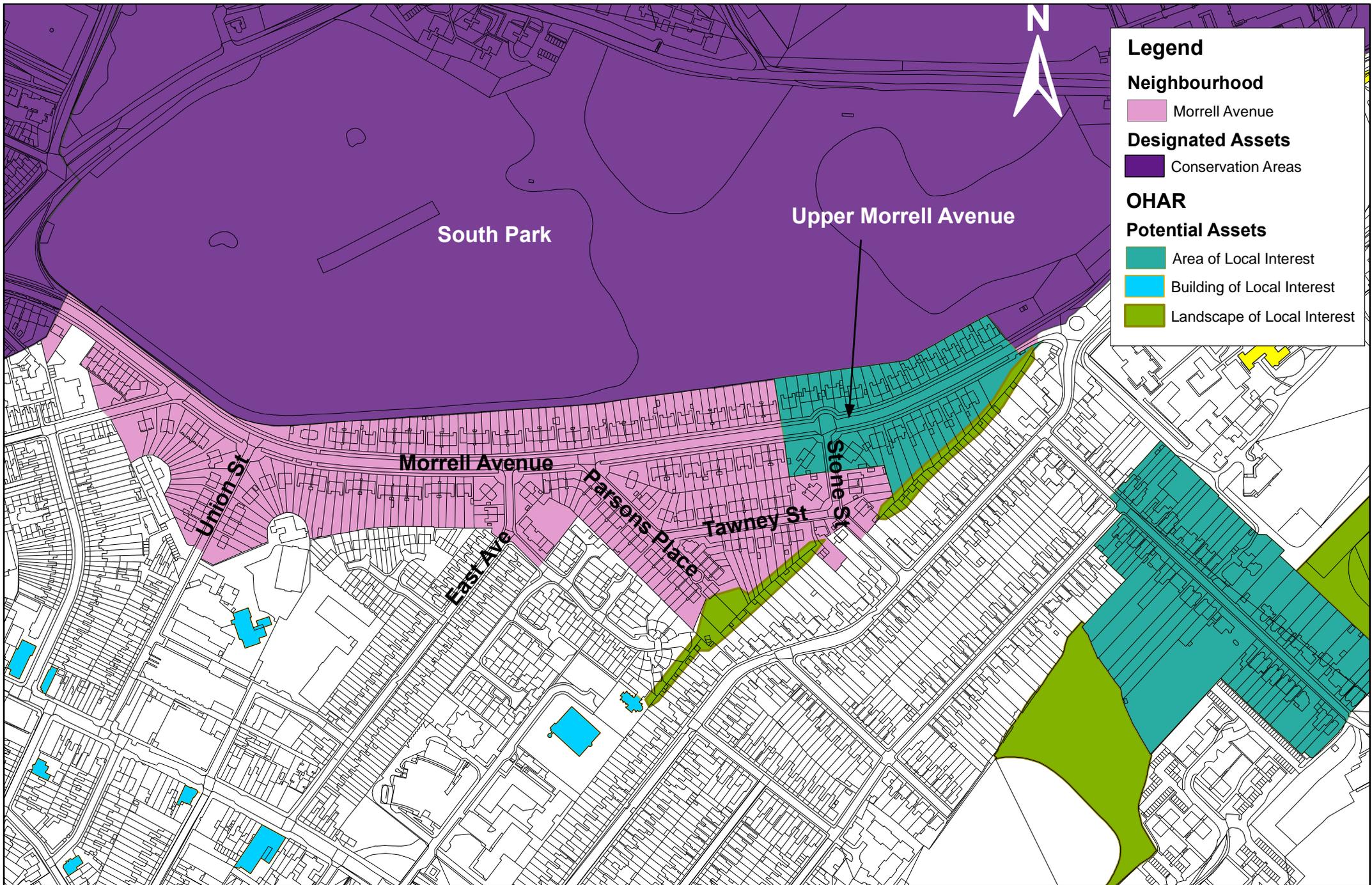
### Potential Heritage Assets

Nos. 177 –219 (odds) and Nos. 120 – 146

(evens) Morrell Avenue with Nos. 1 and 2 Stone Street including tree avenue.



The attractive tree-lined route of Morrell Avenue (© Lewis Clarke Reproduced under Creative Commons License)



**Morrell Avenue Neighbourhood**

### East Oxford Green Spaces

The environment of East Oxford includes its underlying geological make up, which has influenced the development of the area, the materials of its buildings and the character of streets and spaces. It also contributes to the high quality of the views out to the area's green setting. The green spaces that surround and reach into the suburb provide opportunities to enjoy wildlife and to escape from enclosed and built-up streets, as well as routes through the area that avoid heavily trafficked streets. They also provide remnants of the once rural landscape into which the city has expanded, including rare and bot ecologically and culturally valued habitats, such as fens and a wild flower meadows.

#### ***SS Mary and John's Churchyard***

Father Benson bought the land for this churchyard in the late 1860s, although the land wasn't consecrated for burial until 1878, by which time the foundation stones of the church had been laid. Nevertheless, the first burial actually took place in 1876 by special permission of the Bishop of Oxford.

The churchyard was laid out with a geometric pattern of walks, which has survived and divides the area into 14 plots. It was planned as an area for both the dead and the living and was laid out to create a place of resort for those who lived nearby. The paths were planted with Irish yew

and pollarded limes, which give the western part of the churchyard a woodland character. The tree planting also includes Wellingtonias and Corsican Pines prompting some to describe it as an arboretum for East Oxford. The creation of a mini-labyrinth and a garden of Remembrance and Celebration are modern contributions to this area as a place for peaceful rest and contemplation. It continues to function as a place for meeting and socialising, whilst a part of the area is now managed by the community to provide wildlife habitat including a wild flower meadow and bog garden.

The churchyard contains the graves of many notable people and communities of East Oxford, including members of the area's religious communities and people with connections to its institutions, such as the workhouse and schools. Father Benson's memorial cross stands at the centre of the churchyard.

Information about the churchyard's history and wildlife is now provided on information boards, whilst an excellent community run website provides more information about the churchyard and East Oxford.



Trees in Ss Mary and John's Churchyard are managed to encourage wildlife, as well as contributing to the wooded appearance of the area.

## East Oxford Green Spaces

### **South Park**

South Park holds a special place in the history of the city's environs and has been included in the Headington Hill Conservation Area as a result of its special historic interest and character and appearance. The park was formed out of the land of Cheney Farm, which lay in St Clement's Parish beyond the open fields of Cowley. The Morrell Family bought the farm in the 1870s to preserve the rural setting of Headington Hill Hall and gentrified the farmland as an extensive park with wooded bays, specimen trees and groves and boundary planting. In the late 1920s the City Council wished to buy the land to build housing to relieve pressure on built up areas of the city

**South Park was given to the city by Oxford Preservation Trust with the requirement that its green and open character should be preserved**

centre. The Morrell family resisted this, finally agreeing to sell just over a quarter of the farmland, on which the Morrell Avenue estate was built in 1929. The remaining land was sold to Oxford Preservation Trust in 1932 to preserve it as an element of the city's green setting. The Trust gave the land to the City Council in 1957 under strict covenants that it should remain undeveloped. South Park now forms a public park of great importance to the city. It offers one of the finest views of the city's famous dreaming spires, with its background of Wytham Hill, which is enjoyed by many of the people of East Oxford and other surrounding community's.

In its earthworks it preserves the ancient ridges

and furrows of ploughing by teams of oxen, whilst there remains potential for the survival of traces of the Parliamentarian encampment constructed during the siege of Oxford in 1645-6. The plantations of trees left by the Morells have matured creating stately stands of oaks, as well as well defined boundaries to Morrell Avenue, Warneford Avenue and Cheney Lane. These form part of a corridor for wildlife habitats that extends from Lye Valley and Warneford Meadow northwards along Headington Hill and into the Cherwell Valley's floodplain.



# East Oxford Green Spaces

## **Warneford Meadow**

The Meadow represents a surviving fragment of the open fields of Headington Parish, which was part of Southfield Farm after the Headington Enclosure of 1804. The land was bought for Warneford Asylum in 1918 to ensure the presence of land for therapeutic work, to produce food for patients and to prevent housing development in the immediate vicinity of the hospital/asylum. As such, it formed part of a hospital farm during the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. This finally closed in the 1960s at a time

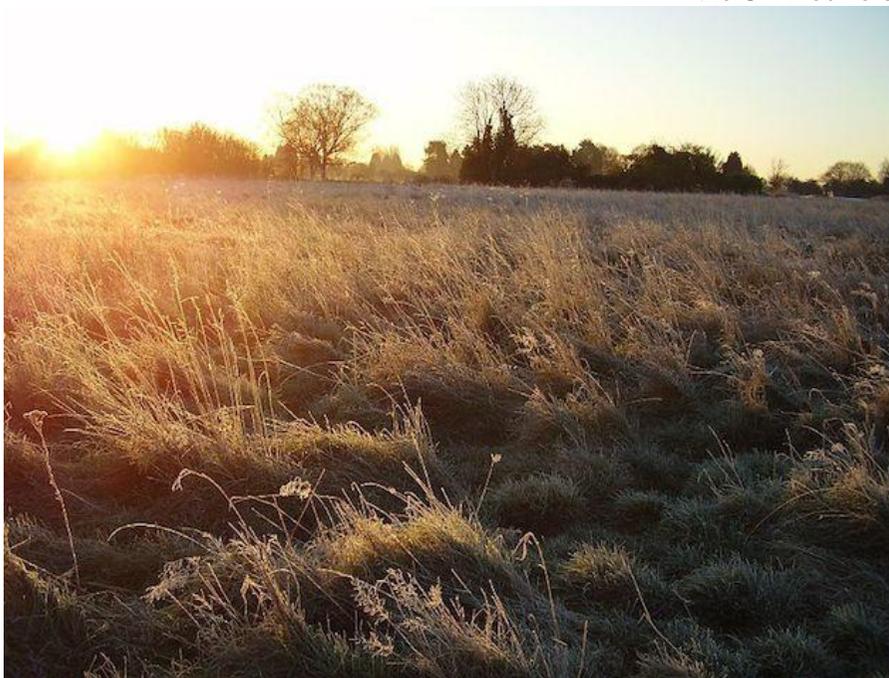
when ideas of health care were moving away from such models of occupational therapy. Local people have been able to use the open space for walking and recreation for more than thirty years and, as such, it has been registered as a Town Green, which restricts works that would prevent access to or over the land. The land now provides a green setting to Hill Top Road and the Churchill and Warneford Hospitals and feeds the streams that run down into the Lye Valley.

The lower land at the eastern edge of the meadow forms part of an area of lowland fen or wet woodland, which are priority habitats within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. The grassland is unimproved, but through lack of adequate cropping has now run to rank grass. The meadow also lies near to recorded finds of Roman pottery manufacturing remains (uncovered at the Churchill Hospital) and provides a site with potential for good survival of buried remains due to its survival as an area of undeveloped land. The Southfield Golf Course is a

contiguous green open space directly to the south.

## **Oriel Playing Fields**

To the south east of the Divinity Road area the playing fields owned by Oriel College provide a green setting to the Bartlemas Conservation Area and a green outlook for houses on Southfield Road. They form part of the historic endowment of Bartlemas hospital and chapel, ownership of which was transferred to Oriel College in 1329. An area of woodland at the northern end of the property is suggested on the plan of Bartlemas by Badcock, produced in 1840, although the 1878 edition of the Ordnance Survey's map of Oxfordshire doesn't record woodland there at that time. The 1957 Ordnance Survey Map suggests that trees had been planted around the perimeter of the former woodland area, which is now a more fully developed wood with a small clearing on its south western edge. The medieval tradition of a Ascension Day service at Bartlemas Chapel of fellows of All Soul's College was revived in 2009 probably after a break of more than 400 years. The woodland was chosen as an appropriate location for part of the rights, recalling the May Day 'woodland revels' that were a part of medieval popular culture. The woodland habitat area is enlarged by the mature trees and woodland character of the adjacent gardens at the rear of properties on Hill Top Road and Southfield Road



**A winter sunrise at Warneford Meadow (© Afry, Reproduced un Creative Commons License)**

## East Oxford Green Spaces

### **East Ward Allotments and Boundary Brook Nature Reserve**

This area of green open space was recorded as allotments on the 1899 Ordnance Survey Map, whilst land just to the east was a City of Oxford recreation ground (the latter was developed as Cricket Road and Ridgefield Road in the 1920s). The allotments expanded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century reaching down as far as the 'boundary brook' to the south and to Iffley Road to the west. As part of the 'dig for victory' campaign during the Second World War allotments were an important part of the war effort on the home front. However, use declined in the 1960s and by the mid-1970s the southern and western extensions had been redeveloped for schools and, later, for the Boundary Brook Housing Estate. The area of cultivation declined further in the 1980s and a part of the remaining green space was turned into an urban nature reserve in 1990 with a highly active group of volunteers organised through the Oxford Urban Wildlife Group and Oxford Conservation Volunteers. The space now provides a rich mosaic of wildlife habitats, including marsh, hay meadow, a cornfield and woodland. The allotments continue to provide opportunities for the public to enjoy the natural environment as well as opportunities for those wanting to grow their own food in the heart of a densely developed urban area. They include a small allotment shop and children's play area to help parents with young families spend time on their allotments.

### **Aston's Eyot and The Kidney's**

The island of Aston's Eyot, measures some 30 acres and is surrounded by the Thames, Cherwell New Cut and the Shire Lake Ditch. It is accessed by footpaths and bridges from Jackdaw Lane and The Kidneys and is owned by Christ Church. It is currently managed by a community group (Friends of Aston's Eyot) in partnership with Christ Church. The group also maintain a website with further information about the Eyot, including more detail about its history, wildlife and management.

This land has been recorded since the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the king took it from Abingdon Abbey's property and granted it to the newly founded All Soul's College. The college let it out to various local landowners up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a mixture of water-meadow and market gardens. Christ Church bought the land in 1891, completing their control of the belt of green space that would lie across the Cherwell from their famous meadow. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the

land was used as the city's rubbish dump. It was used as a military training ground during the

Second World War and as a pig run afterwards, as well as having a short life as a rugby pitch. It has gradually generated scrub cover during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1970s and '80s, Christ Church granted a non-exclusive license to the City Council to use the Eyot as public open space. It was also designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation by Oxford City Council. The college licensed a bottle-digging club to use the Eyot in 1983-84. However, this rapidly exceeded the expected



**The public are granted access to Aston's Eyot by Christ Church, whilst a voluntary community group now manages the area**

## East Oxford Green Spaces

level of impact and included the use of mechanical diggers, and was discontinued. Some smaller scale digging continued both with and without the consent of the college until 1999.

The area is now a popular resource for quiet recreation and wildlife spotting for the local community. It provides a refuge for common rural wildlife within the city's urban area and is accessible semi-natural green space with views to the River Cherwell. This includes views of the areas that are popular for rowing with the boathouses on the west side of the river as prominent features in the view. Given the forty years history of the island's use by the community it now has communal value for people of east Oxford.

The Kidneys were also small islands on the edge of the River Thames, although the channels that surrounded them have been gradually filled in. They are owned by the City Council and are publicly accessible as roughly mown grassland. They were also used as a rubbish dump in the post-war period, raising the ground level above the floodplain. This area is more open than the island to the north, although it has an attractive woodland edge to Meadow Lane, and is popular with dog walkers. To the south is the landing for the Sea Scouts, which preserves part of the course of the stream that defined the westerly limit of the island. The eastern edge of the Kidneys includes the Meadow Lane allotments,

which provide another important resource for local residents.

Both Aston's Eyot and The Kidneys lie within the 'Thames and Cherwell at Oxford Conservation Target Area' defined in the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. The very southern tip of land in the Kidneys is a Site of Special Scientific Interest as a surviving area of lowland water meadow supporting a colony of Snake's Head Fritillaries. Groups of pollarded willows and alders run along the banks of the Cherwell, providing a soft green edge to views along the river seen from the land and the water, which is a historically valued feature of Oxford's riverside reflected in the prose and poetry of the city.

### ***Ss Mary and John's School Field***

The school playing field, located south of the building complex, preserves the outline of a field recorded on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey Map and forms part of the green setting of the Iffley Fields area. It provides the foreground in attractive views west from Bedford Street and Meadow Lane, with field boundaries of green hedgerows that are likely to date from the enclosure of the fields of Iffley in 1830, if not earlier. Indeed, where they follow the Shire Lake Ditch they even mark the old boundary between Oxfordshire and Berkshire.



**Ss Mary and John's School field lies at the end of Bedford Street and provides foreground to the views of the Thames Valley beyond**

### ***Long Meadow***

The Meadow has been identified as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation as a surviving area of Lowland Meadow that is regularly subject to flooding and preserves an interesting ecology. The southern half of the meadow has also been recognised as a local site of natural importance at the County Level and the whole area is included in the 'Thames and Cherwell at Oxford Conservation Target Area' defined in the Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. The Meadow forms a part of the setting of

## East Oxford Green Spaces

the city's Central (City and University) Conservation Area. It makes an important contribution to the character of the riverside, experienced by boaters in particular, bringing a rural character area up to the edge of the city centre that is unlikely to have changed significantly since the Middle Ages. Scholars of the college know it as the skating field or rink field, presumably due to its propensity for flooding in the winter, when it can freeze. The cattle have recently introduced a herd Long Horn Cattle to graze the meadow, reintroducing an historic element of the character of the Oxford riverside meadows. At present a chain-link fence used to divide the southern and northern parts of the meadow are considered to detract from its character by adding an urban element within an otherwise rural character area. It is not publicly accessible but can be experienced in views from Christchurch Meadow, Jackdaw Lane and by boaters from the River Cherwell.

### Designated Heritage Assets

SS Mary and John's Church – Listed Building Grade I

SS Mary and John's Church Hall – Listed Building Grade II

Headington Hill Conservation Area (including South Park)

### Potential Heritage Assets

SS Mary and John's Churchyard

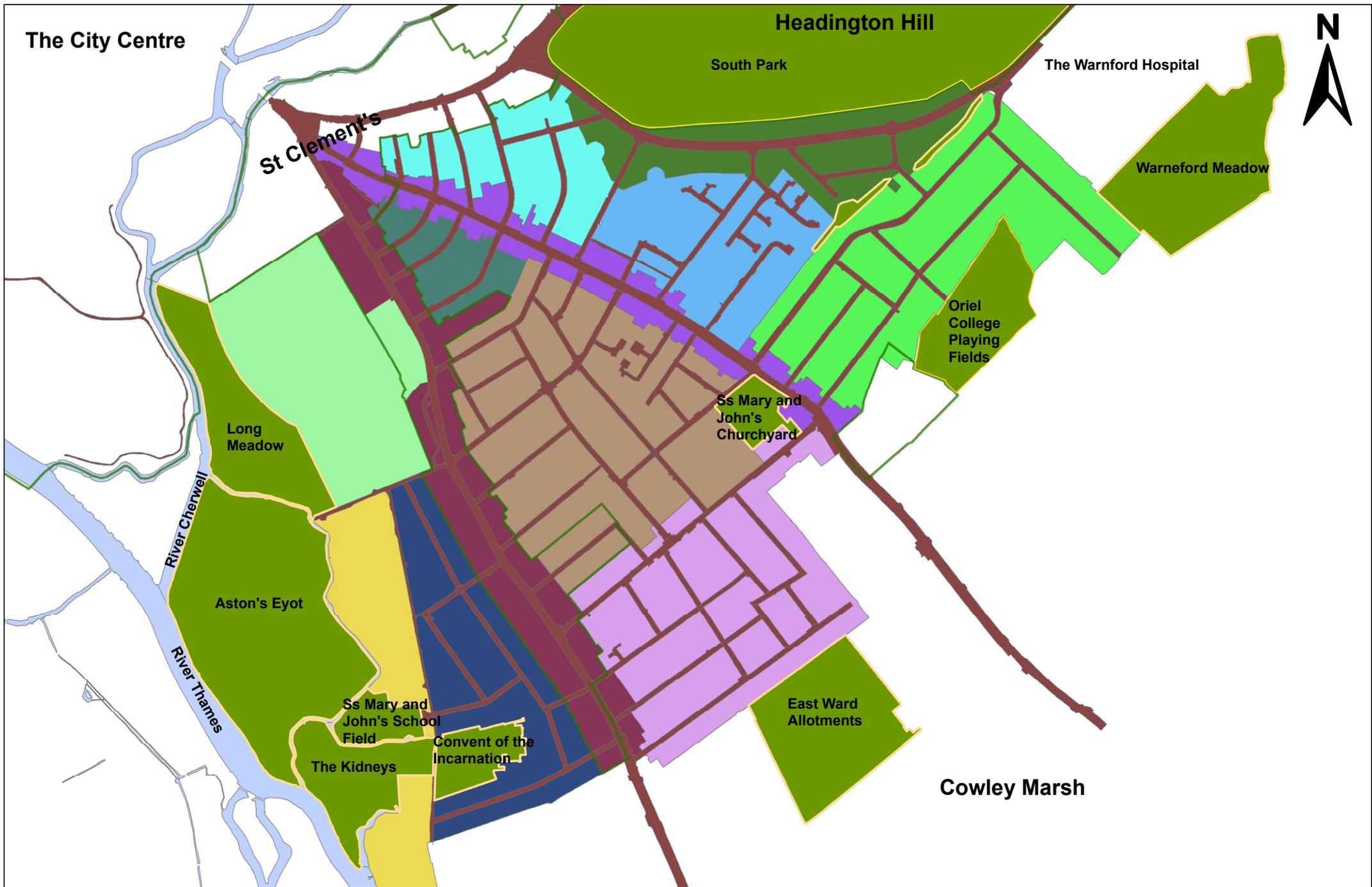
Warneford Meadow

East Ward Allotments, Cricket Road

Aston's Eyot, Jackdaw Lane

The Kidneys, Meadow Lane

SS Mary and John's Church of England Junior School field, Meadow Lane



**The East Oxford Suburb and its Historic Green Spaces**

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#### **Web-based sources**

The Iffley History Society: maintain a highly informative local history website including an interactive map of sites of historic interest at <http://www.iffleyhistory.org.uk/>

## Resources for Further Study

Friends of Aston's Eyot: Accessed at <http://friendsofastonseyot.org.uk> . Provides lots of information about this important

Friends of Warneford Meadow: Accessed at <http://www.friendsofwarnefordmeadow.org.uk/page.php?pageid=home> , provides lots of information about the meadow, including the community group's campaign to maintain it as publicly accessible open space and their successful application to register it as a town green, as well as information about its history.

Oxford History: An extremely well researched website maintained by an enthusiastic local historian covering many aspects of local history in Oxford and including histories of, among others, Walter Gray and John Galpin at <http://www.oxfordhistory.org.uk/>.

SS Mary and John Churchyard: accessed at <http://www.ssmjchurchyard.org.uk/home.php>. Provides lots of information about the development of the East Oxford suburb including the involvement of the area's Religious Orders in its development (amongst masses of other material).

East Ward Allotment Association: Accessed at <http://ewaa.grou.ps/home>. In addition to information about taking on an allotment and allotment community resources, this website provides a short history of the allotments, which was used in preparing this document.

UK List of Priority Habitats: Accessed at <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5706> provides information on habitats identified as priorities for conservation within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, including details of the plant and animal life they support