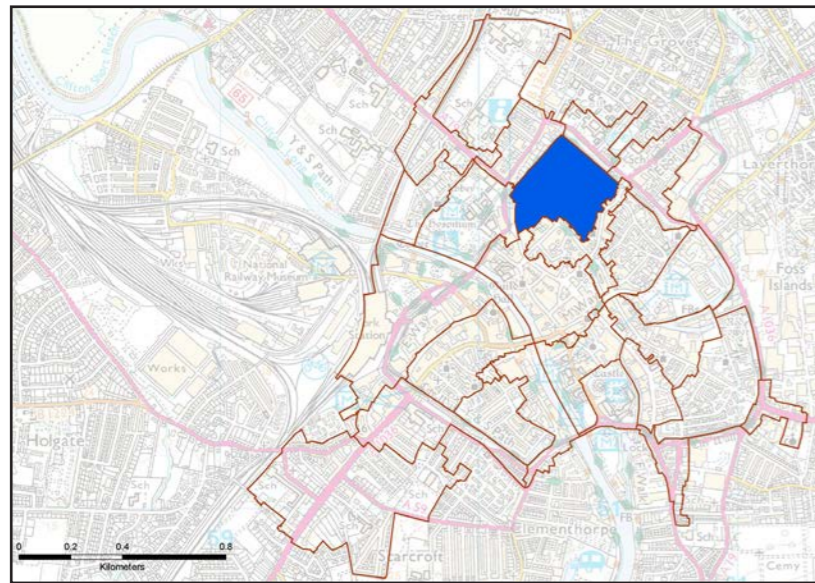


Character area 9: Minster Precinct



The location of the character area within the historic core.

Description

A Precinct is one of the defining features of the medieval English cathedral. It comprises an enclosure, filled by housing, communal facilities and administrative buildings. Originally subject to independent jurisdiction, they are often places of great charm and beauty. Some, notably Salisbury, are extensive and retain a strong sense of otherness behind their walls and gates. On the other hand York's Precinct has evolved into a less formal and less separate place, though one which nonetheless has a distinctive character of its own. It is also a place of contrast: whilst the north side retains much of its historic seclusion and is marked by green openness, to the south of the Minster the walls and gates have come down. Here the city comes right up against the Minster and the streets, cleared of traffic, throng in the summer with the millions who come to see one of the greatest buildings in Europe.

Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal

Archaeological background

Roman

Evidence for Roman activity is well known throughout this area. The Minster Precinct occupies a substantial portion of the northern half of the legionary fortress of Eboracum. Part of the fortress Headquarters, the Principia, is exposed in the crypt of the Minster. A barrack block was recorded in waterlogged conditions beneath the minster (EYO2994). A column from the north-east colonnade of the Roman headquarters building was excavated from beneath the Minster in 1969 and erected in 1971 to mark the 1900th anniversary of York (MYO1158). Further remains of a store building are recorded on the Historic Environment Record (MYO2161) to the rear of Ogleforth in line with the fortress wall.

Many surviving streets follow earlier thoroughfares such as Chapter House Street (Via Decumana) from the north eastern gate of the fortress. Part of this Roman road was observed during sewer repairs at 1 Chapter House Street (1996.412). Further parts of the barrack block and possibly a rampart have been observed at 23 Ogleforth (EYO721) and 4-7 Monk Bar Court (1993.2) respectively. Archaeological investigations at York Minster Library in 1995 also revealed four successive road surfaces (via Quintana) dating from the first to fourth centuries (EYO65). The Porta Decumana, the north-east gate of the fortress may survive within the medieval wall rampart (MYO2202) close to Monk Bar.

The fortress wall itself was located during historic investigations such as in 1860-61 (EYO2702) and in 1927 behind Gray's Court (EYO2665-66). A 0.9m thick foundation of the north-west 5 tower was recorded on the line of the wall to the rear of Gillygate (EYO2643). The latter excavation revealed a Severan period (AD193-211) concrete foundation noted immediately below the bedding of the medieval city wall. Remains of a clay bank were also noted.

Peasholme Green revealed further deposits associated with pottery and tile production as well as a cobbled road surface (EYO151).

Anglian-Anglo-Scandinavian

Evidence for post-Roman and Anglian activity is limited. Coinage and pottery is known from the nearby areas of Bedern and Aldwark. These areas were linked to the Minster Precinct area via Ogleforth (Ugleford). Recent excavations at the Minster revealed thick deposits of dark soil containing Roman building material within the Principia courtyard area. This deposit is typical of 5th century York and associated with post-Roman abandonment. Two postholes were noted which were sealed by further dark soil. A sceatta (796–c.830) was also found as was a stone-lined grave associated with a known Anglo-Scandinavian cemetery in the vicinity of the present south transept of the Minster. Further Anglian deposits are recorded beneath the Minster itself. The sites of the early precursors to the Norman and later Minster are not known precisely although a location to the north of the Minster is possible for Paulinus Cathedral and subsequent rebuilds in the 8th century onwards. There is little evidence of domestic settlement in the Minster area and it is probable that the later medieval walled precinct had its origins at least in the Anglo-Scandinavian period, perhaps coinciding with the elevation of the Bishopric of York to an Archbishopric in the early 8th century.

Medieval

Relatively little is known about the Precinct before the 13th century. The Minster (MYO1127) was completely rebuilt by Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux in the later 11th century and rebuilt again in the 13th to 14th centuries as the exceptional gothic edifice it is today. A Norman floor surface is recorded c. 1m below ground level outside the Minster entrance (EYO3002). A ditch enclosed an area that essentially preserved the layout of the Roman fortress which was later replaced in 1283 by a twelve-foot high wall and gates, to protect clergy and property. Only fragments survive of the medieval buildings of the Precinct. The Archbishops Palace (MYO1614) was established by c.1090 and rebuilt 1154-81. The chapel, now the Minster Library (MYO1590) and arcade survive. The arcade has been repositioned forming an attractive monument within the Minster garden. The original extent of the palace is unknown.

In the vicinity, evidence for medieval domestic activity is plentiful. At 4 Ogleforth evidence was revealed of intense occupation during the 14th century. Unusually this site appears to have been open ground prior to this activity and between the medieval and post-medieval periods. The site has been occupied continuously since the 18th century (EYO721). Several burgage plot boundaries survive on Low Petergate and Ogleforth. Further 14th century remains including a possible tenement boundary ditch, buildings and evidence of craft working were located at 2 Ogleforth (EYO663). These deposits were found generally at depths of c. 0.75-1m although in some areas along the frontage of Ogleforth the archaeology was as shallow as 0.25m below ground level. These investigations both concluded that earlier Roman and medieval remains were likely to exist at depths greater than 1.5m below ground level. A watching brief in 1999 for cable trenches running between St. William's College, the Minster and the Minster Song School mainly on Chapter House Street observed a series of substantial medieval buildings south of Deangate at depths between 0.3-0.45m below ground level (EYO190). The possible layout of the former Minster Yard was also recorded.

Post-medieval – Early modern

Generally the area surrounding the Minster was well-populated by the 16th century and included light industrial activity. Late medieval and post-medieval deposits were noted at St. William's College in 1998 (EYO168). Three trenches opened in 1991 at York Minster Library (EYO19) revealed post-medieval dump deposits and a late medieval structure. Both of these events reached depths of 1.5m below ground level and did not reach levels below the late medieval period. The Albion Iron and Brass Works against the city walls continued manufacturing until relocating as the Phoenix and Albion Works off Leeman Road in the late 19th century.

Visible character

Re-erected Roman column

Architecture dominated by the Minster, one of the greatest Gothic buildings in northern Europe

Remains of large medieval buildings for the clergy e.g. Archbishop's Palace, 9-13 Minster Court and Treasurers House

Large number of Magnesium limestone buildings

Highest concentration of 17th century architecture in the city

High number of listed buildings

Several Roman thoroughfares relating to Eboracum preserved in streetscape

Medieval street layout preserved elsewhere

Minster Precinct Walls (City Walls) and Bootham Bar visible from number of streets

Burgage plot survival is high on either side of High Petergate and on the north side of Ogleforth

Sub surface character

Ove Arup Development & Archaeology Study Research Zone: I

Deposit Depth (where known): Ove Arup Archaeology and Development Study suggests Roman deposits of a high quality exist in this area at depths of 3m to 5m.

Investigations suggest Roman and Medieval deposits exist at depths greater than 1.5m below ground level at York Minster Library and Ogleforth but other areas e.g. south of Deangate Medieval buildings at c.0.3-0.45m below ground level

On Ogleforth, late medieval and post-medieval deposits have been identified c.0.75-1m below ground level and as shallow as 0.25m below ground level on Ogleforth frontage.

Period Survival: Roman deposits relating to the fortress are well known throughout the area. Evidence for post-Roman, Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian activity is sparse while medieval deposits are common. Post-medieval and early modern evidence of occupation is also evident, possibly truncating earlier deposits.

Interventions (recorded on HER April 2013): There are approximately 47 interventions recorded on the City of York Historic Environment Record (HER). Few of the interventions are recorded in any detail and a brief examination of some grey literature suggests many interventions are yet to be recorded in the HER. See Appendix I for brief summary.

Significance

Overview: Archaeological remains of high quality dating from the Roman through to the post-medieval periods exist throughout the area. Roman deposits relating to the legionary fortress will have been damaged by the construction of the Minster and surrounding buildings. However, excavations have demonstrated that in some areas, even beneath the Minster, Roman archaeology survives well, where it is deep enough to be undisturbed.

The Minster Precinct is highly significant to the origins and growth of the Christian Church in Britain being one of only two Archbishoprics – the other being the Archbishopric of Canterbury. The siting of York's earliest Minster by St Paulinus on the site of the earlier Roman Principia or military headquarters' building is of interest. The subsequent limited nature of urban development in the area up to the present day has resulted in significant archaeological preservation in places. Dean Park, one of York's few substantive green spaces provides a useful backdrop to the Minster as well as helping to preserve Roman and medieval remains. Deposits of a high quality dating back to the Roman period are known to exist at an average depth of c.5m. The Ove Arup Archaeology and Development Study suggests natural ground levels at anywhere between 2.5m to 9.0m below ground level.

Generally Roman and medieval deposits are not expected at depths of less than c.1.5m below ground level. However, in some areas, such as Ogleforth, archaeological deposits of the medieval and post-medieval periods can be found at relatively shallow depths – as little as c.0.25m below ground level on the Ogleforth frontage. Occupation evidence in these areas may have truncated earlier deposits. Burgage plot boundaries survive in part on Ogleforth and High Petergate.

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

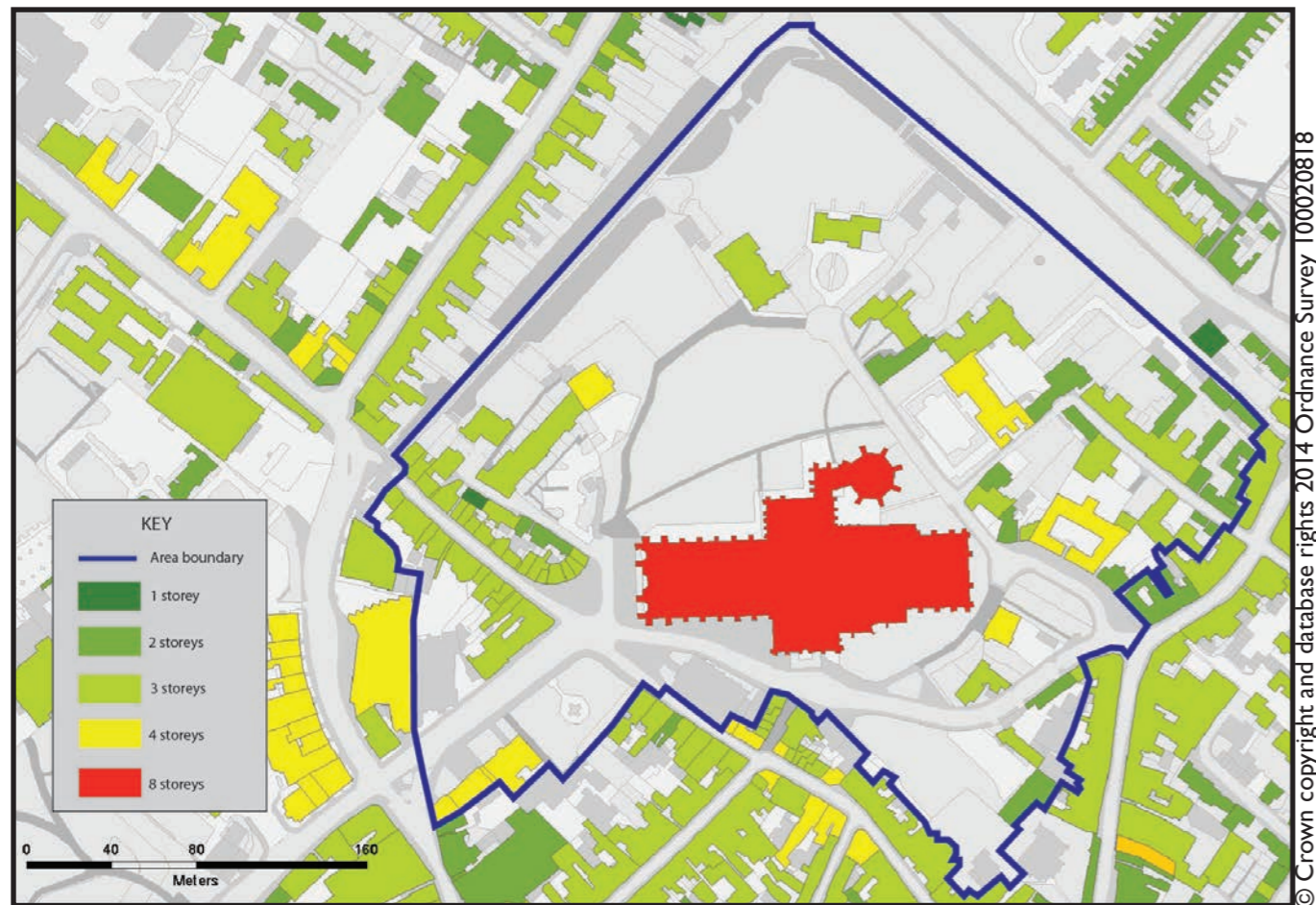
The Minster Precinct contains a high number of architecturally or historically significant buildings. Eight Grade I listed buildings including the City Walls, 23 Grade II* and 59 Grade II buildings.

In addition, three Buildings of Merit have been identified in the Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal - the former Purey Cust Hospital, the Minster Stoneyard and houses in Ogleforth.

The Minster Precinct and its Walls are a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The walls are sizeable extant medieval remains, which form recognisable landmarks, surrounding the largest, most recognisable landmark in the city. These walls make a substantial contribution to York's collection of significant landmark monuments, one of the city's key significances.

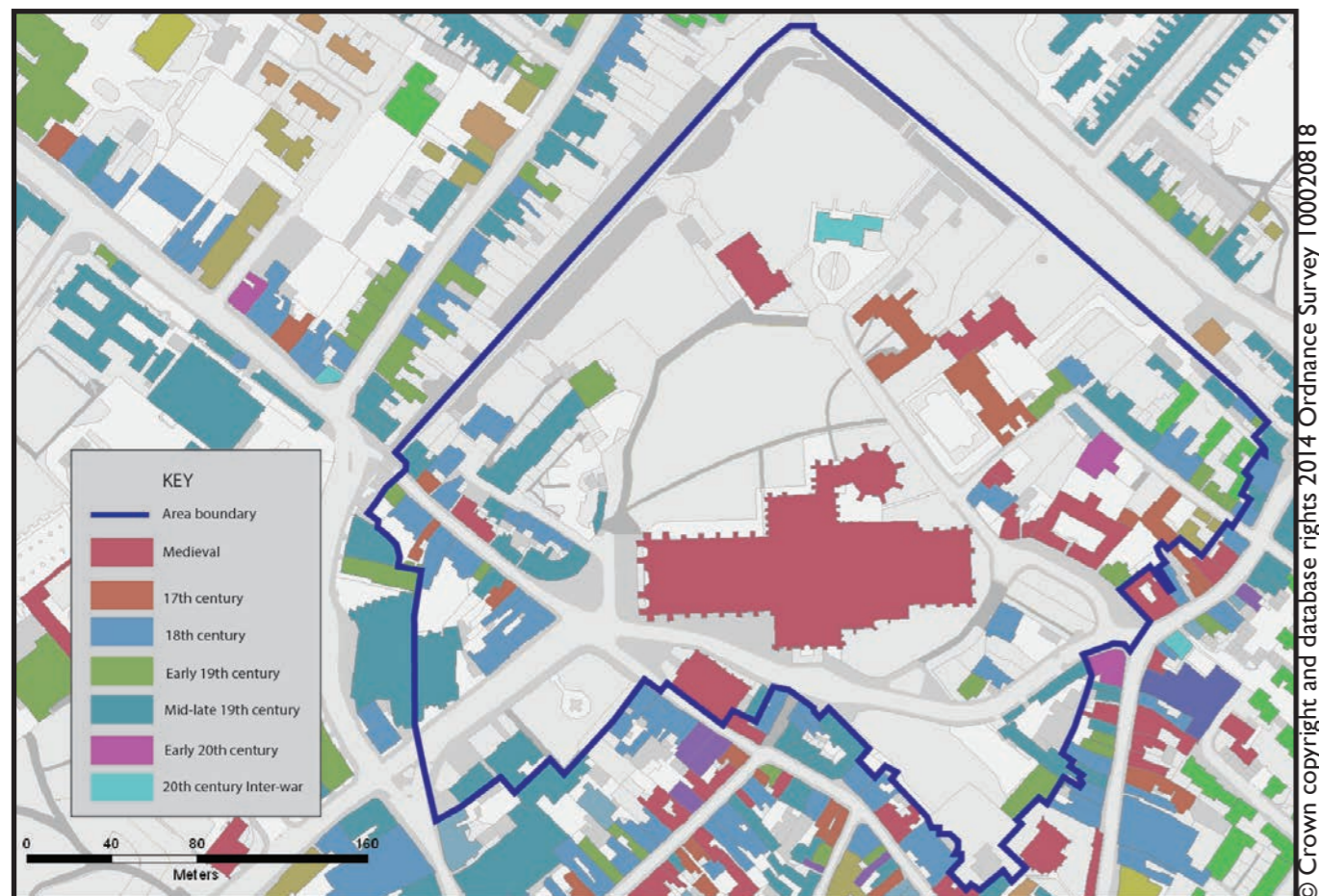
Streetscape Components: Paving within this character area is predominantly riven and sawn English Pennine Sandstone flag stones, found on Deangate (part), Duncombe Place, Precentor's Court, Minster Yard, Chapter House Street, Ogleforth and College Street. Pre-cast concrete flags are also used on High Petergate and on part of Deangate. Carriageways are generally asphalt although in some patches, e.g. College Street, and around the Minster, granite setts are present. The recent (2012/13) Minster Piazza scheme (part of the Minster Revealed Project) has created a new square for York replacing asphalt with a combination of sawn English Pennine Sandstone flags and bound gravel (up to Duncombe Place).

This area of the city centre contains a wide variety of streetscape components. On Duncombe Place telephone boxes, a post box, Broxap waste bins, bus stops and street lights are in use, all dating to the late 20th and early 21st century. Lighting units designed in an historical style are in use in this area. A small grassed area featuring a South African War memorial separated from the road by a line of trees provides an additional green space to the Minster garden. The junction of Duncombe Place and High Petergate features black iron bollards and cast iron fingerposts. A mixture of seating is in use alongside standard cycle racks. On some quieter streets, e.g. High Petergate and College Street, lighting is attached to the side of buildings.



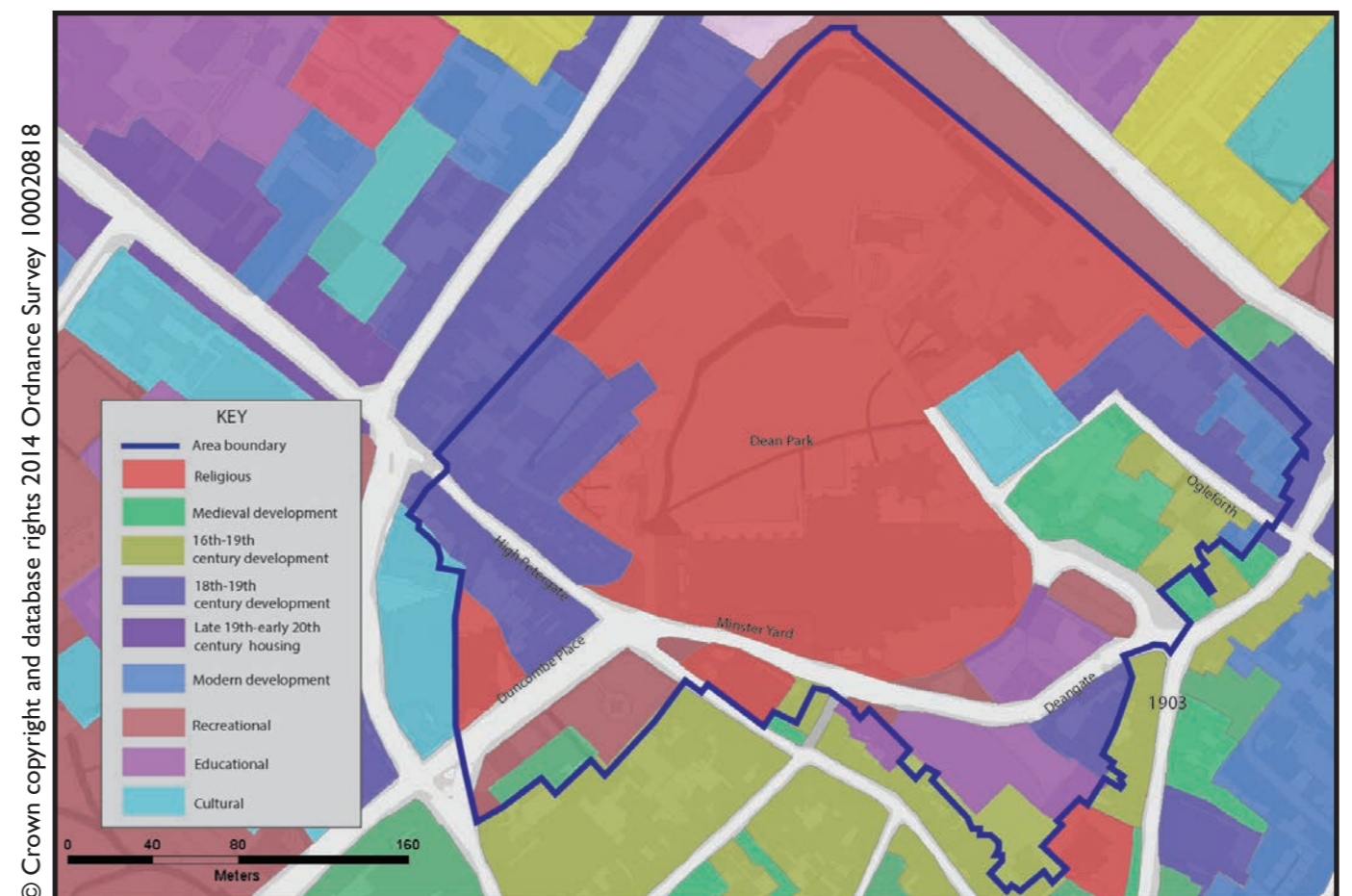
Above: Plan showing the heights of the buildings within this character area.

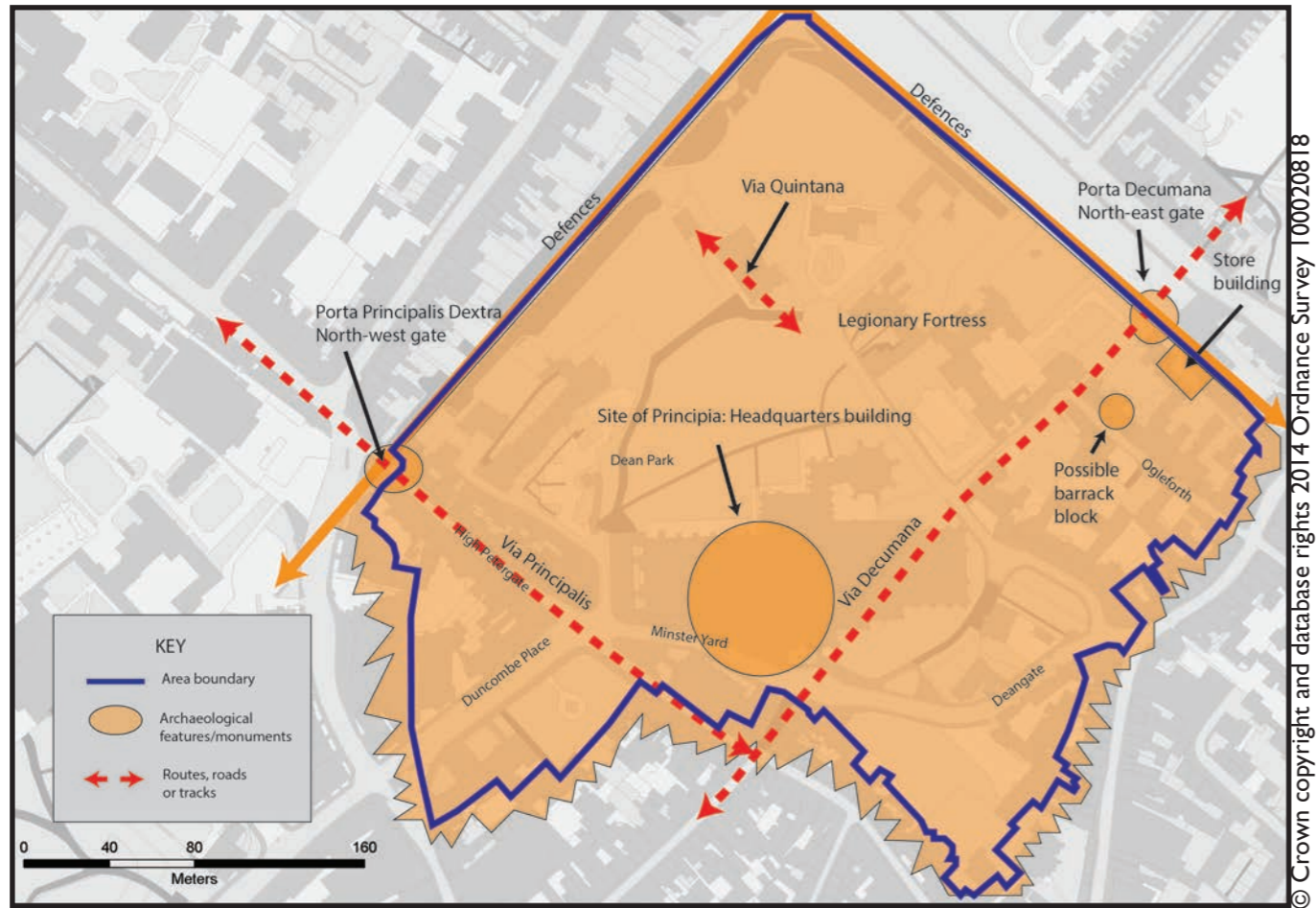
Below: Plan showing the construction dates of the buildings within the area.



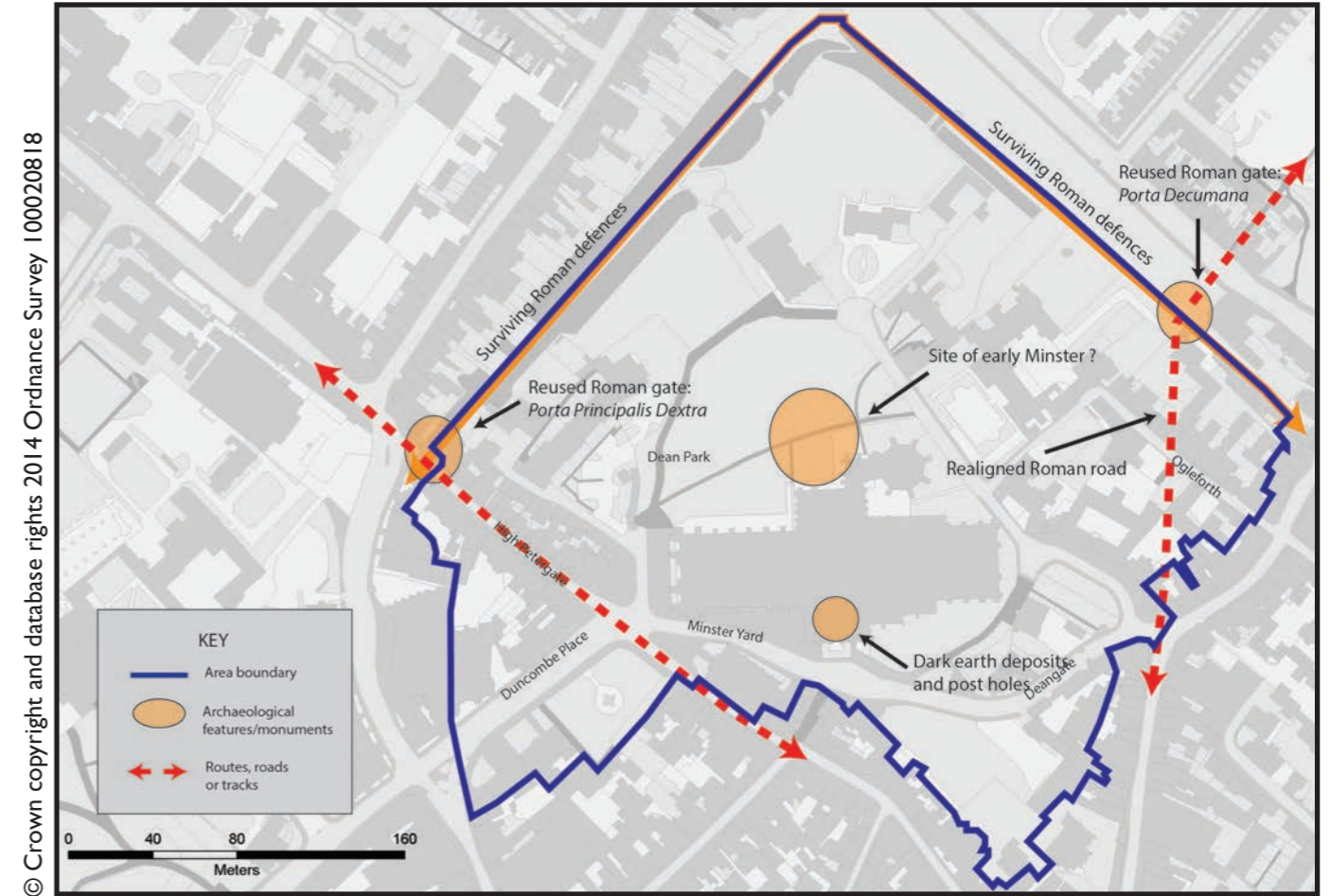
Above: Plan showing designated heritage assets within this character area.

Below: Plan showing the Broad Type characterisation of the area. White roadways indicate roads or lanes visible on the 1852 Ordnance Survey Plan.



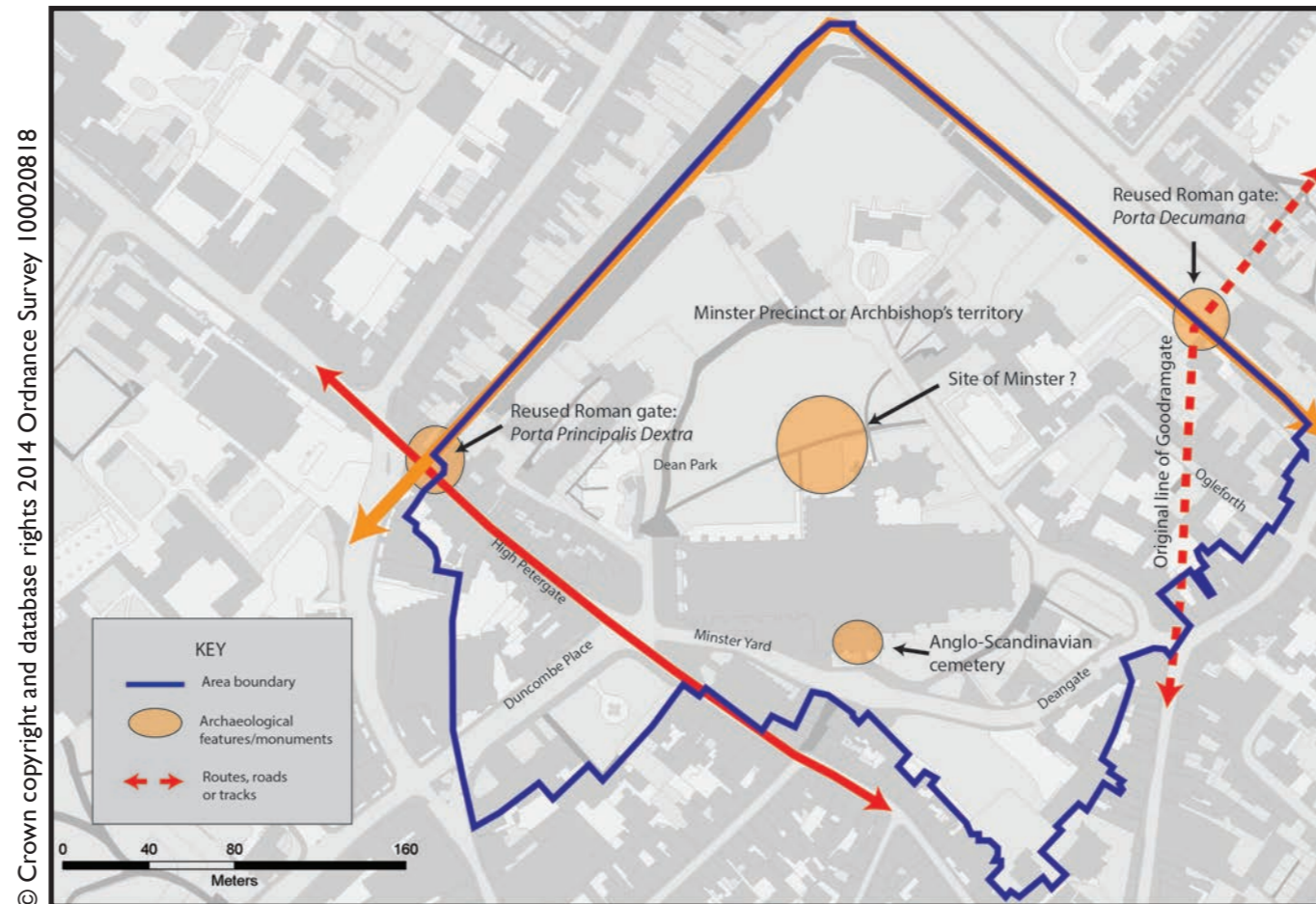


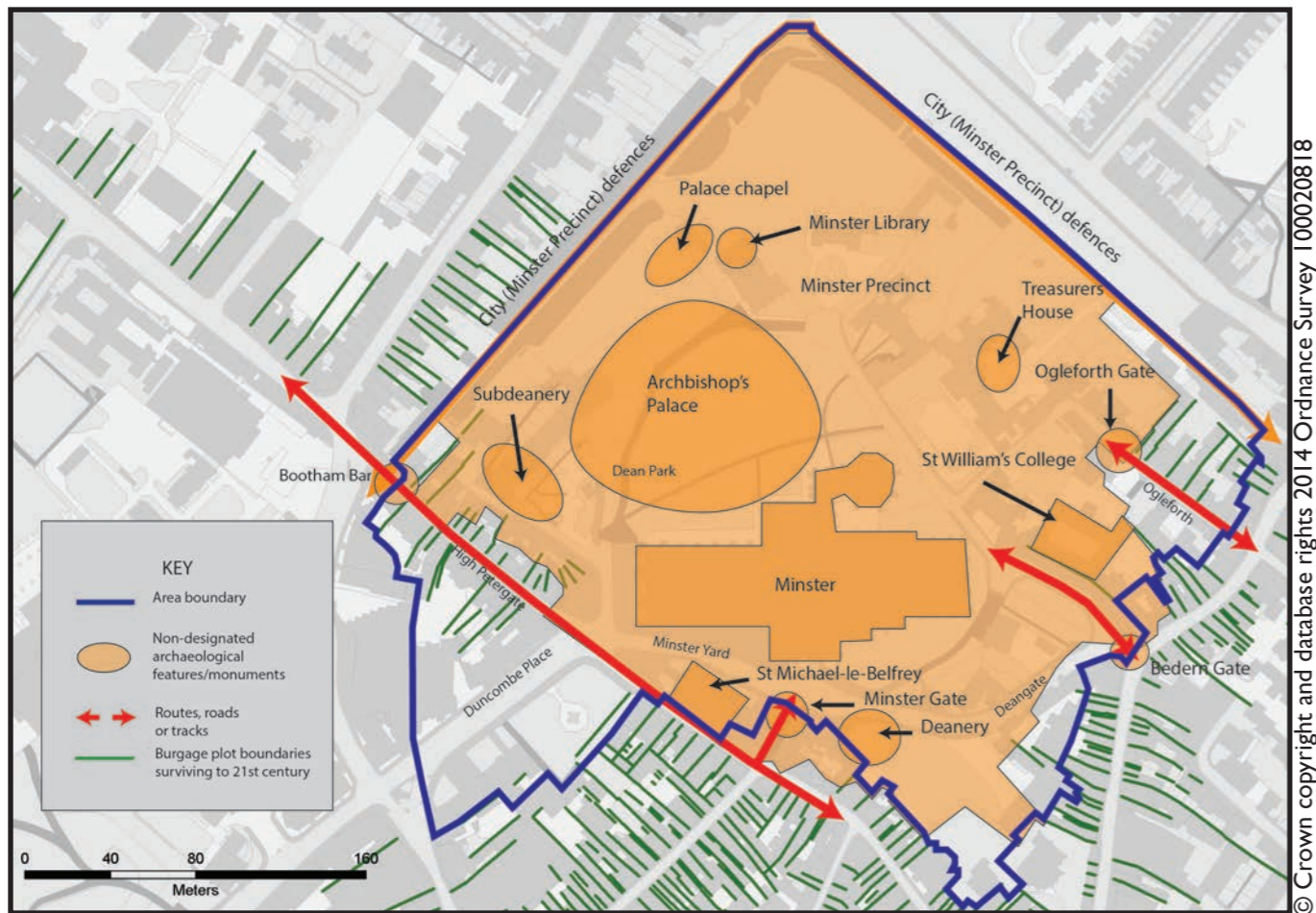
The Roman landscape.



The Anglian landscape.

The Anglo-Scandinavian landscape.

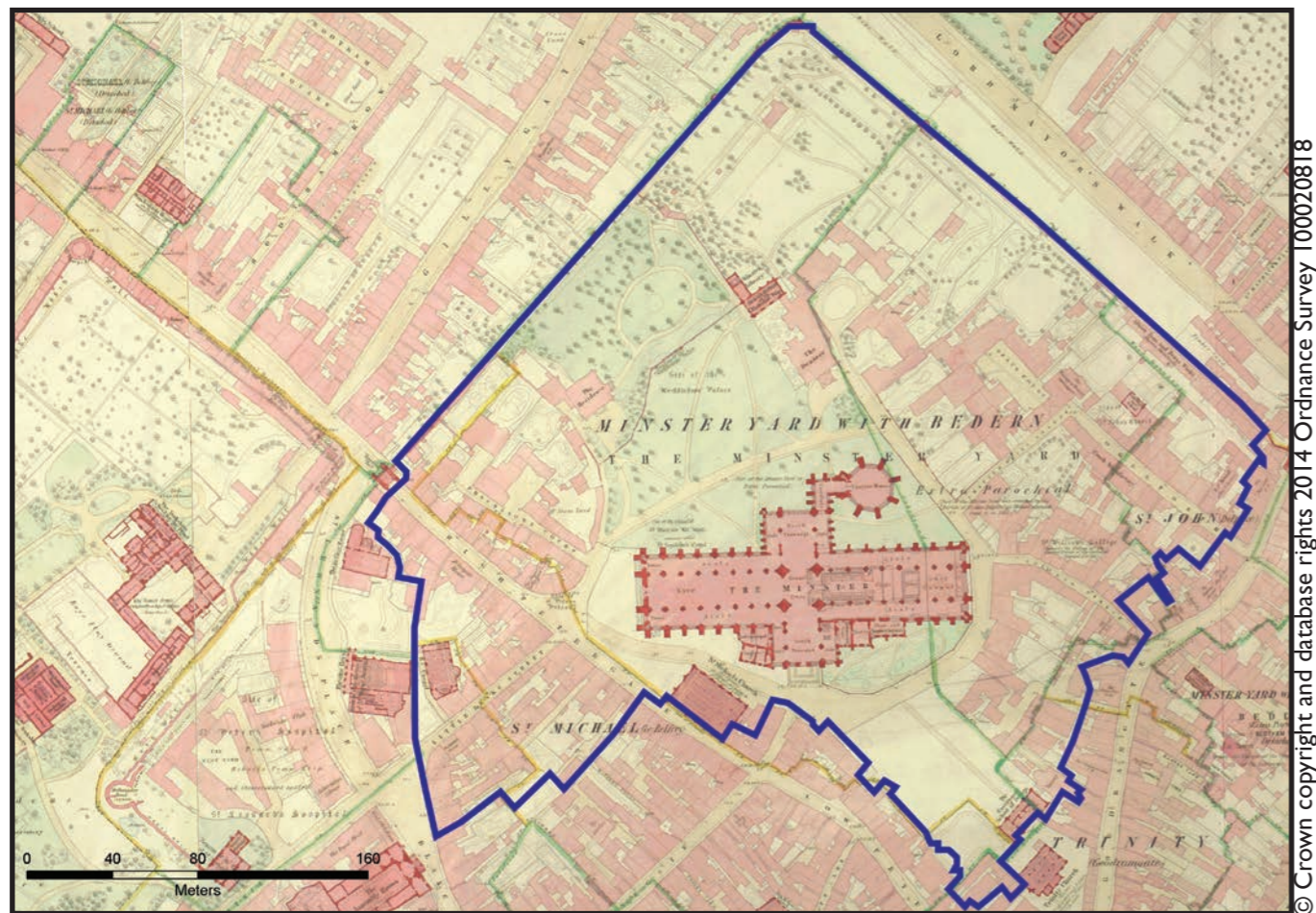




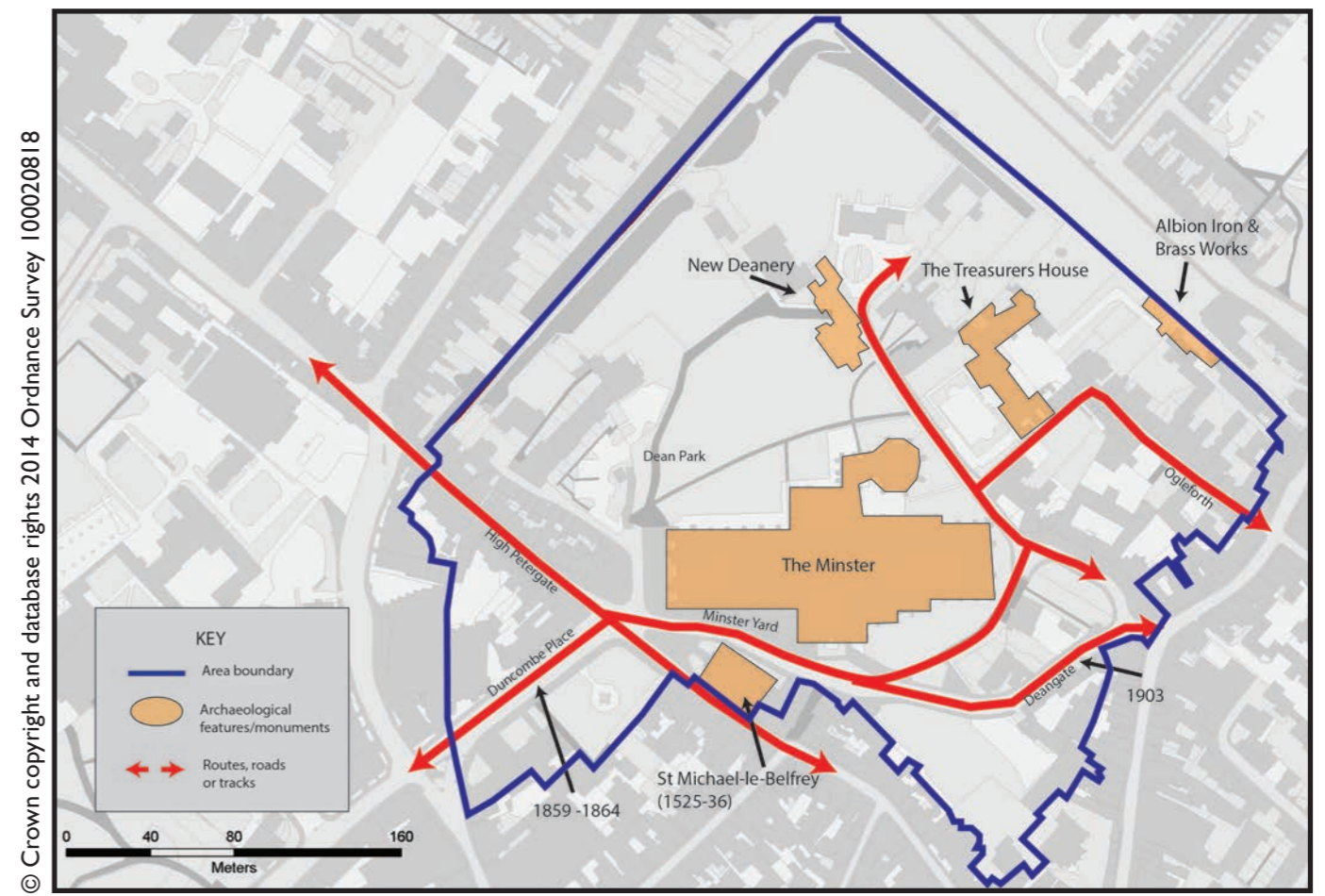
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Above: The medieval landscape.

Below: The 1852 landscape.



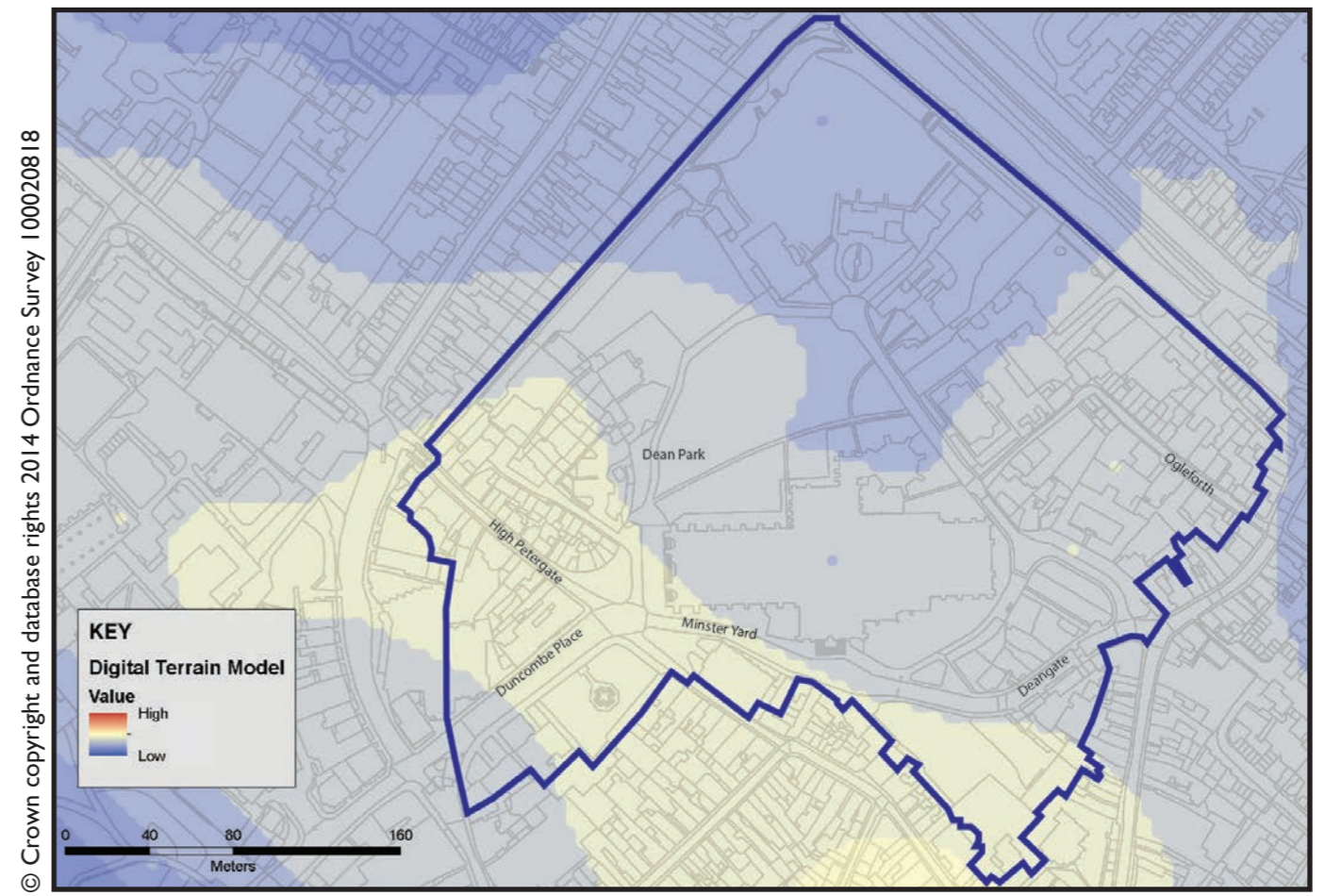
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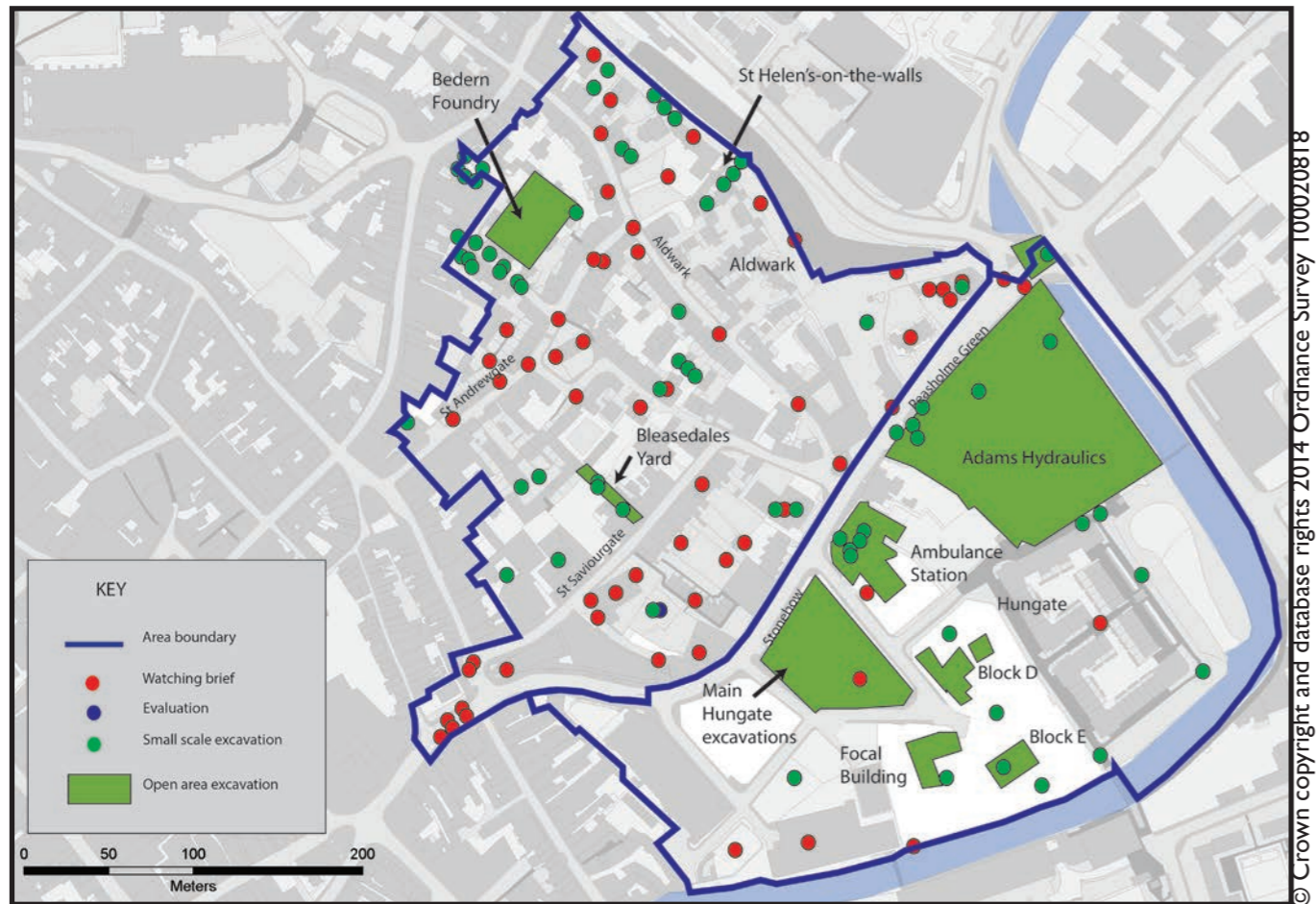
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Above: The post-medieval landscape.

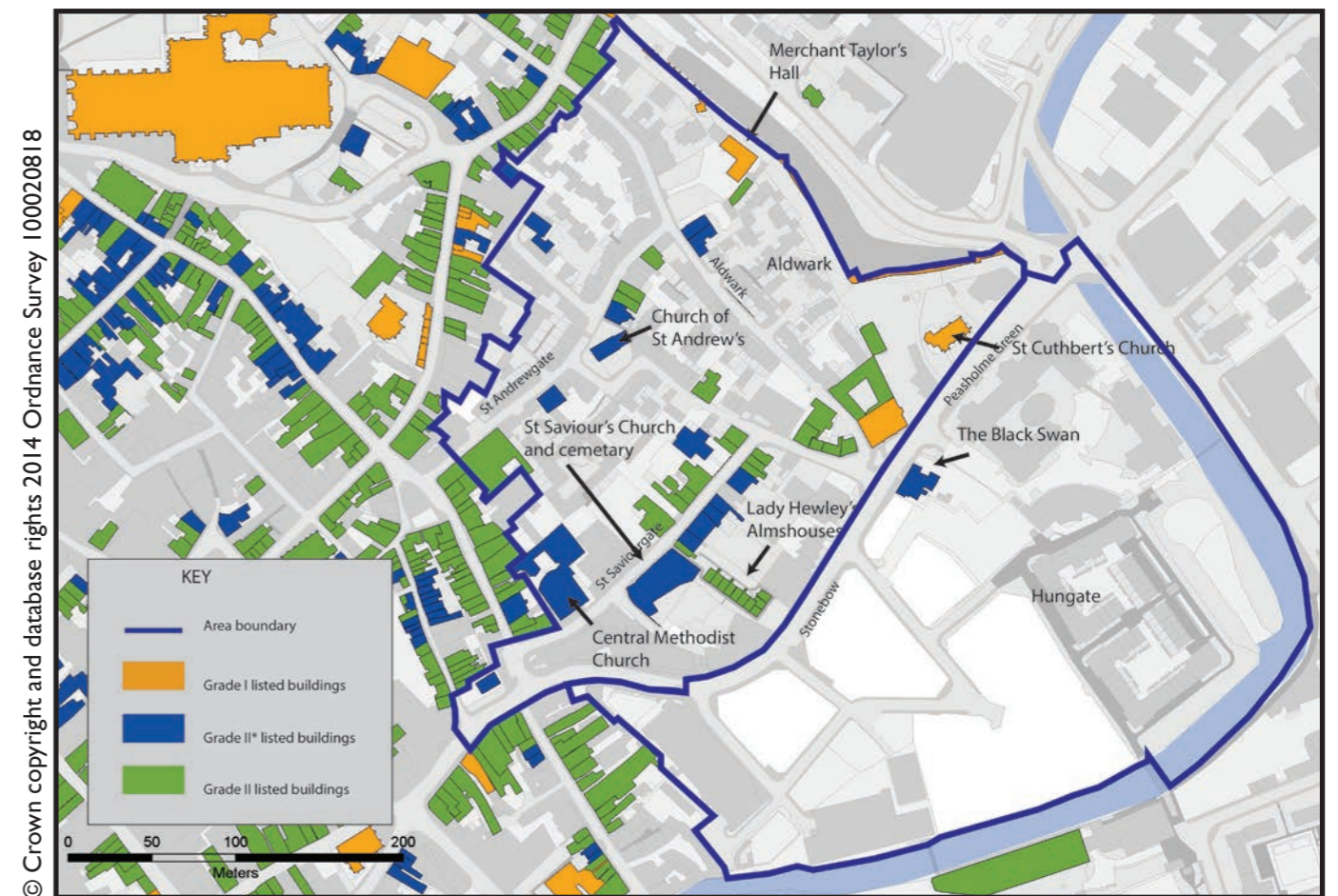
Below: The general topography of the area showing higher land towards Petergate.



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



Location of listed buildings.



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

Main Sources

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

Ove Arup, 1991, Archaeology and Development Study, York

YAT Annual Report 2011-12

York City Council Historic Environment Record (and grey literature report EYO663 and 721)

York City Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal- 9: Minster Precinct

Researched and written by: Claire MacRae

Graphics: Bob Sydes and Claire MacRae

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