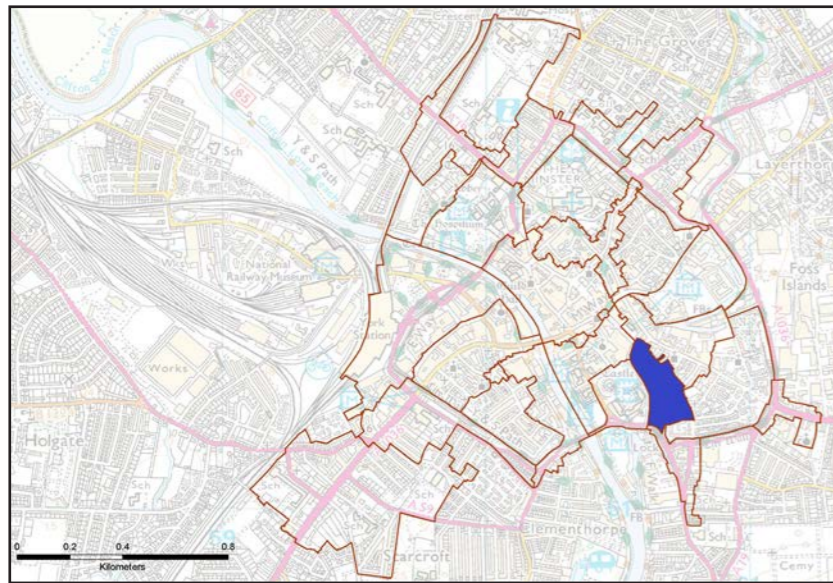


Character area 14: Piccadilly



The location of the character area within the historic core.

Description

Piccadilly was developed much later than the rest of the medieval city centre and has larger scale building plots, reflecting its industrial past. The lack of high quality retailers and historic buildings means it is not a destination for visitors, and locals mainly use it for car parking. At the southern end, the street's character is dominated by large modern office blocks which obscure the view to the Castle beyond. A number of buildings are in poor condition suggesting neglect and lack of investment over many years. Although the Foss runs through the area, it is almost completely hidden and unused.

Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal

Archaeological background

Roman

Roman activity is known within the area although the nature of it is poorly understood. Evidence of cobbled surfaces, ditches and structural timber has been located in a number of places along Piccadilly (EYO33, 34 and 39) but within fairly small investigations. The only substantive evidence of settlement and settlement related activity comes from George Street/Dixon Lane excavations beneath Medieval St Stephen's Church graveyard and on slightly higher ground overlooking the River Foss. The majority of the area up to and including modern Piccadilly was probably prone to flooding. The Roman road identified in Area 11 is suggested to cross the River Foss and kink through the area to the south of Dixon's Lane. No evidence has, as yet, been found to support this.

Anglian - Anglo-Scandinavian

Rubbish pits, clay-extraction pits, post holes and ditches ranging from the Roman to the Anglo-Scandinavian period were also located during the George Street/Dixon Lane excavation. During excavations on the former Fiat Motors site (EYO20) at the southern tip of this area, Anglo-Scandinavian occupation evidence was noted at considerable depth covered by medieval flooding silts of the King's Pool. The former Jewson's Timber Yard (EYO39) Anglo-Scandinavian evidence for industrial activity was discovered a mere 0.5m below ground level. Further evidence of bone and antler working is known from 38 and 50 Piccadilly (EYO33 & 35). George Street, formerly Nowtgail (Old Norse) probably dates back at least to this period.

Medieval

The Piccadilly area appears to have incorporated burgage plot boundaries leading from properties along Walmgate to the bank of the River Foss. These plots were broken up with a series of lanes including the present Dixon's Lane (formerly Church Lane). George Street (Nowtgail) led to Fishergate Bar and was the principle route to and from Selby. In 2005, Medieval burials associated with St Stephen's church (closed by 1331) were found sealing Anglo-Scandinavian deposits located on George Street/Dixon Lane. St. George's Church and burial ground (closed by 1639) was located on Lead Mill Lane.

Close to this on the corner of Mill Street and Piccadilly a watching brief revealed dry, stratified deposits containing medieval burials (EYO1991). The King's Pool was created in the late 11th century when a dam was built across the mouth of the Foss. This flooded the area around the new Norman Castle and the western half of this area, making an artificial lake from what is now Castle Mills Bridge to Foss Islands Road.

Post-medieval – Early modern

Following the drainage of the area in the late 18th century, several new streets were created in the 19th and early 20th century, including Piccadilly to Dixon Lane (c.1840's), a continuation to Parliament Street together with a new bridge over the Foss (1911) and Merchantgate (1911).

At the start of the 20th century, timber, builders' and coal merchants could be found in this area later becoming car show rooms, garages etc in the inter war period. Dumping related to the canalisation of the Foss and later industrial activity was noted up to c.4.5m thick in places during the Fiat Motors excavation (EYO29). During a watching brief outside Mayfair House, Post-Medieval tile dumps containing re-deposited human remains were noted (EYO3575). The construction of these large scale buildings will have had a negative effect on any surviving archaeology in this area.

Visible character

Neglected riverside setting

Large scale industrial building plots

Generally used as parking area

Piccadilly –wide planned street

Visible Medieval monuments (Walmgate Bar, Fishergate Tower and City Walls)

Sub surface character

Ove Arup Development & Archaeology Study Research Zones: 8 and 4

Deposit Depth (where known): Excavations have revealed that natural ground levels on Piccadilly vary widely from 0.25m to 8.0m below ground level depending on the amount of historic flood deposition there has been. The Ove Arup Development and Archaeology Study suggests archaeological deposits survive at depths of c.3.0m to 9.0m. However, some more recent investigations have produced archaeology at very shallow depths e.g. 0.5m below ground level.

Modern deposits are estimated across the area at c.1.0m to 5.0m thick.

Period Survival: Archaeological evidence of Roman and Anglo-Scandinavian activity has been found within the area although the best evidence has come from higher ground overlooking the River Foss. The depth of deposits within the flood zone of the Foss has significant Medieval deposits are sparse in the riverside area due to the creation of the Kings Fish Pool. Further east, some evidence of Medieval land-use exists in the form of St. George's and St. Stephen's Church and graveyards. Post-medieval archaeology has often been disturbed by 19th and 20th century industrial development.

Interventions (recorded on HER April 2013): There are approximately 22 interventions recorded on the City of York Historic Environment Record (HER). Few of the interventions are recorded in any detail and a brief examination of some grey literature suggests several interventions are yet to be recorded in the HER. See Appendix I for summary.

Significance

Overview: Piccadilly is situated on the Foss Waterfront (East Bank, South) and on higher ground to the east, occupies part of the enclosed medieval Walmgate area. The River Foss is clearly an important factor in understanding this part of York and a glance at the topography map gives an insight into the relationship between the higher ground and those areas that must have been prone to periodic flooding.

On the waterfront, deposits of a medium quality dating between Roman-Medieval periods are expected at unknown levels but are likely to be at least 6m below ground level and anaerobic. The archaeology is largely unknown but deposits are likely to exist at least 3m below ground level.

Higher ground, away from the riverfront, has revealed evidence of Roman and Anglo-Scandinavian occupation and industrial/craft activity. Anglo-Scandinavian activity may be associated with development along Walmgate rather than a separate settlement. This trend certainly seemed to continue into the medieval period where clear evidence of extended burgage plot boundaries has been found. Although there is no direct evidence, this area may have been traversed by a Roman road that continued the line from the Coney Street area. From Anglo-Scandinavian times onwards, George Street seems to have been a principle route from York to the Selby area, via Fishergate Bar from the 13th century.

It is assumed that many archaeological deposits, particularly post-medieval and later, were truncated during street improvements of the 19th and 20th centuries as well as the construction of large industrial buildings and mid 20th century office blocks. With the limited information available it can be assumed that in undisturbed patches, substantial stratified deposits survive within this area at varying depths between 0.25m to as much as 8.0m and 9.0m.

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

The Piccadilly area contains few architecturally or historically significant buildings. There is only one Grade II listed building. Two buildings of merit have been identified in the Historic Core Conservation Area Appraisal, the Banana Warehouse and York Trolleybus Garage (more recently known as Reynard's Garage) as good examples of interwar architecture in the area.

Streetscape components: Paving is predominantly a mixture of asphalt, natural stone (riven English Pennine Sandstone) and pre-cast concrete flags (Marshall's Saxon type). Asphalt is used on Piccadilly, Merchantgate, Dixon Lane, Lead Mill Lane and in part on George Street and Dennis Street. Riven English Pennine Sandstone flags and cobbling survive in small amounts. Pre-cast concrete flags are restricted to part of George Street. English Pennine Sandstone is used on Mill Street and partly on Dennis Street. Carriageways are generally asphalt.

Throughout this area mid to late 20th century street lighting units, Edinburgh style waste bins, green cast iron wayfinding posts and late 20th century traffic signage are in use. Late 20th century bus stops are situated on Piccadilly and Merchantgate alongside black steel cycle racks.

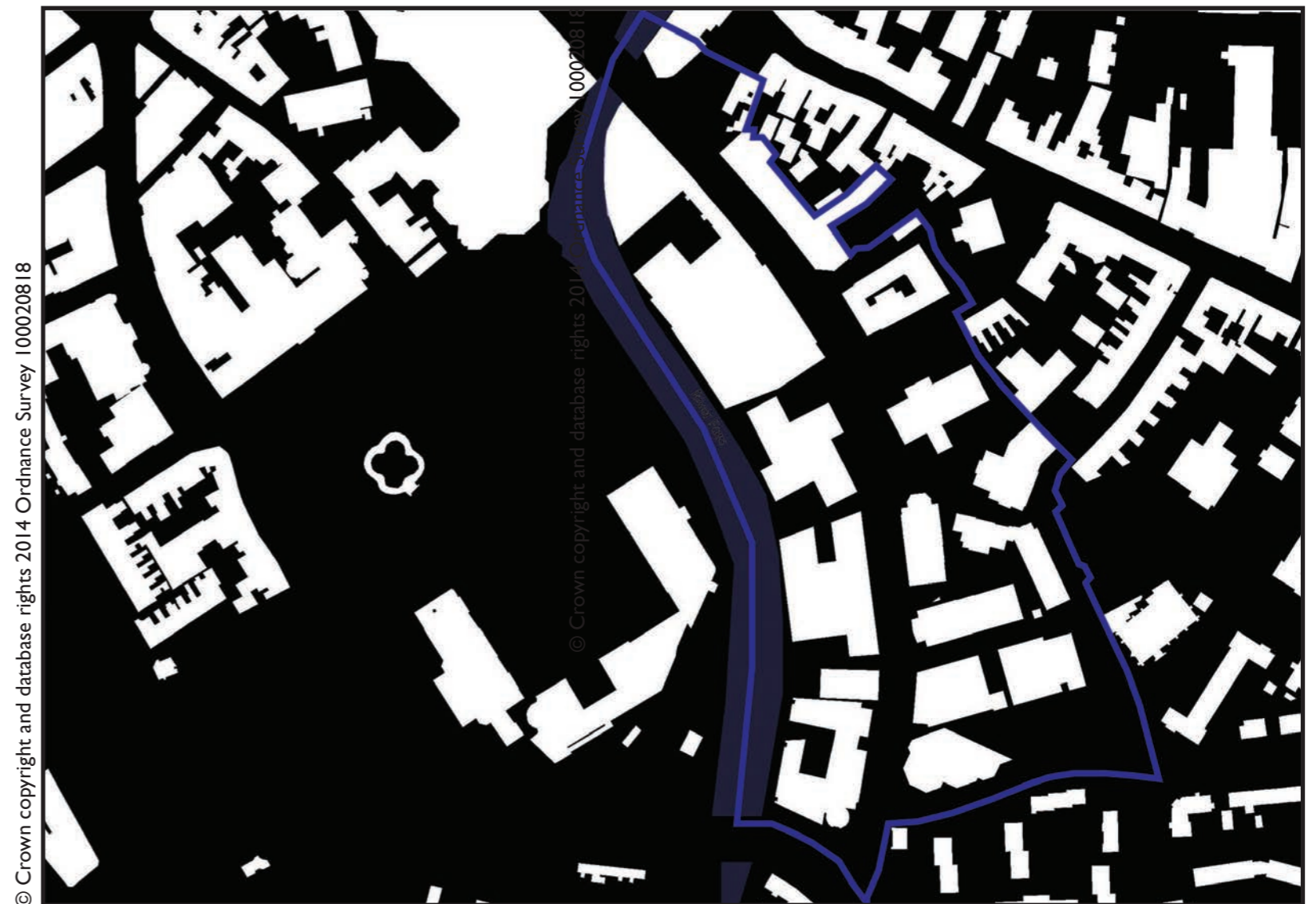
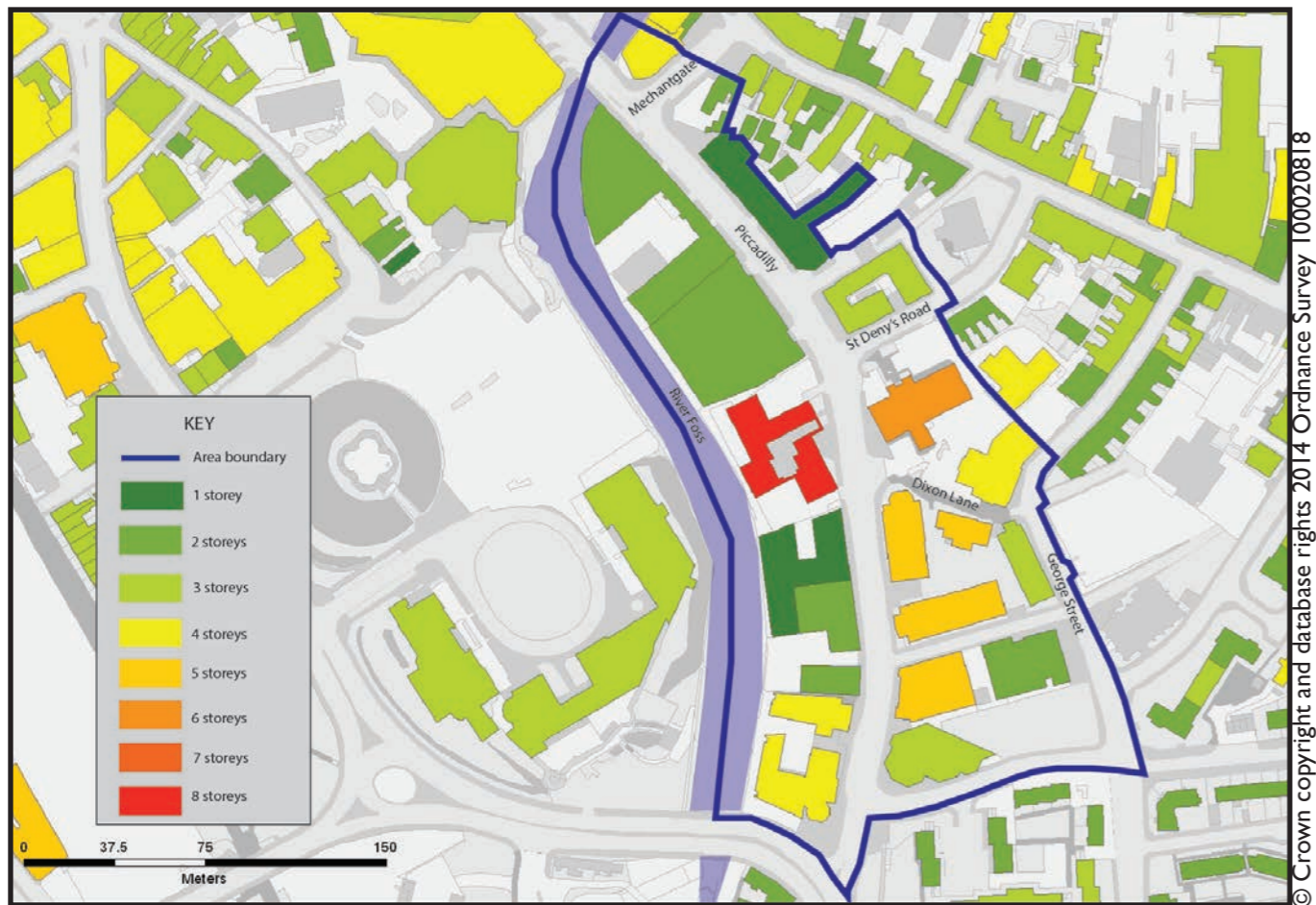


Figure ground map with built environment shown as white on black.



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

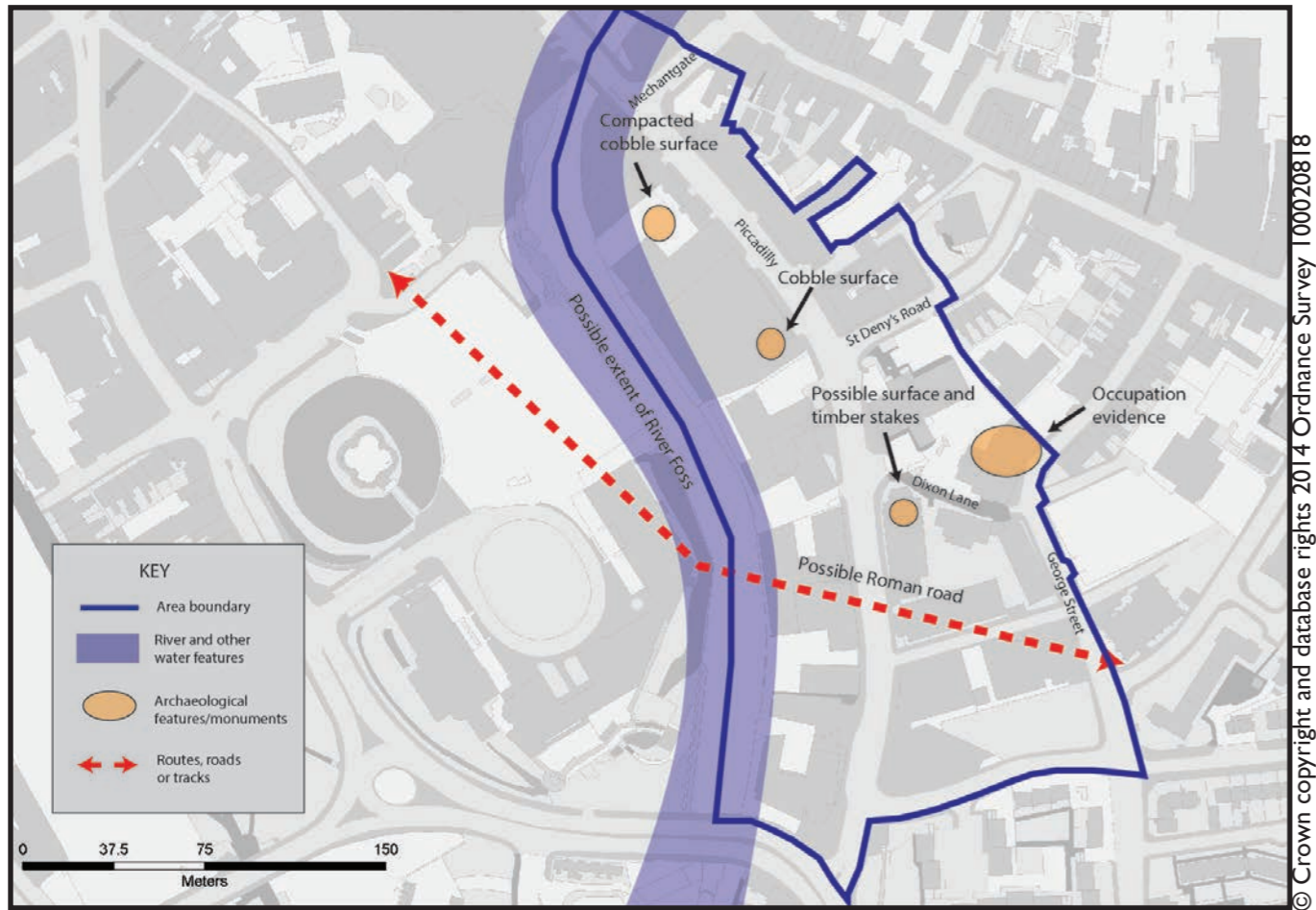
Below: Plan showing the construction dates of the buildings within the area.



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

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

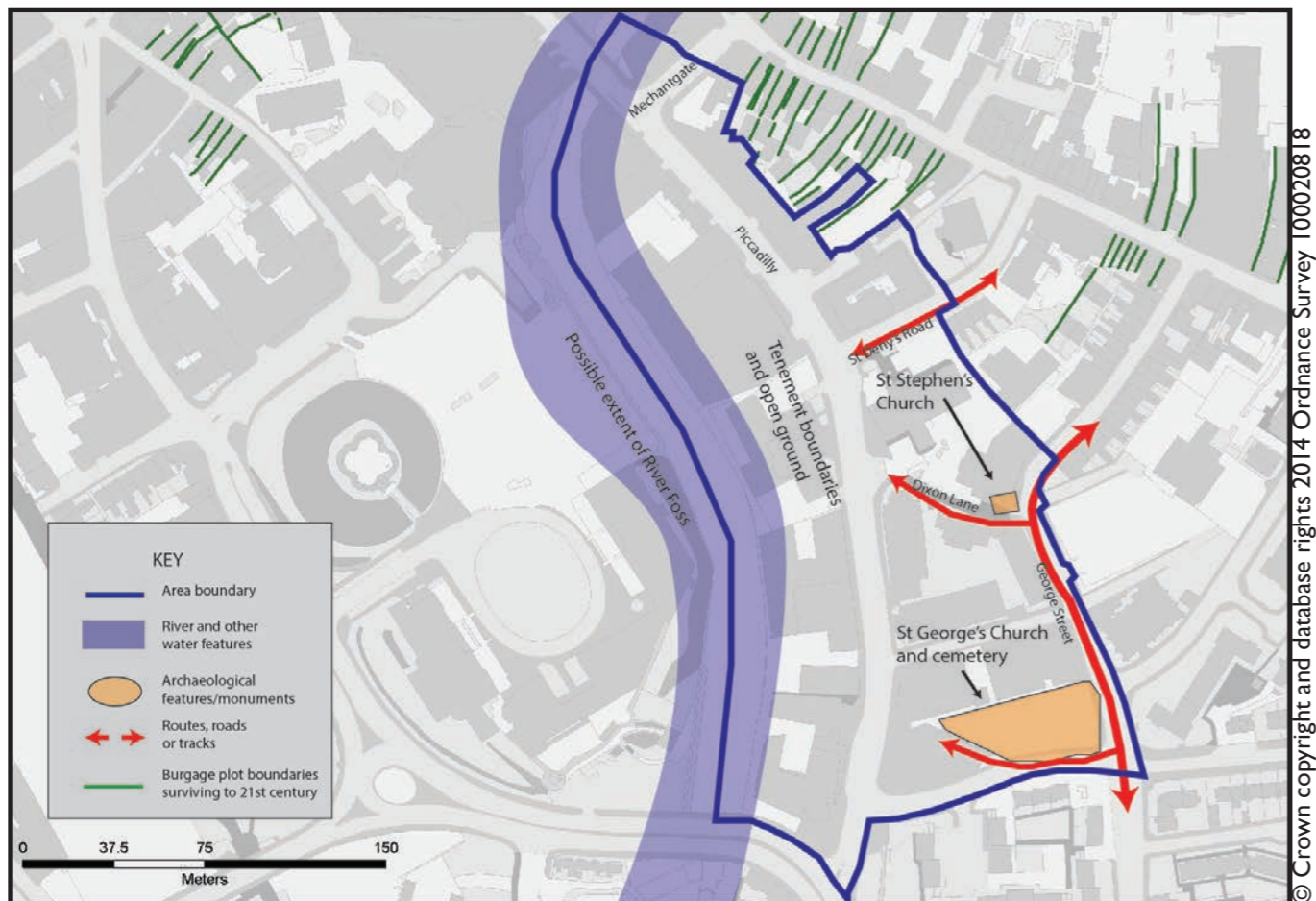




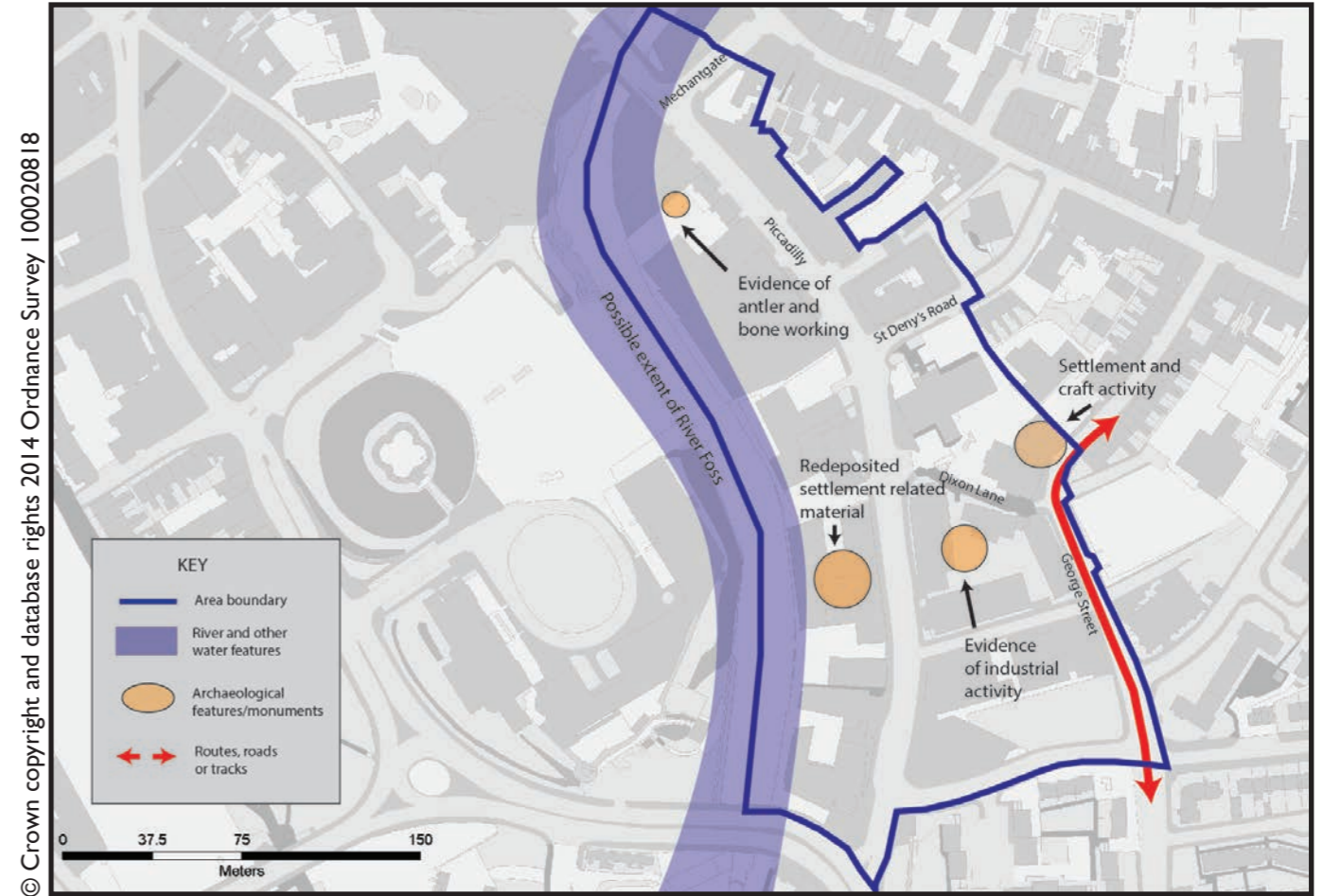
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Above: The Roman landscape.

Below: The medieval landscape.



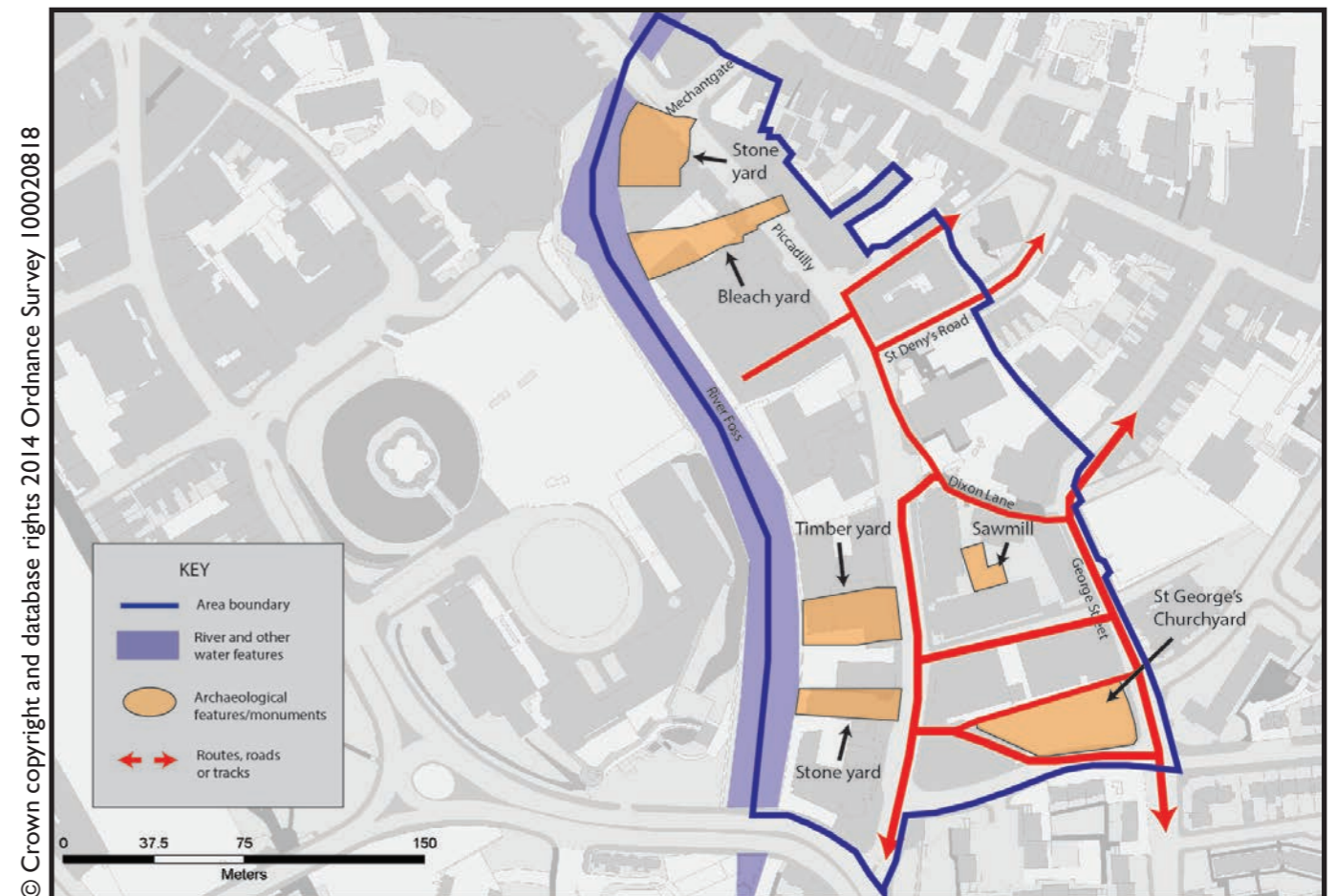
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Above: The Anglo-Scandinavian landscape.

Below: The post-medieval landscape.



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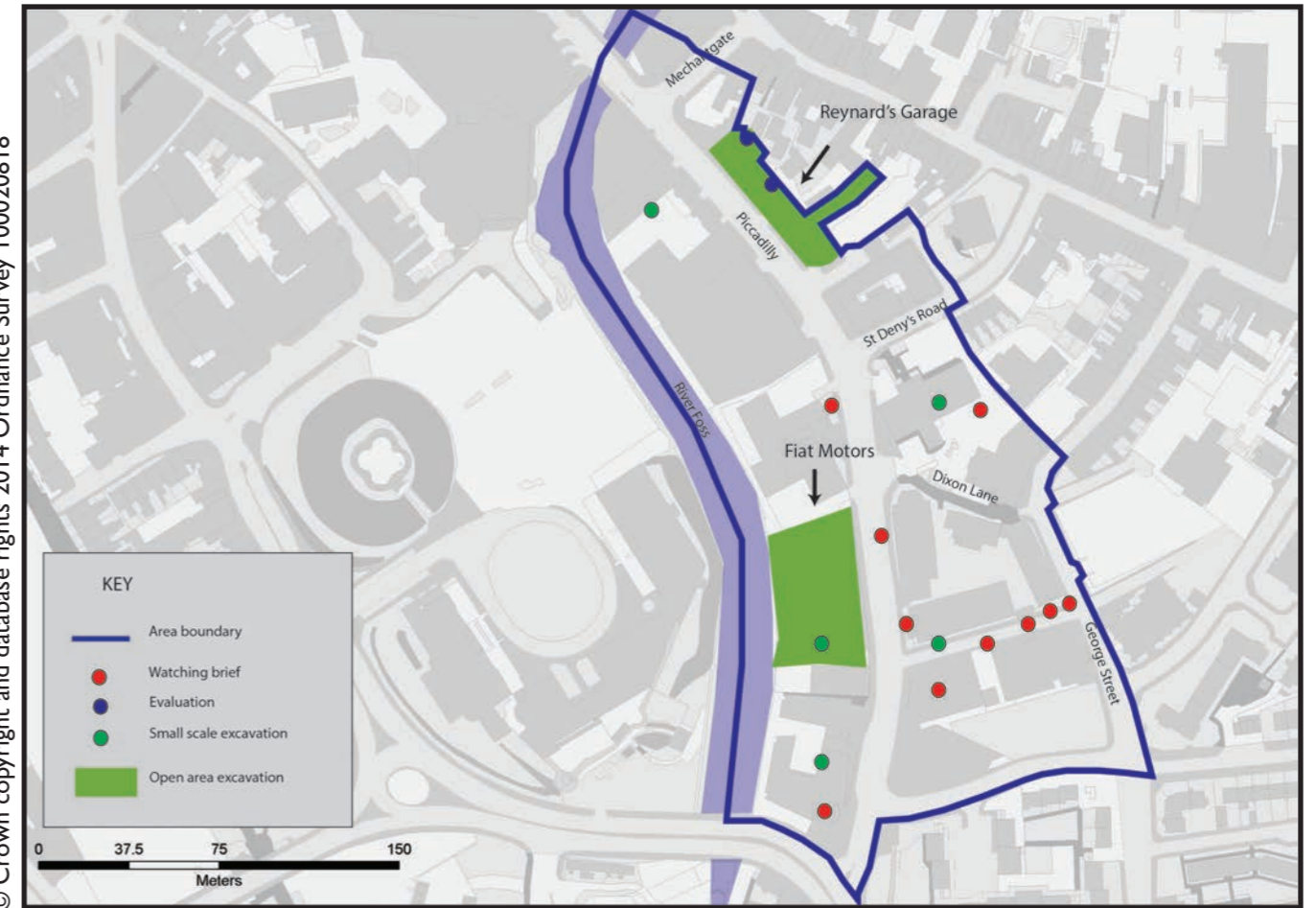
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Above: The 1852 landscape.

Below: The general topography showing the relatively low lying nature of the area.



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

Below: Location of listed buildings.



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