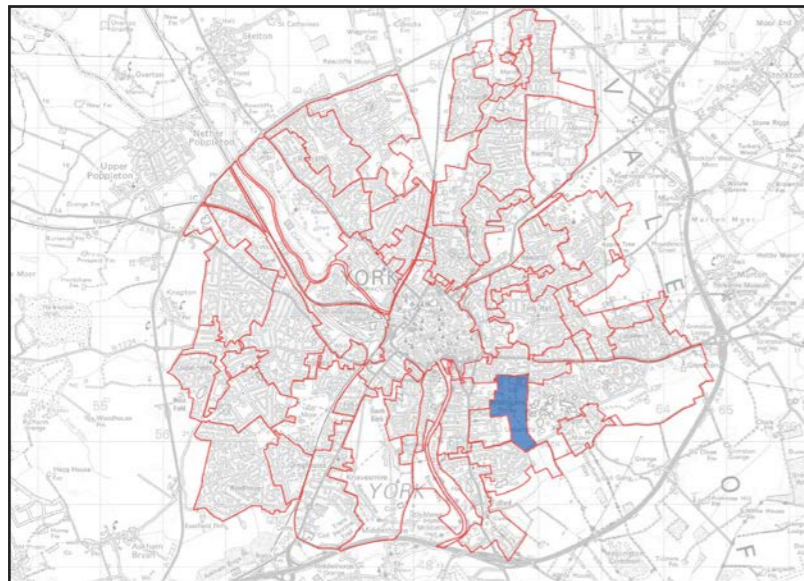
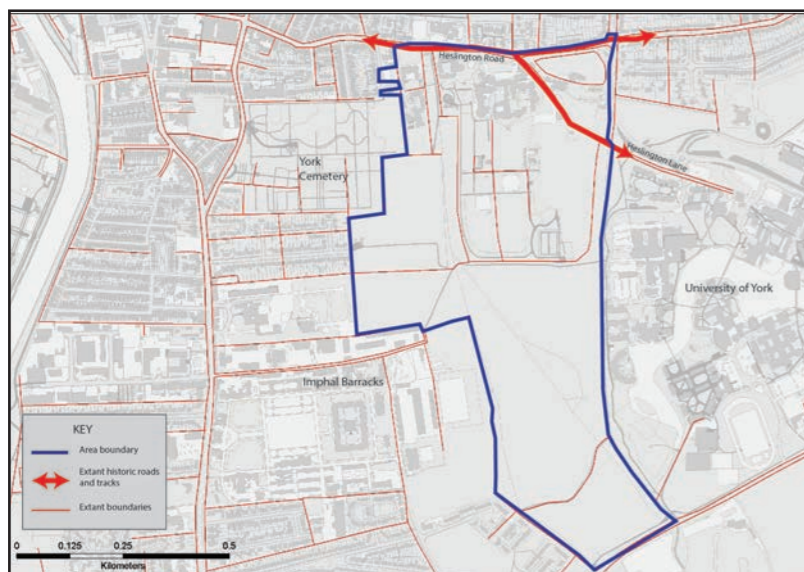


## Character area 63: The Retreat and Walmgate Stray



Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey Plan 1852



Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey Plan 1852

### Key Characteristics

**General Character:** Large open public green space with scattered trees and historic hedgerows incorporating Walmgate Stray and Low Moor as well as private parkland area of The Retreat

Buildings are generally late 18th to early 19th century and relate to The Retreat or the Stray

The Retreat occupies high ground with views north of the city and south over Walmgate Stray, land slopes down towards the south and Low Moor

Conservation Area and within Green Belt

Stray historically important as common grazing land

Contains Low Moor allotments

Important recreational and aesthetic green space – one of York's principal characteristics

Includes Area of Archaeological Importance – Lamel Hill

Extant rural boundaries dating to at least 1750

Remains of First and Second World War military training areas

Approximate walking/cycling distance to the city centre from the centre of entrance to Walmgate Stray on Heslington Road is 1.6km

**Dominant Building Type:** Three-storey 18th century former institutional building

**Other Key Building Types:** One-storey 19th century former Herdsmen's Cottage and 20th century buildings

**Designated Heritage Assets:** Lamel Hill (SAM) and three Grade II listed buildings, Heslington Road Conservation Area and Lamel Hill Area of Archaeological Importance

**Non-designated Heritage Assets:** Fairfax House, Post-Medieval and possibly older hedgerow boundaries, First and Second World War military training remains, early 20th century allotments and Medieval and Post Medieval ridge and furrow

**Key Views:** Local views of The Retreat from the Stray and university buildings in particular Wentworth College and the Siwards Howe concrete tower from the Stray and Low Moor. Rural views to the south. Glimpses of Layerthorpe chimney and Rowntree/Nestle factory from highest points.

**Surviving historic roads and tracks:** Heslington Road, Green Dikes Lane (now unnamed) and informal tracks running north- south-east across Stray

## Archaeology and history

The Retreat occupies a ridge of high land which no doubt would have been attractive for prehistoric occupation particularly with the location of the River Foss nearby.

A similar high patch of land immediately to the east, now occupied by the university campus has provided evidence for Roman and Anglian settlement. Further east again at the site of the new Heslington East campus extensive evidence for prehistoric and Roman settlement has been excavated. Several stray flints have been located within the Low Moor Allotments.

The Retreat sits to the south of the Roman route of Lawrence Street. Roman cemeteries are well known in the area as they were often located along the roadsides. The surrounding area of Lamel Hill (MYO 2208) includes a late Roman and Anglian cemetery. The hill itself may date to the pre-Roman period although it is often cited as being an English Civil War military earthwork. By the late 18th century it was clearly being used as a windmill mound as depicted on the 1772 plan of Walmgate. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 287) and Area of Archaeological Importance primarily due to its known archaeological remains and its archaeological potential.

During the medieval period the area formed part of Low Moor and common land serving Fulford village situated to the west. The area was enclosed in 1757 creating Walmgate Stray from the common lands of Fulford. This was expanded further in 1828 incorporating the area now occupied by the allotments.

Medieval ridge and furrow (MYO 2209) has been identified on this part of the stray. Test pitting within Low Moor Allotments produced Roman and Medieval pottery. A Medieval and a Post-Medieval coin have been located here but may have been included within the waste collected from the city, deposited as fertiliser.

Post-Medieval, narrow ridge and furrow (MYO 2210) probably dating to the Napoleonic wars, is evident across Low Moor.

In 1793, York Quakers purchased land to create a new hospital for mentally ill members in open surroundings with access to gardens and animals. The Retreat was constructed in 1796 by local architect Peter Atkinson for William Tuke. The grounds include Lamel Hill and a Quaker burial ground and are enclosed by a large brick wall. The building is still in use as a place for the treatment of people with mental health issues.

The Stray and Low Moor, like many other public open spaces, was utilised by the army as a training area during the First and Second World Wars. However, the military connection to this large patch of land probably dates back to the construction of the nearby Cavalry Barracks in the late 18th century.

## Character

The institutional area of The Retreat is the focal point of this character area. The three-storey building is set in its own walled parkland with views southward over the Stray. The gardens are obscured from public view by high brick walls. Where these face the Stray they have been spray painted with graffiti. At the front of the building, there is an asphalt car park area and tree lined access road leading to Garrow House. The private road into Lamel Beeches, a modern nursing home, consists of pink herringbone paving and is lined by modern period style lighting. Aside from the private garden of The Retreat, the historic, open landscape surrounding it has provided an important place for grazing and agricultural practice since the medieval period. The land contains many hawthorn bushes and trees.

During the First World War this land provided a useful place for target practice and the excavation of front line and communication trenches (MYO2214-19). Later, during the 1939-45 war the stray was again utilised and contained an assault course (MYO2224). Several of these features as well as weapons pits and rifle range targets survive as earthworks and shallow depressions.

The open landscape and views enhance the general setting of The Retreat buildings. The area closest to The Retreat is more park-like in nature attested by the purposely planted row of trees. This was planted shortly after the First World War when an attempt was made to make the Stray areas more recreational spaces. Low Moor Allotments now occupies part of the Stray and has existed since the first quarter of the 20th century, probably introduced during the First World War.

The entrance to the Stray from the lane leading to the campus (formerly Green Dikes Lane) dates to at least the 1750s when the Stray was enclosed. The entrance here is now via a mid 20th century iron kissing gate featuring the York city crest. The second northern entrance to the Stray is located between Herdsmen's Cottage and Lamel Beeches.

This is probably slightly later in date and may have been created with the enlargement of The Retreat in 1828.

Both northern entrances lead onto natural, historic, informal footpaths featuring long distance views southward across the moor. Other entrances from the south, east and west date to at least the early 19th century although the gateways are more modern in appearance with asphalt footpaths leading across the moor in places. Dog waste bins are in place at some of the entrances/exits.

There is a long association with the people of York and the Stray. The Stray and moor still play an important role recreationally and maintain a rural feel to the city. This large, peaceful, green space reinforces one of York's principal characteristics. These spaces separate the urban areas of the city and help prevent urban sprawl. Football has been formally played on the Stray since at least the when three football pitches existed along with former railway carriages providing basic changing facilities.



## Significance

**Archaeology:** The late Roman and Anglian cemetery of Lamel Hill is clearly a site of great significance and the possibility of associated settlement is a strong possibility. The high ground of this site and the adjacent Retreat is also likely to have seen some level of Prehistoric activity due to its attractive position in the landscape and nearby known Iron Age and Bronze Age settlement. Designation as both a scheduled monument and an Area of Archaeological Importance reinforces this.

Further south on the Stray and Low Moor known archaeological remains are limited to medieval and Napoleonic ridge and furrow and remnants of late 19th to early 20th century military both visible in the form of earthworks.

**Architecture:** The area contains four Grade II listed structures – The Retreat (1790s), summerhouse (c.1900), Garrow House (c.1835) now a student hall of residence and Herdsmen's Cottage (c.1840s).

A one-storey flat roofed mid 20th century building has been constructed between The Retreat and Garrow House.

**Historic:** The Stray and Moor area contains many historic boundaries in their original rural form. The current outline of Low Moor dates to at least the 1750s. The eastern boundary provides the division between Fishergate and Heslington Wards.

The Retreat has a strong link to local Quaker William Tuke, the founder of the hospital. The application of Quaker beliefs towards the mentally ill led to a revolution in attitudes towards and the treatment of mental illness. Today, The Retreat retains its original principals and contains many Quaker members as Directors. The burial ground within The Retreat includes the resting place of Joseph Rowntree, another influential local Quaker.

Military connections with the area are strong and dates back to the English Civil War with the use of Lamel Hill as a gun battery. It has also been suggested that the Battle of Fulford may also have taken place across part of Low Moor.

The links to the former 18th century Cavalry and more recent Imphal (infantry) barracks are important. The surviving Imphal barrack boundary wall is clearly visible from the stray reinforcing the closeness of the land to this large military centre. Earthwork remains of military training facilities including practice trenches from the First World War are a poignant reminder of the grim realities of war.

Grazing across the Stray, as in other similar areas such as Hob Moor, still takes place. The allotments provide another recreational use for the area as well as a small continuation of agricultural practices on this land.

**Streetscape components:** Asphalt footpath and cycle ways on parts of the Stray as well as informal, historic pathways across the area. On Heslington Road, asphalt carriageways and footpaths exist with Edinburgh style waste bins and modern street lighting. There are some low signage boards on Walmgate Stray although many are vandalised.

**Aesthetics:** Walmgate Stray is distinct from its surrounding suburban areas and adjacent villages such as Heslington and the University campus. The large green spaces are peaceful havens for dog walkers, cattle, allotment holders and cyclists alike. The surrounding architecture is aesthetically pleasing as is the large open expanse of land to the south of the buildings.

## Opportunities and recommendations

There are many opportunities to better reveal and enhance the significances of the archaeological and historic values of Walmgate Stray as part of York's special qualities.

Opportunities for improving the quality and consistency of contemporary street furniture and the public realm should be identified, in particular the enhancement of existing pedestrian surfaces, cycling facilities and upgrades of existing street furniture. This should be undertaken following guidance contained in the City of York Streets and Spaces Strategy and Guidance (City of York Council, 2013).

Increase knowledge of the significance of the Stray and make better connections to York's military heritage.

Detailed survey of the earthworks could form part of a community project.

Wherever possible and practical, it is strongly recommended that inherited historic landscape grain evidenced through post-medieval and 19th century former field boundaries should be enhanced and conserved. These play a key role in explaining the historic development of the area. Where historic boundaries have been identified, either as surviving hedgerows or trackways, efforts should be made to ensure their continuing survival.

Hedgerows and trees should be carefully managed and opportunities for planting new trees along grass verges and in existing hedgerows should be identified. A programme of regular monitoring of original hedgerow boundaries should be secured. Grazing and management of the grassland should continue to be supported.

Key views of the Minster, other major heritage assets and local landmarks should be maintained and enhanced to help orientation and enhance local distinctiveness.

Development management policy should take account of the contribution made by locally identified heritage assets to the distinctive character of the area. Sub-surface archaeological sites and landscapes are particularly important. Appropriate mitigation strategies should be agreed to protect potential archaeological deposits for any future development in area.



## Character Area 63: Images



*The Retreat*



*Entrance to Stray from Green Dikes Lane (see below)*



*Boundary wall facing south onto the moor featuring a commemorative plaque regarding Quaker Burial Ground and graffiti.*



*Track leading from Green Dikes Lane along the west side of The Retreat.*



*Asphalt path running alongside boundary wall taken from the west.*



*Above 3 images- Former weapons pits and trenches visible as earthworks and depressions on Low Moor and Walmgate Stray.*



*Green Dikes Lane leading from Heslington Road to the University Campus.*





*Entrance to Walmgate Stray from Heslington Road at Herdsmen's Cottage.*



*Herdsmen's Cottage*



*Late 20th and 21st century university buildings visible from Low Moor.*



*Northern end of Stray facing south.*



*Part of some of the lane purchased as part of the enlargement of The Retreat in the 19th century, viewed from Green Dikes Lane.*



*Post-medieval boundaries forming the western edge of Low Moor.*

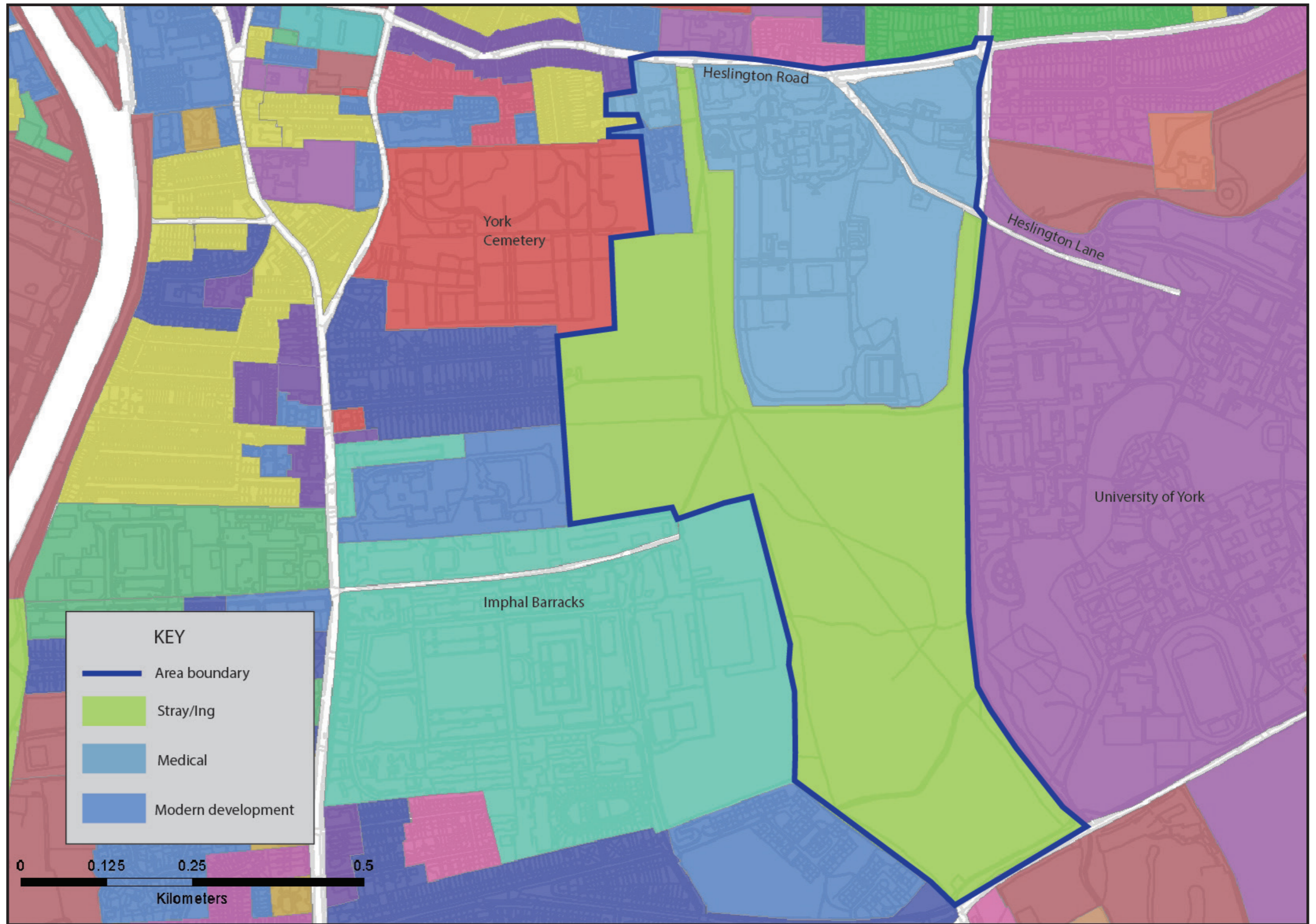


*View of the former assault course area near the Heslington Road entrance.*



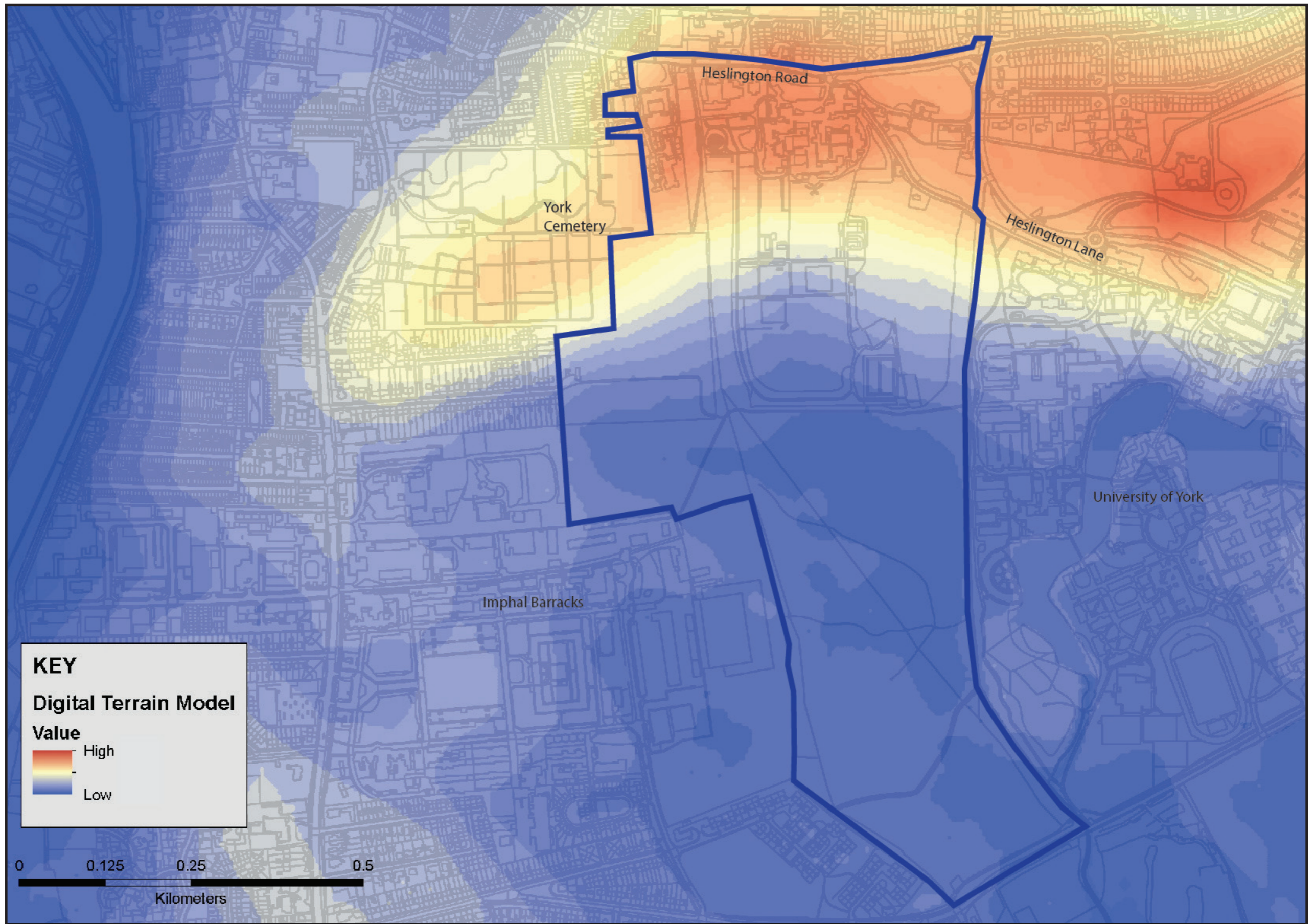
### Character Area 63: Maps

Broad Type characterisation plan. White roadways indicate roads or lanes visible on the 1852 Ordnance Survey Plan



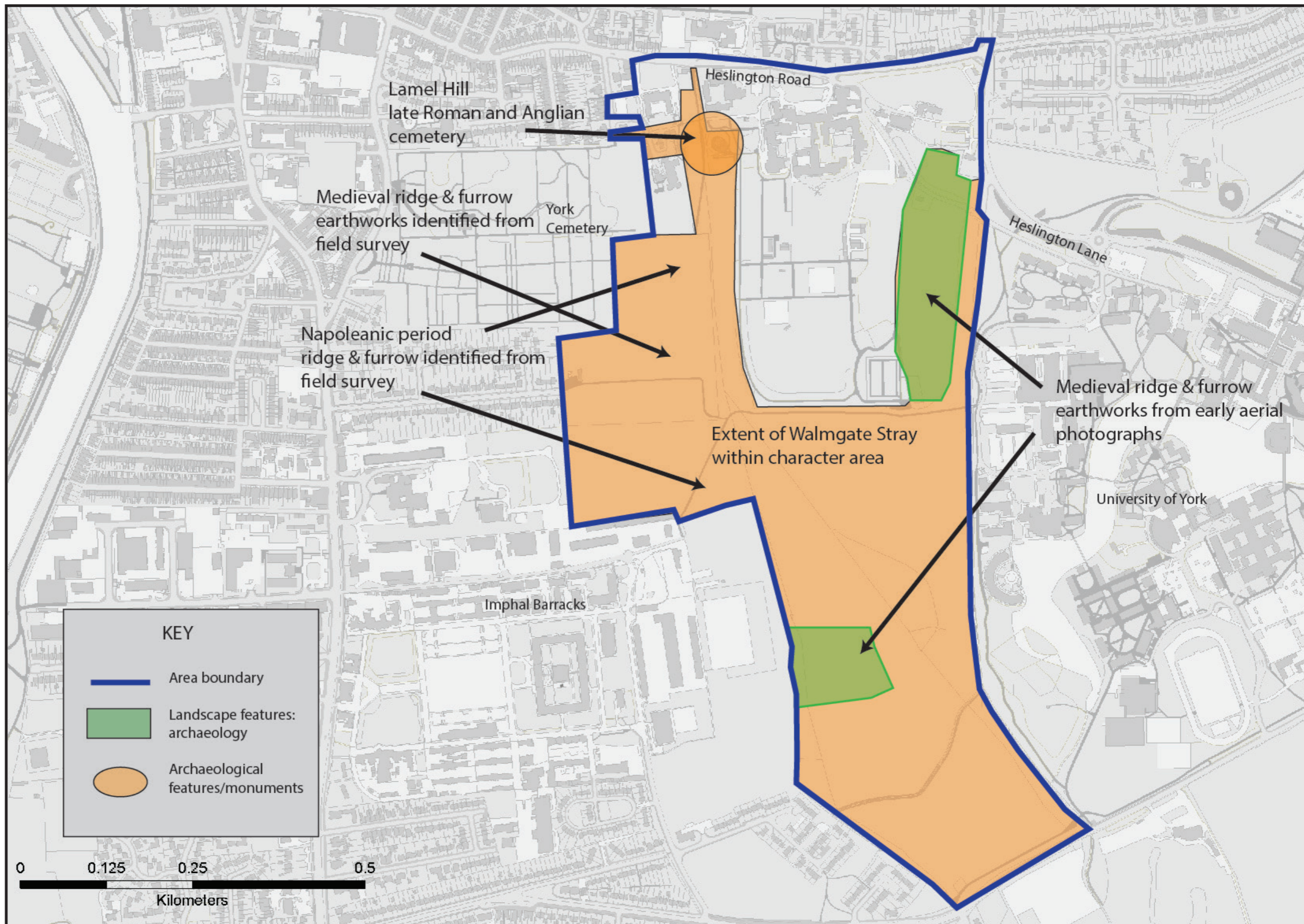


Topography



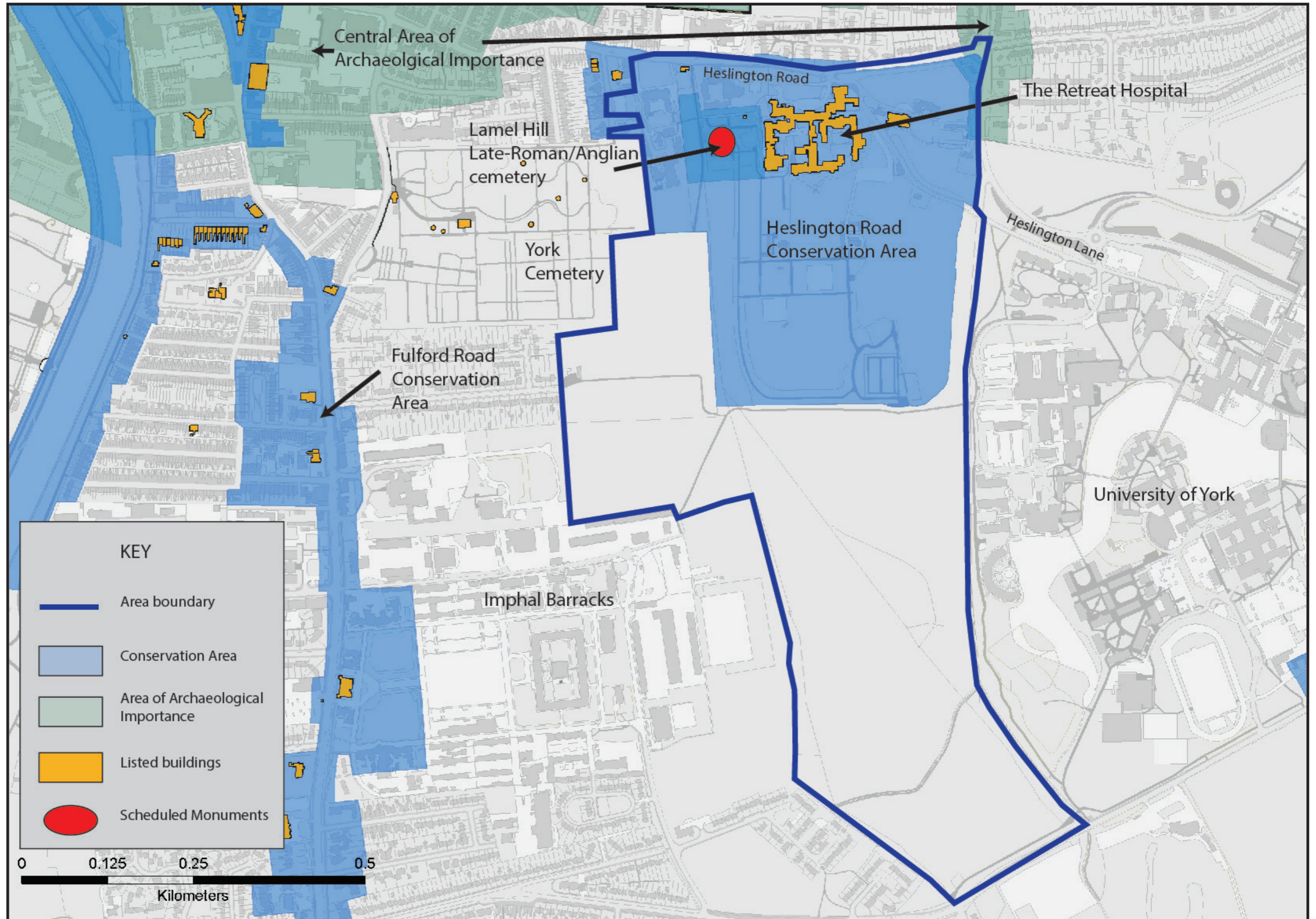


Archaeology and heritage assets





Designated heritage assets





Extant surviving boundaries, roads and tracks as depicted on the 1852 First Edition Ordnance Survey map

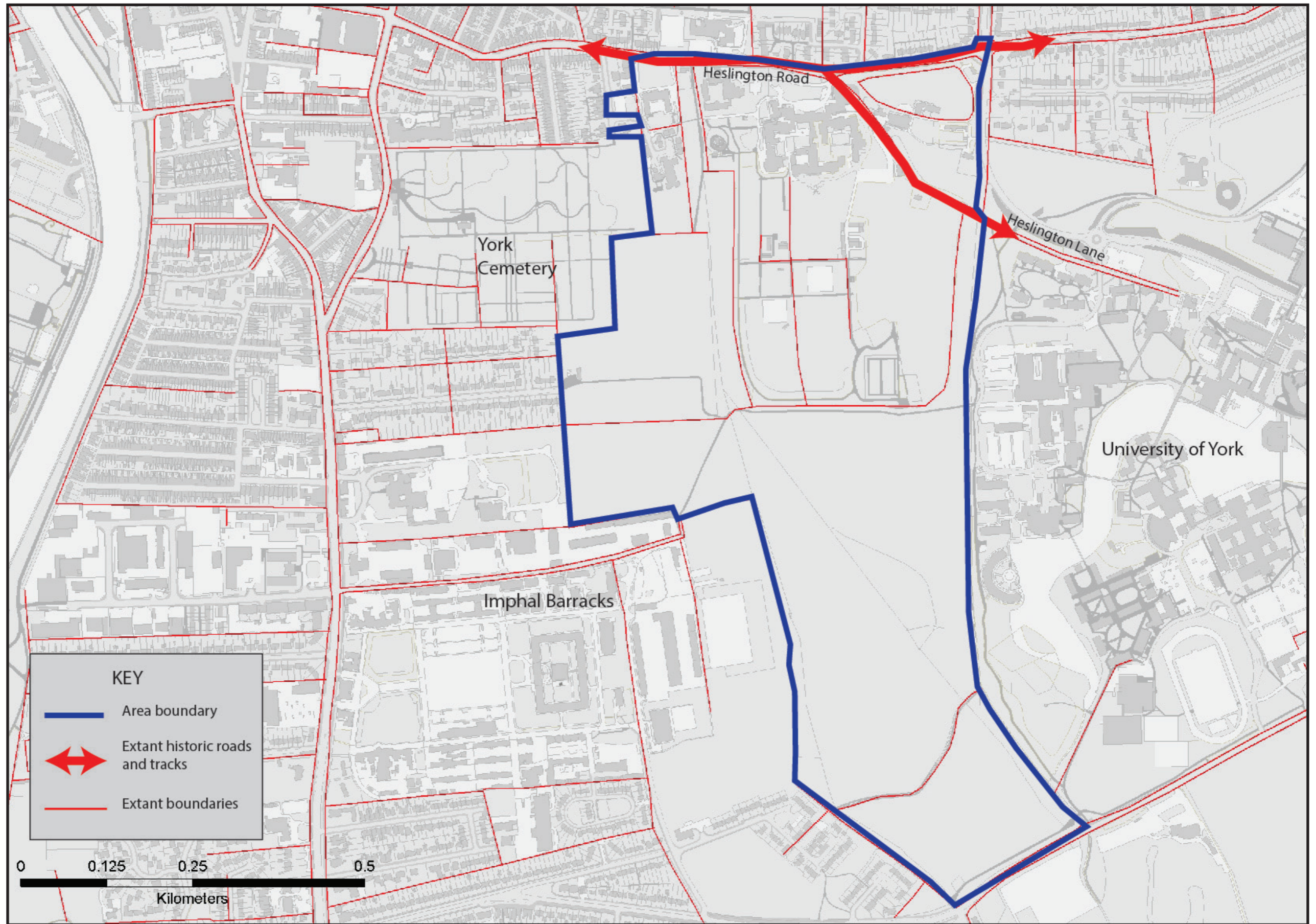




Figure ground map showing the relationship between open space (black) and the built environment



© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100020818



**Researched and written by:** Claire MacRae

**Photographs:** Claire MacRae except where indicated

**Graphics:** Bob Sydes and Claire MacRae

**Edited by:** Bob Sydes

**Funded by:** English Heritage

**Issued:** November 2013

© **City of York Council 2013**

