



Listening Learning Leading

Wallingford Conservation Area Appraisal

Adopted
April 2018



Acknowledgements

This document has been produced with thanks to The Conservation Studio who produced a thorough draft of the area in 2012. Their draft has formed the basis for this amended and updated document.

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South Oxfordshire District Council
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Introduction and Policy Context

A conservation area is an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance (Planning [Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas] Act 1990, Section 69).

The responsibility for designating conservation areas lies with the Local Planning Authority. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to review their Conservation Areas from time-to-time.

Wallingford Conservation area was designated on 22nd January 1969 and a boundary review was carried out in 1988. A draft Conservation Area Appraisal was researched and produced by consultants, The Conservation Studio, on behalf of the council from 2005 to 2012 and included a boundary review.

The draft Conservation Area Appraisal produced by The Conservation Studio has subsequently been revised and updated by the council's Conservation/Design Team in 2017 incorporating further proposed boundary changes, updated Local Plan policies and government guidance.

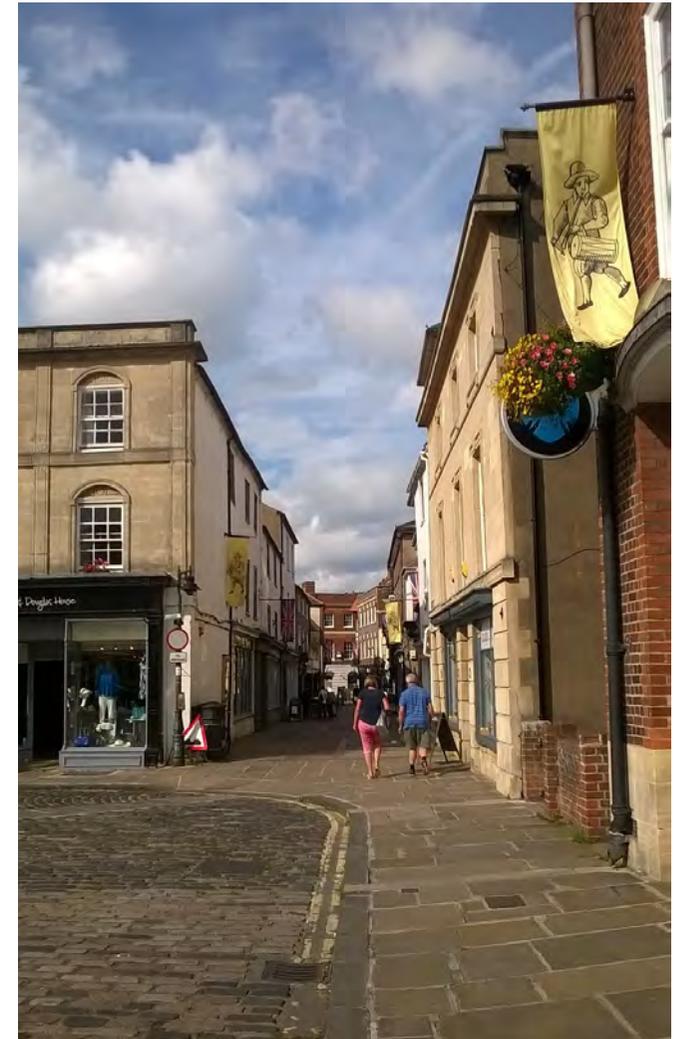
What does Conservation Area designation mean?

Conservation Area designation provides extra protection in the following ways:

- Local Authorities have general control over most complete demolition of buildings within conservation areas;
- Local Authorities have additional control over some minor development;
- Special provision is made to protect trees within conservation areas.

When assessing planning applications, Local Authorities have a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.

In addition to statutory controls, both national policy and the Local Authority policies in the Local Plan help preserve the special character and appearance of conservation areas and their setting where it contributes to its significance.



A view down St Mary's Street from Market Place

What is the purpose of a conservation area appraisal?

The aim of this Appraisal is to:

- Identify the special architectural or historic interest and the changing needs of the conservation area;
- Define the conservation area boundaries;
- Increase public awareness and involvement in the preservation and enhancement of the area;
- Provide a framework for informed planning decisions;
- Guide controlled and positive management of change within the conservation area to minimise harm and encourage high quality, contextually responsive design.



The Boat House pub on the riverfront: identified as a local interest building

Planning Policy Context

The development plan currently comprises the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 and the saved policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. Other material planning considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2032.

Full details of the enabling legislation, local development management policies and effects of conservation area designation can be found on the Council's website and in the advisory documents listed in Section 9.



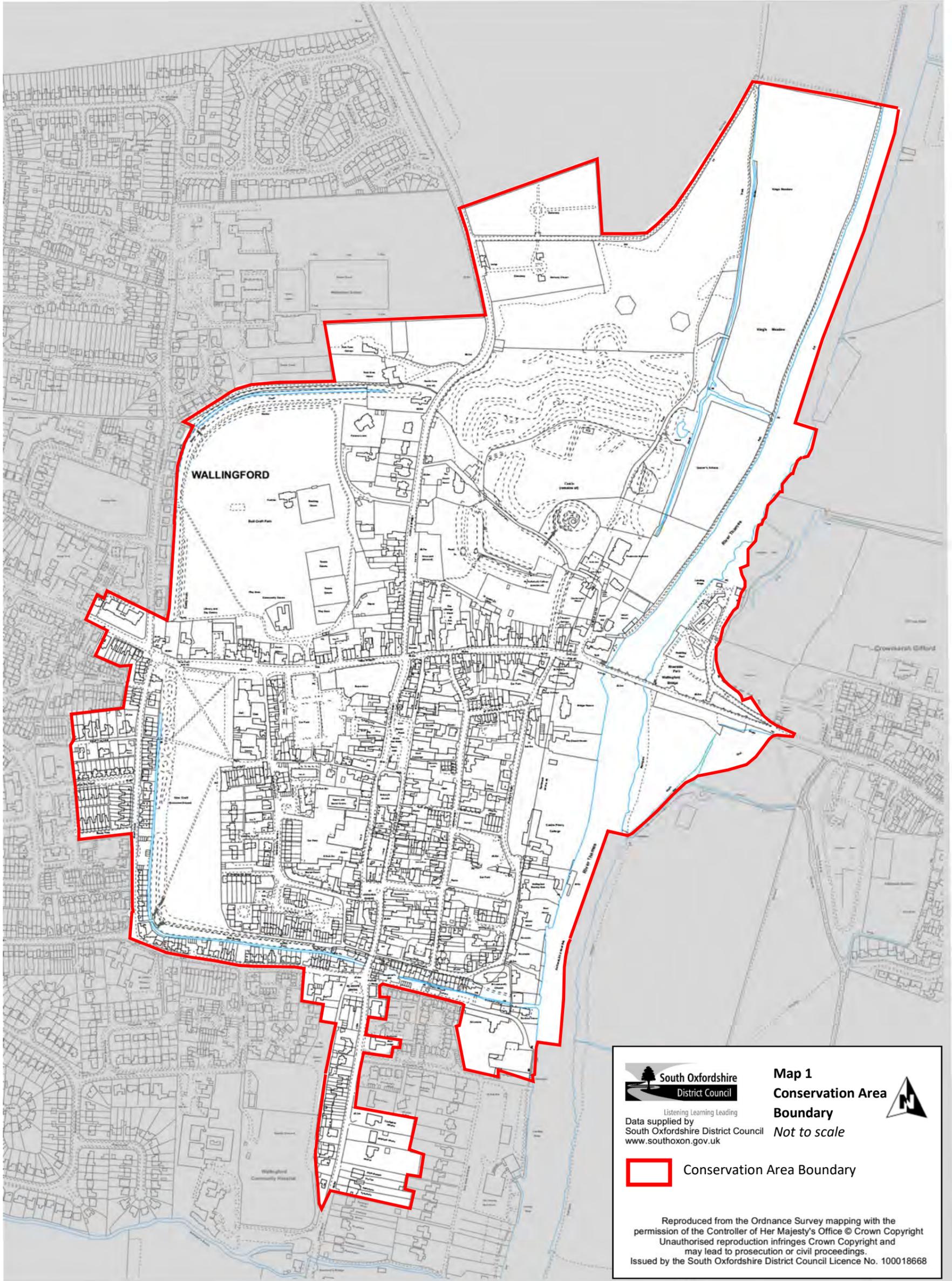
9-11 Castle Street, 20th century terraced houses (left) within historic street scene

Consultation

Consultation is an important part of the designation process. Local views were sought prior to the alteration or designation of the conservation area and suggestions and comments welcomed. The consultation period for this document and the revised boundary ran from 11 October to 22 November 2017. A public exhibition open day was held at Centre 70 on 8 November 2017. Notice of a newly designated or altered conservation area is publicised in the London Gazette, a local newspaper and registered in the Local Land Charges Register.



Chalmore House on the west side of Reading Road proposed for inclusion within the conservation area



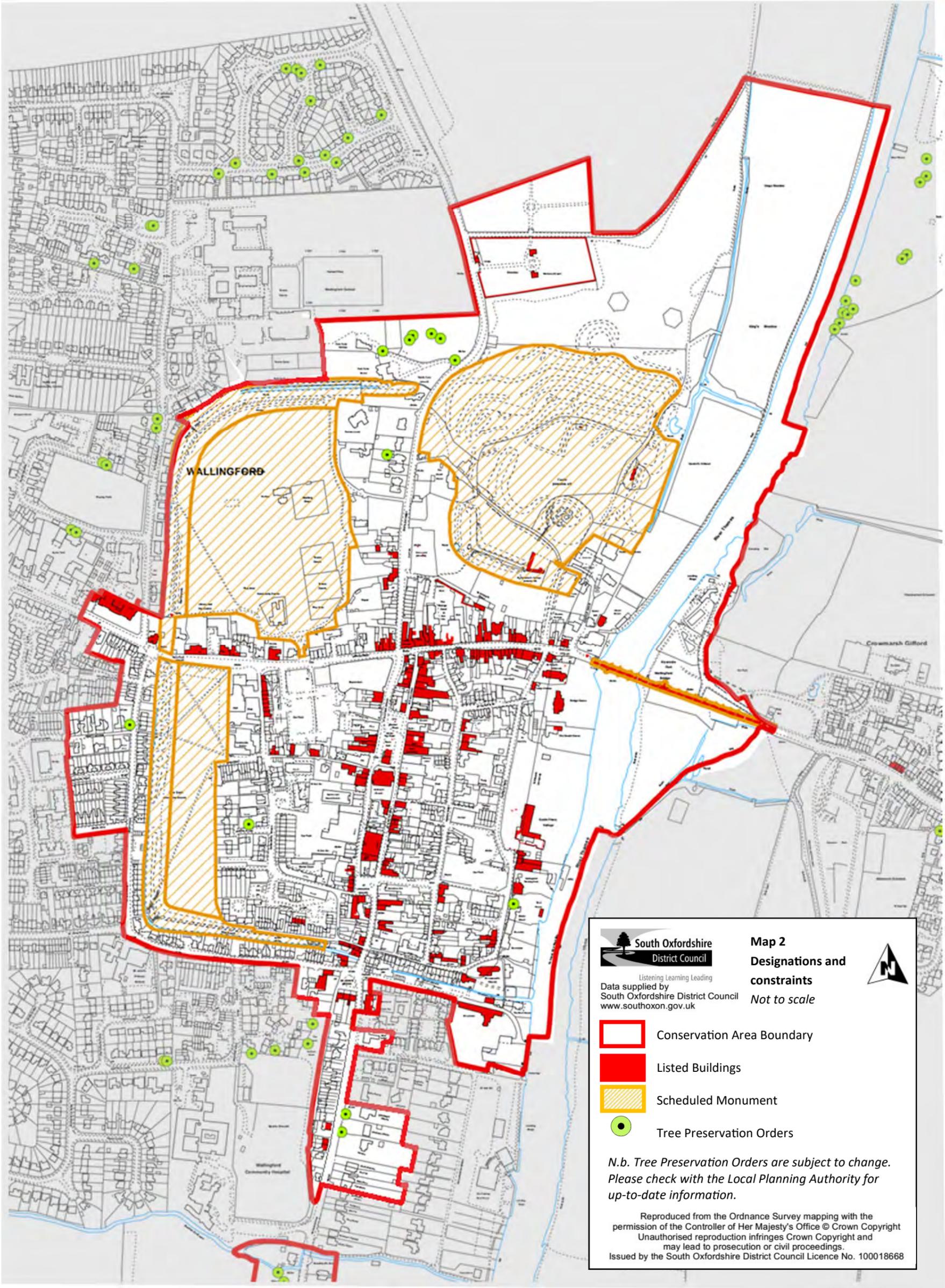

Map 1
Conservation Area
Boundary


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 Conservation Area Boundary

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2. Summary of Special Interest

The primary significance of Wallingford conservation area is as a town located on an important river crossing over the River Thames. It became a major historical military strategic site under the Saxons and has the best-preserved town plan of this period in England complete with 11th century motte and bailey castle. Wallingford also developed as an important market centre with exclusive trade links via river and road from early times.

This assessment of significance follows the framework set out in Historic England's 2008 document *Conservation Principles*:

Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical value: the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present - it tends to be illustrative or associative.

Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

Evidential value: high (national importance)

There is high evidential value in the archaeological remains of Wallingford which consists of both the below-ground archaeological remains and its buildings. There is yet more to be discovered in terms of below and above ground archaeology with archaeological reports emerging with new information regularly.

Significant archaeological investigation was carried out during the early 21st century encapsulated by the Wallingford Burh to Borough Research Project. This discovered large numbers of finds both within and out of the Saxon town walls and supported the understanding that the Saxon town was initially designed as a fortress rather than as a town.

Large numbers of finds were discovered and dated in the areas outside of the Saxon defences and particularly in the area to the south suggesting that there was settlement in Wallingford long before the Saxon development of the town. The findings of this project in combination with the reports on previous major digs culminated in a published monograph by The Society for Medieval Archaeology (2013).



*St Lucians (rear elevation), listed at grade II**

Historical value: high (nationally important)

Wallingford conservation area has high historical illustrative value from pre-historic and Roman times to the present day. This is represented in the town's evolution and form; the persistence of ancient routes, the remarkable survival of the Saxon street plan, defensive earthworks, the moated castle site and the range of buildings from Medieval times to the present day which includes the urban expansions of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Each character area defined within this appraisal has a distinct historic character, which adds to the historic interest of the whole conservation area.

Wallingford conservation area has high associational value in its royal connections. King Alfred developed Wallingford as a defensive military town to protect Wessex from the Danes in the Saxon period. Wallingford Castle was later built on instruction from William the Conqueror and thereafter became an important royalist residence and stronghold.

It was held by Empress Matilda during the 12th century civil war and after the war the town was granted a Charter by Matilda's son and heir Henry II. The castle was almost continuously a royal residence until the time of King Henry VIII.

Wallingford then played a pivotal role in the English Civil War, being the last major royalist stronghold to surrender in 1646.

Wallingford also holds importance as the home of Judge William Blackstone of Castle Priory whose 18th Century *Commentaries on the Laws of England* helped shape the legal system and Constitution of the newly created United States of America.

Aesthetic value: medium to high (regional and national importance)

Wallingford conservation area's aesthetic interest arises from the architectural

qualities of individual buildings, the landscape and river setting, ancient earthworks, Saxon enclosures and street plan. The open green spaces of the Kinecroft, Bullcroft and Castle Meadows are offset by the close-knit nature of the streets in between. The Victorian and Edwardian extensions to the town consist of planned streets with individual details and designs that show conscious aesthetic intent.

Communal value: high (national importance)

Wallingford conservation area has had a historic communal use from early times as demonstrated by the development of the town with market centre. It has a thriving and active local community and its heritage value is enriched by the continuance of long standing local events and activities associated with leisure and religion.

Market Square is of particular note as a public space and houses the town's war memorial, town hall and the weekly market. The work of the LPA and Community Groups to improve the market place and other communal areas was recognised by Europa Nostra Awards in 1980 and 1987-88.

The open spaces at the Kinecroft and



Wallingford's war memorial forms an important communal focal point to commemorate those of Wallingford who gave their lives in the First and Second World Wars. The memorial was first unveiled to the town in a ceremony on May 22 1921.

Bullcroft provide important focal points and gathering places.

Other places with high communal value include the Corn Exchange and Town Hall which are important expressions of civic pride.

3. Assessment of Special Interest

3.1 Location and Geography

Wallingford is within south Oxfordshire on the flat, low-lying floodplain of the River Thames. It is bounded on its east by the River Thames which flows from north to south framing the eastern edge of the settlement.

The town is approximately 50 miles west of London, 20 kilometres (12 ½ miles) south-west of Oxford and 9km east of Didcot. The A4130, which connects Henley to Didcot, passes through the town centre from east to west. In the 1990s a southern bypass was provided to alleviate traffic congestion in the town centre.

Wallingford is well connected by road and local bus services to Oxford, Reading and Henley. There is a railway station at Cholsey, three miles away. Mooring facilities are available for those arriving by boat along the River Thames. The town lies on the Thames Path National Trail which runs for 184 miles from the source of the Thames to the Thames Barrier in Greenwich. Routes 4 and 5 of the National Cycle Network pass through the town.

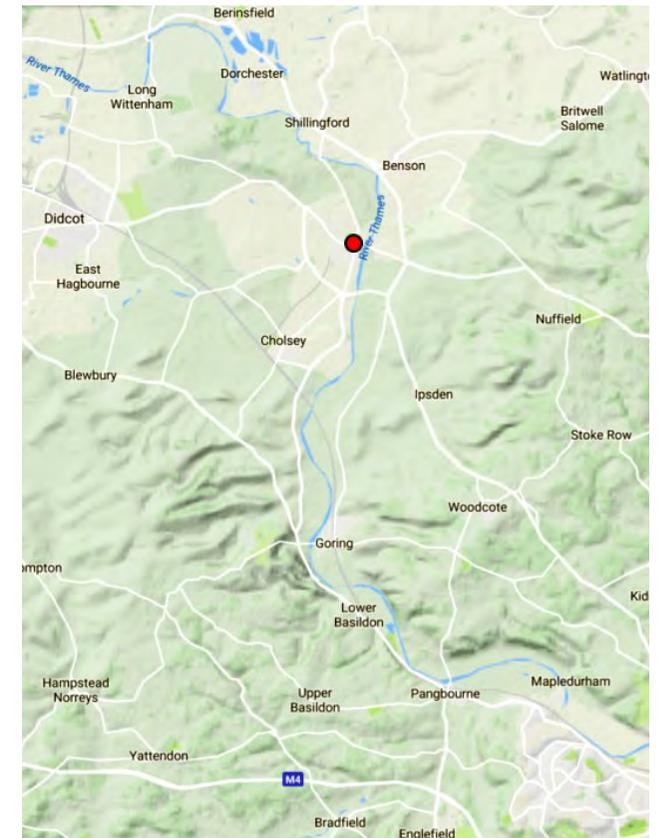
Wallingford lies on a gravel spur next to the river although the level of the land in

the town is generally no more than 55 metres above sea level. The town is immediately surrounded by the flat flood plain of the river, although on the east side of the river beyond Newnham Murren and Mongewell, the land rises gradually along a gentle escarpment. To the west, the land also rises to Cholsey Hill (74 metres) and Brightwell-cum-Sotwell (105 metres).

Whilst clay is found in the Vale to the east of the River Thames, the immediate geology is gravel and alluvium over chalk. This provides the distinctive flints and clunch (chalk building stone) which is typical of the area, along with deep red or blue bricks made from the local clay. Historically, the limestone of the Oxford Heights to the north of Wallingford has also provided a popular building material.



Local flintwork: roughly knapped and densely laid uncoursed in lime mortar



Topographical map of region: Wallingford is located at the point where the River Thames exits the flat plains towards the 'Goring Gap' between the Chiltern Hills and North Wessex Downs Credit: Google topographical imaging

3.2 General Character and Plan Form

Wallingford is an historic market town of national importance. The form of the town is succinctly described by architectural historian, Pevsner in his volume of Berkshire 1966: 'It is a planned town, roughly square with rounded corners and its streets roughly parallel or crossing at right angles.' The main crossing is Castle Street running north to south and continued in St Mary's Street with High Street running from the Thames bridge. The castle fills the north east quarter, its north west quarter is mostly open (Bullcroft). Market Place lies south of the main crossing. Ramparts are well preserved on the north, south and east sides.

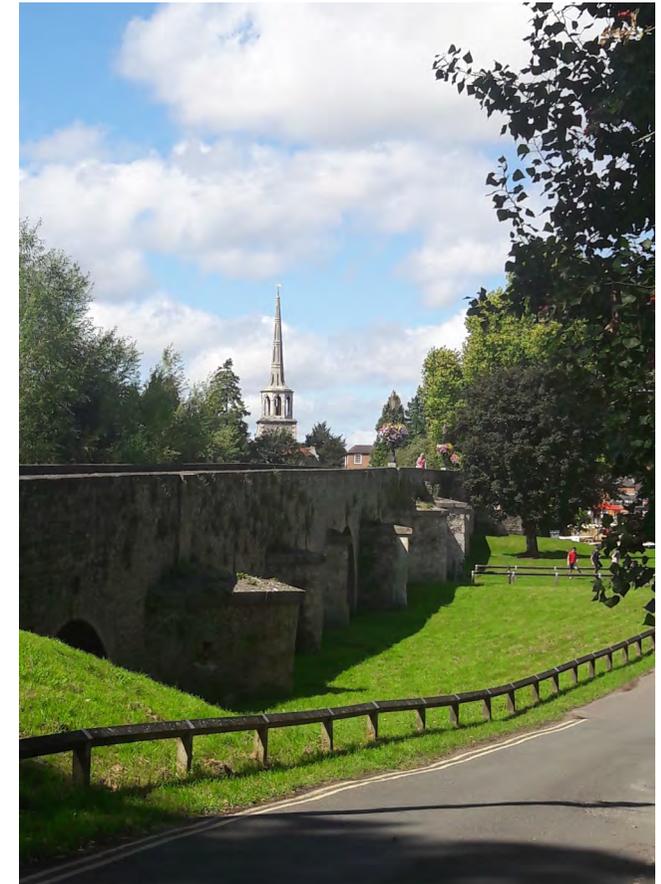
Before the formation of the Saxon fortress, many strategic routes converged upon the this point in the flat valley in one of the few locations where the River Thames was shallow enough to be forded all year round. Its early evolution as a settlement can be traced back to its basic geography and the needs of early people.

Wallingford's subsequent development was led by the strategic political demands of King Alfred. The Saxon street plan can still be traced in the present grid layout. The north-eastern quarter of the town was

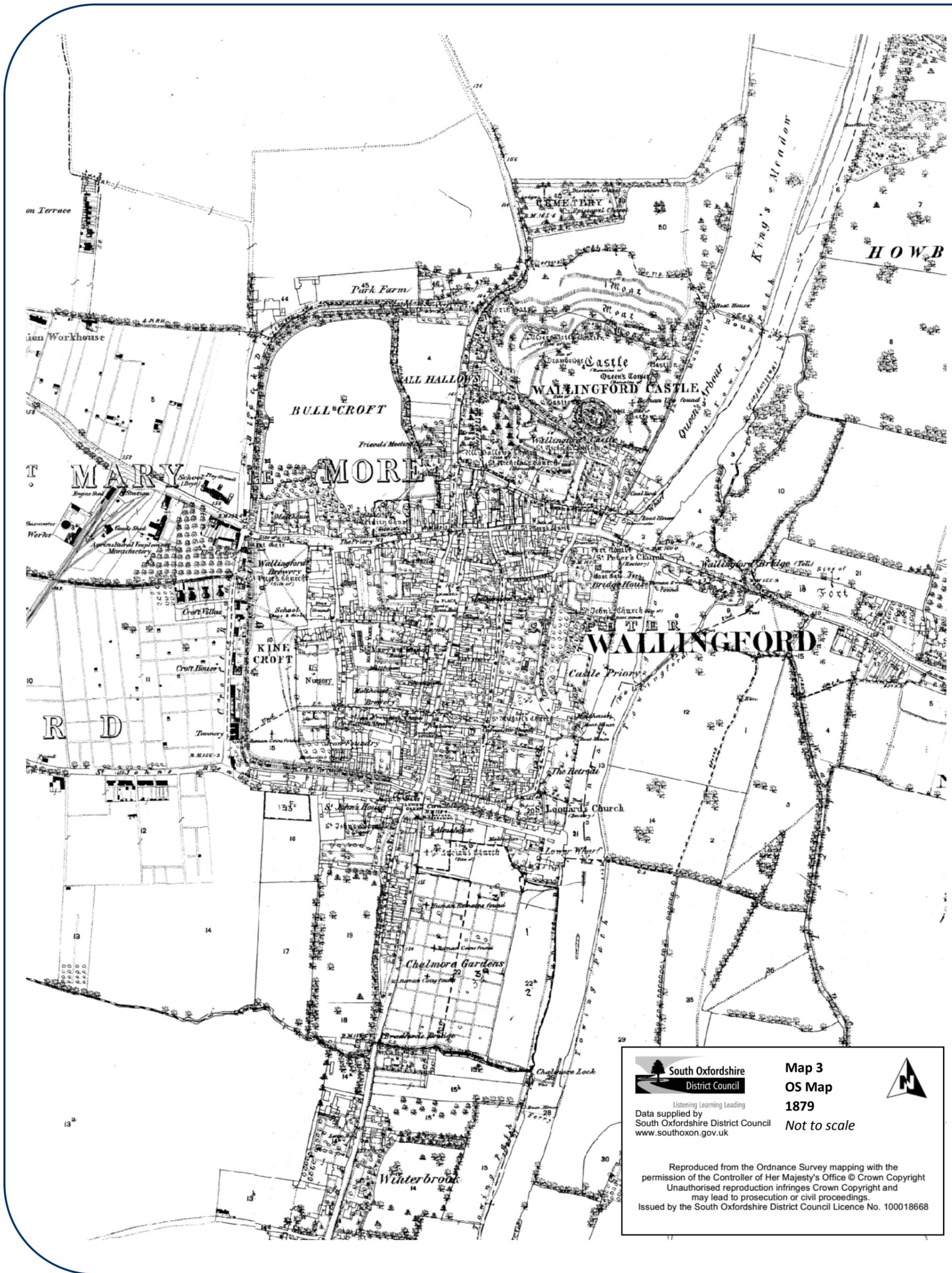
occupied by the castle and the north-western quarter by a Benedictine Priory. The castle site now forms open land as does the land occupied by the dissolved priory, the area now known as Bullcroft.

The southern portion of the fortress developed as a residential area and town. 'Crofts' consisting of smallholdings occupied the area. Archaeological investigation has revealed that the present open area of land in the south-western quarter known as Kinecroft held properties in the 11th to 13th centuries along the line of a continuation of the present Church Lane.

The town's medieval form maintained the established Saxon layout but eventually divided the land into smaller strips to form burgage plots. These consisted of long narrow plots extending back from the main roads with buildings cheek by jowl on the road frontage, often with service lanes providing access to the rear of the plot. This distinctive urban form still survives in Wallingford and is best preserved on the eastern half of the town on High Street and St Mary's Street, with Wood Street and St Peter's Street retaining evidence of having serviced the rear of these plots.



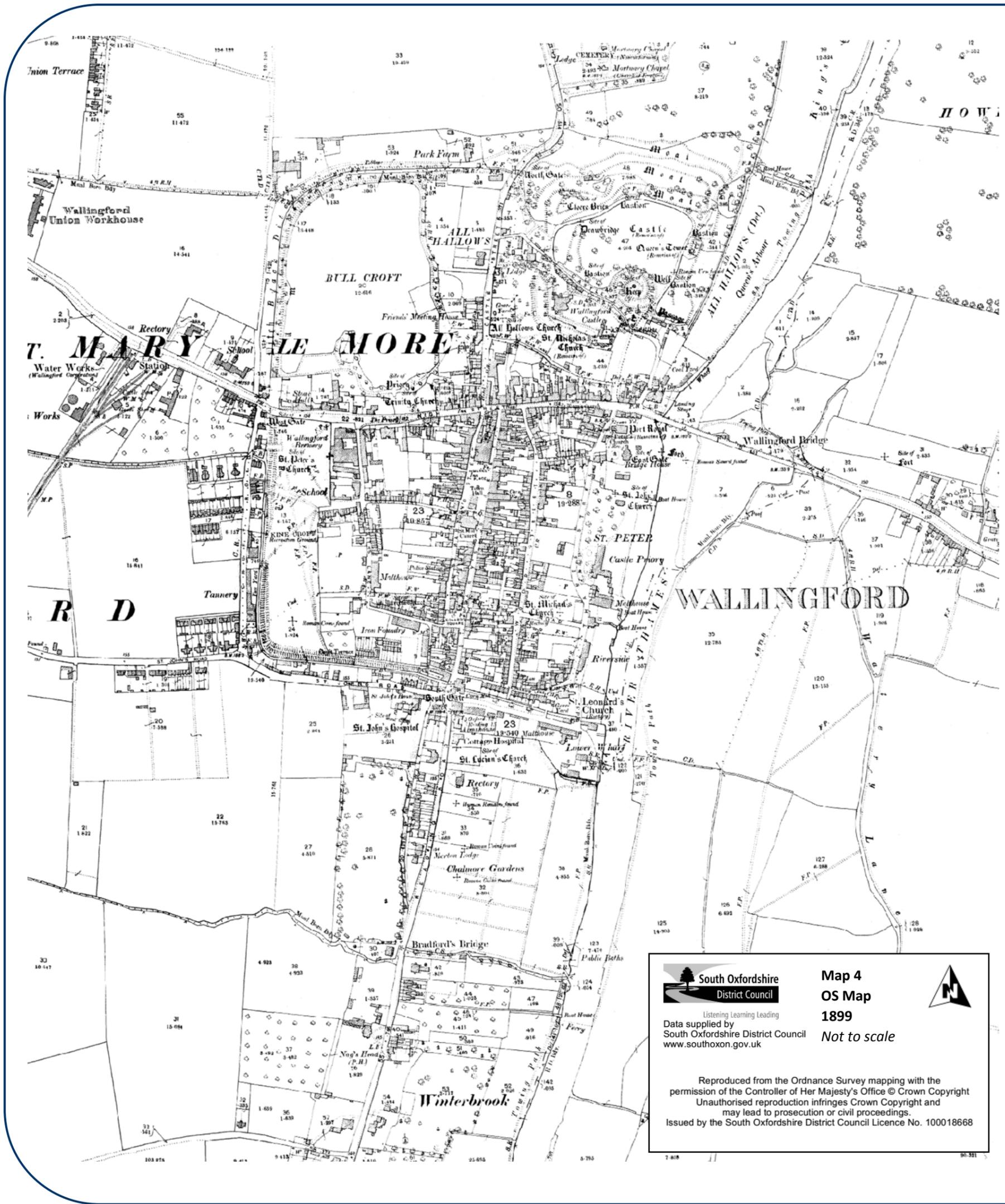
The bridge approach to Wallingford in the low lying flood plain to the east of the town. The bridge contains some of Wallingford's earliest surviving historic fabric within some of its archways

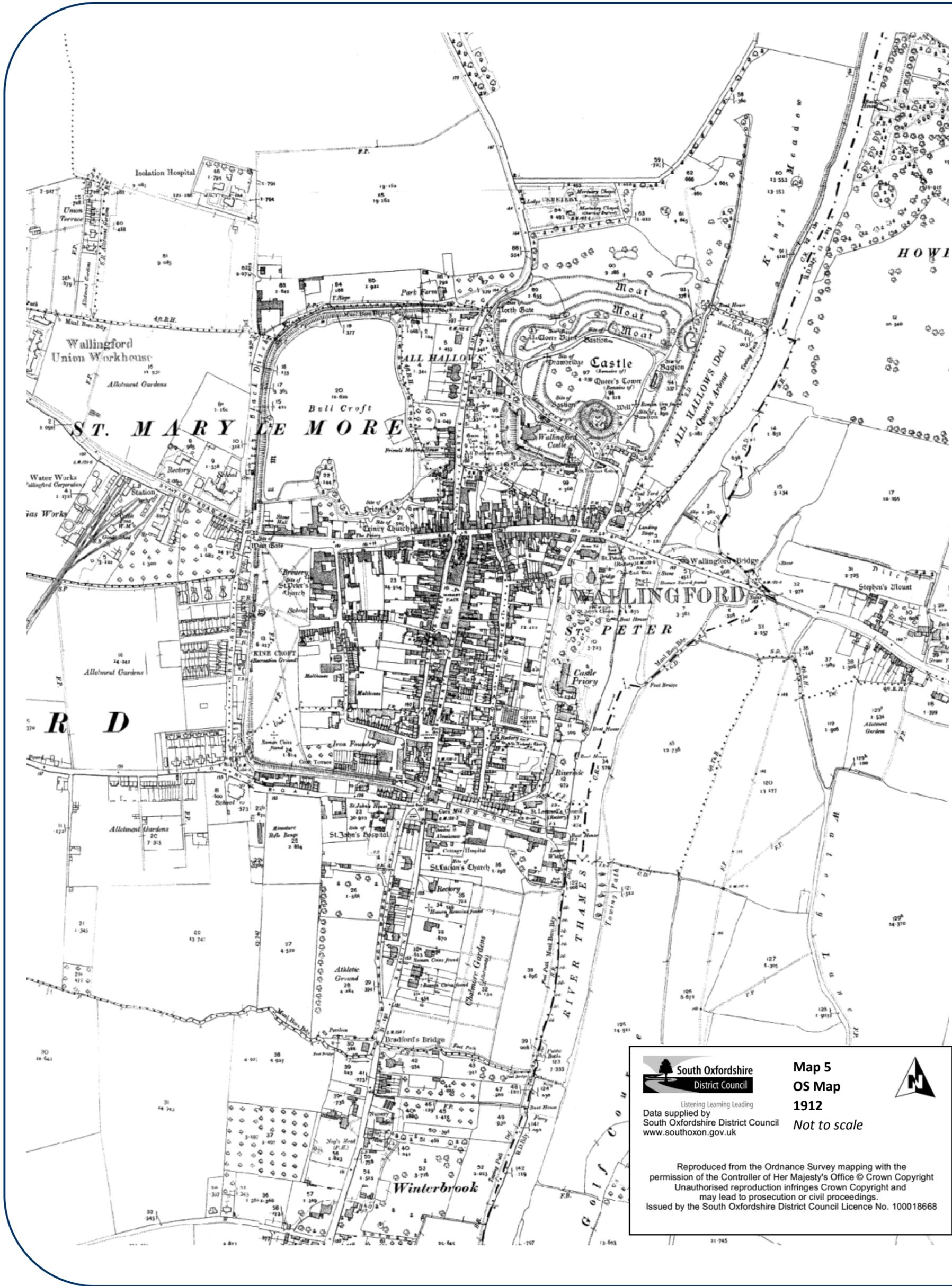



South Oxfordshire District Council
 Map 3
 OS Map
 1879
 Not to scale

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Map 5
OS Map
1912
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The earliest buildings that survive in Wallingford are from the medieval period. Notable for their early date are the ruins of Wallingford Castle, St Leonards Church and Wallingford Bridge. Remains of the 13th century bridge can still be seen within the fabric of the existing bridge and show the important role that the bridge has played as a gateway to the town through history.

Subsequently Wallingford flourished as a market town. Although few changes were made to the planform of the town, its appearance changed. Notably in the 18th century, some new buildings were constructed and medieval were buildings re-

fronted. Terraced housing and small cottages sprang up beyond the main streets throughout the southern portion of the town and on its outskirts to house the burgeoning workforce.

The arrival of the Wallingford railway branch line to the west of the town embankments contributed the next phase of change. The areas surrounding the original Saxon town plan began to develop in earnest for the first time. Terraces of workers dwellings and villas sprung up along Croft Road and St Johns Road, along the Reading Road and throughout the town. Along with this expansion came the allocation of land for

allotments and the building of schools and important civic buildings.

By the early 20th century, larger houses for the burgeoning middle classes had filled the larger gaps on Castle Street and to the west side of Reading Road. During the mid to late 20th century the town expanded significantly to the west with new roads serving large housing estates between its peripheral roads. Today, Wallingford remains inextricably linked to the River Thames and the activities along the river, which provide an active, vibrant and very attractive setting to the town.



St Leonards Church: one of Wallingford's earliest surviving buildings



Riverside, Thames Street: riverside villa home to the 19th century artist George Dunlop Leslie RA. The boathouse in the foreground was built for the artist in 1882 and is grade II listed as a good example of a boathouse at the high point of the late Victorian interest in boating as a leisure pursuit

3.3 Listed Buildings

The Conservation Area contains about 150 individually listed buildings. Of these, two are listed at grade I and eleven are listed at grade II*, 10% of the total. This is a higher percentage than the national average. Nationally, grade I and grade II* listed buildings make up only just over 8% of the approximate total of listed building entries. They are considered to be “of exceptional interest” and “of more than special interest” respectively.

The two grade I listed buildings are:

- Wallingford Castle (the remains of Queen’s Tower, the remains of St Nicholas’ College and a fragment of wall which may have formed part of the inner bailey)
- Wallingford Town Hall (built in 1670 with Doric columns on the ground floor creating an open sheltered area which was once used for market stalls – not only is it an exceptional historic building but it is important for its dominating location overlooking the Market Place, with a particularly fine Venetian window at first floor level).



Queen’s tower remains in Wallingford Castle Meadows; probably 13th century and listed at grade I

The grade II* listed buildings are:

- Wallingford Bridge
- The Quaker Meeting House (c.1724) off Castle Street
- Nos. 17, 18 and 19 High Street; the George Hotel ; St Michael’s House (Nos. 94, 95 and 96 High Street); and Calleva House
- Castle Priory College, Thames Street



*Calleva House, High Street: an imposing 18th century Baroque style building. Listed at grade II**

- Church of St Peter, Thames Street
- No. 6 St Mary’s Street
- Church of St Leonard, St Leonard’s Lane
- Church of St Mary, Market Place
- St Lucian’s and attached maltings, Lower Wharf

A full list of the listed buildings in the Wallingford Conservation Area can be found at section 10 of this document.

3.4 Local Interest Buildings

Some buildings are not listed but make a positive contribution to the special architectural and historic character of the conservation area. These buildings meet the criteria set out by Historic England in Local Heritage Listing: Historic England Advice Note 7. Although they are not statutorily protected, the effect of developments upon their significance can be considered within planning applications against the tests of paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework as 'non-designated heritage assets'.

Local Interest Buildings are identified in yellow on Map 6. Photographs and descriptions are included as an appendix to this document. Some examples of buildings which have been identified are:

- World War II Pill Box at the Riverside Park
- Riverside, Riverholm and Middle Wharf on Thames Street
- The Old Free Library and Methodist Church on St Leonards Square.
- The Boat House public house on the Riverside

3.5 Landscape Setting

Wallingford lies within the River Thames Corridor Landscape Character Area which is described as flat, alluvial land which forms the corridor of the River Thames between Long Wittenham and Goring, and includes the lower reaches of its main tributary, the River Thame. The immediate landscape is made up of large fields with a number of drainage ditches and low hedges. There is little woodland apart from a line of trees along the east side of the road from Shillingford. On the east side of the river, long rows of willows and other trees are more evident, particularly in views from Wallingford Castle.

To the immediate west is the North Wessex Downs AONB and Western Vale Fringes Character Area, an area of low-lying land

encircled by the chalk hills of the North Wessex Downs and the outlying Sinodun Hills. To the east, the Central Vale Fringes Character Area is a continuation of the chalk 'shelf', which is sandwiched between the Chilterns escarpment and the River Thames. This is defined along its eastern edge by the steep escarpment of the Chilterns, which leads to the higher Chiltern plateau, which is characterised by a row of ridges and valleys.

Important national landscape designations surround Wallingford. The Chilterns AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the North Wessex Downs AONB lie to the east and south-west of Wallingford respectively and on either side of the Goring Gap, where the River Thames breaks through the Chilterns on its way to Reading.



The distant Chiltern Hills AONB visible on the horizon from Wallingford Castle motte

