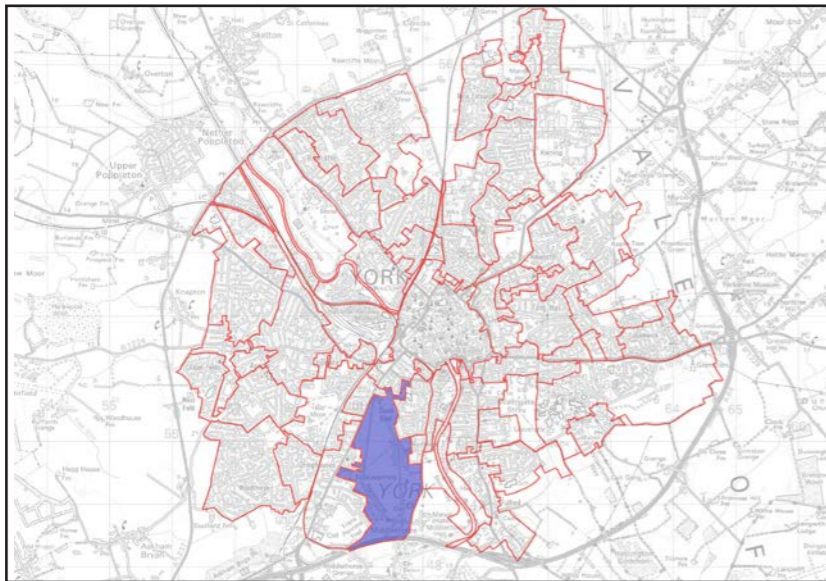
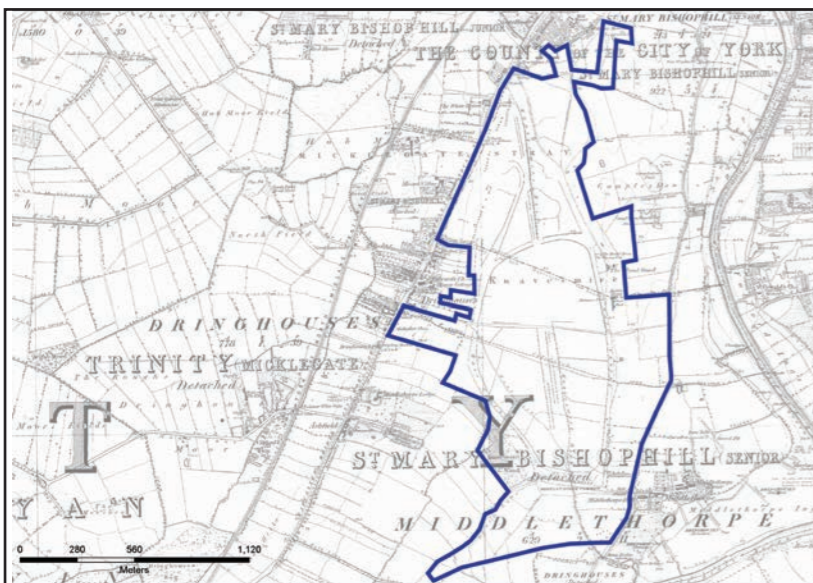


## Character area 74: York Racecourse and the Knavesmire



Location of character area



Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey Plan 1852

### Key Characteristics

**General Character:** Large open public green space including the racecourse area. The Knavesmire is bounded by tree lined roads, separating the nearby urban development from the green space. The area provides a large, important recreational space, popular for events, close to the city centre.

Area bounded by Tadcaster Road to the west, Bishopthorpe Road and the Southbank residential area to the east, the ring road to the south and early to mid 20th century housing to the north.

The Knavesmire occupies flat, low-lying ground prone to flooding. Higher ground lies either side along Tadcaster and Bishopthorpe Road.

Contains landmark buildings

Horse racing a nationally recognised characteristic of York

Part of historic Micklegate Stray

One of largest open green spaces in city, partly bounded by mature trees

Tadcaster Road Conservation Area (part) and Racecourse Conservation Area (part)

Situated in quiet suburban area which changes in character during race meetings

Includes Knavesmire Wood (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation), Tadcaster Road racing stables, Scarcroft allotments and York Law College

Approximate walking/cycling distance to the city centre from Racecourse Road is 3km via Bishopthorpe Road

**Dominant Building Type:** Racecourse stands and associated structures

**Key Housing Types:** 1960s two-storey estate cul-de-sac St. James Mount

**Designated Heritage Assets:** Three Grade II listed buildings and one Grade II\* building associated with the racecourse. A further six Grade II structures across the Knavesmire. Part of Dringhouses Area of Archaeological Importance  
**Non-designated Heritage Assets:** Earthwork ridge and furrow, site of former golf course, historic lanes, former Royal Observer Corps bunker, former air-raid shelter, 19th century water trough, early 20th century Scarcroft allotments, Knavesmire Wood (c. 18th century), white boundary fence to Tadcaster Road, racing stables and site of anti-aircraft batteries

**Key Views:** Local views of the racecourse stands and Terry's factory from the nearby streets and riverside. Views across the Knavesmire from Tadcaster Road and Knavesmire Road. Glimpsed views of York Minster

**Survival of historic routes and tracks:** Bishopthorpe Road, Tadcaster Road, Cherry Lane, Green Lane and lane from Middlethorpe

## Archaeology and history

The Knavesmire is bounded on either side by low ridges of morainic material dating back to the last ice age, the lowest area forming the scoured bed of a glacier into which the historic Knavesmire Beck flowed. This is one of the key characteristics of this area and one that has affected its archaeology and history.

Tadcaster Road (and The Mount/Blossom Street) running along the top of the moraine has been definitely identified as the principal Roman road connecting York with Roman Tadcaster (Calcaria). Roman cemeteries are well known covering a large area straddling The Mount and Tadcaster Road. The present road diverges from the line of the Roman road to the south of Dringhouses and then runs roughly parallel to it. There is some evidence to suggest that Bishopthorpe Road may also be Roman in origin as a compact cobbled surface was discovered in 1981 2m below ground level (referred to in EYO786). Roman occupational and agricultural activity has been recorded on the higher ground in the vicinity of Bishopthorpe Road and the Terry's factory site. A Roman roadside settlement has been excavated at the Fox and Roman public house and Calcaria Court on Tadcaster Road (EYO299).

An enclosure with slight earthworks but undated between the racecourse and Bracken Road may be of prehistoric origin.

Throughout the medieval period, the Knavesmire was used as common grazing land, as part of Micklegate Stray, for the people of Dringhouses, Middlethorpe and parts of York. Small patches of ridge and furrow are recorded on the City of York Historic Environment Record (MYO2124, 2241 and 3434). These are generally located to the west of the racecourse on areas less prone to flooding. Other agricultural survivals include boundary stones relating to the division of Hob Moor and the Micklegate Stray along Tadcaster Road, a pinfold (MYO759) and Herdsman's Cottage c.1840 (MYO1085), all Grade II listed.

On Scarcroft allotment site stood Mount Mills, corn mills still in use in the mid 19th century. The Knavesmire was also the site of the Tyburn, one of four public execution sites in York (MYO2238). This practice continued on the Knavesmire from the late 14th century to 1801. A small triangular shaped field known as The Flatts occupied the land between the Knavesmire and Tadcaster Road.

The outline of the Knavesmire was established as it is today by at least 1624. Cherry Lane also dates to at least this period while Green Lane to the south was established by 1785.

The post-medieval Knavesmire Wood, located at the south-western end of the racecourse, is now managed by The Woodland Trust. It is a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation primarily because of its central avenue of lime trees dating to the 18th century.

In the early 18th century the Knavesmire was drained and levelled. The first race meet took place there in 1731 having moved from Clifton Ings. In the 1750s a grandstand was designed by John Carr; the lower storey is the only part to survive, now incorporated into the Guinness Bar - part of Champagne Terrace. Throughout the 18th century, horse racing became important for the social and economic development of the city. Its significance declined during the first half of the 19th century, but re-emerged in the 20th century as York became one of the major racecourses in the country. The historic Knavesmire Beck, which runs roughly north-south across the Knavesmire was presumably culverted around this time. The racecourse (MYO2239) grew between the 19th and 20th century with major developments taking place in the 1920s including the creation of Racecourse Road, the construction of the enclosure walls, and the erection of small ancillary buildings, additional stands and an indicator board and clock tower.

The stables situated on Tadcaster Road also date to the earlier part of the 20th century.

The Melrose, Ebor and Knavesmire Stands date to the late 20th century.

The surrounding areas remained relatively open until the late 19th century with the creation and subsequent expansion of the South Bank residential area.

The nearby Terry's factory dates to the 1920s. During the Second World War part of the Knavesmire was ploughed as well as providing a location for a searchlight battery and anti-aircraft battery. A Royal Observer Corps (ROC) bunker is located on Knavesmire Road, dating to 1943. This is now used as a football club changing room. On Albemarle Road a former air-raid shelter is now used as a cricket pavilion and changing room. Both of these wartime buildings have been nominated for inclusion on the Local List of Heritage Assets.



## Character

This area is characterised by a large expanse of open, green, recreational space in a tree-lined, parkland setting, which includes the racecourse and its associated buildings. The racecourse grandstands and Terry's Factory situated behind them are landmark buildings, which can be viewed from a number of locations. Tadcaster Road is lined for the most part by mature trees and provides extensive views across the Knavesmire to the racecourse stands.

The Knavesmire and Hob Moor on the other side of Tadcaster Road are bounded by painted white cast iron railings with kissing gates allowing access at various intervals. Along this border several listed structures can be found. The railings have been nominated for inclusion on the Local List of Heritage Assets as they have enhanced the setting of the area for the majority of the 20th century.

The Little Knavesmire, cut off from the larger portion by Knavesmire Road in the 1920s, is bordered by Hospital Fields allotments and the houses of Knavesmire Crescent and Albemarle Road. This patch of land also contains the ROC bunker.

The tree-lined Knavesmire Road is often used by coach drivers as a place to park up while waiting to travel back into the city centre to collect visitors, and is also the key pedestrian and vehicle route to and from the racecourse on race days.

The buildings within the racecourse enclosure are varied in both their size and architectural qualities. The various stands are arranged in a gentle curve that follows the alignment of the course.

The oldest building, part of the original 1754 grandstand, is now incorporated into the Guinness Bar. This one-storey brick structure is listed Grade II\* and is all that remains of one of the most impressive 18th century grandstands in the country. Canopies have been added to the front elevation of the earlier structure, which obscure its architectural qualities.

The earliest stand in use is the original section of the County Stand c.1840. The County Stand has been extended and altered on a number of occasions. It is two-storeys in height and constructed of cast iron and timber. Its northern end, constructed in brick c.1890, was at one time used as the Press Stand (both Grade II listed).

The later stands have a very different character. The Bustardthorpe Stand (early 20th century) at the southern end of the enclosure is constructed of concrete. The name Bustardthorpe refers to the name of a medieval manor adjacent to Middlethorpe. The most recently erected stands (Melrose, Ebor and Knavesmire) are substantial structures, making a major impact upon the surrounding area. The Ebor and Knavesmire stands have adopted a contemporary architectural style.

The old indicator board and clock tower (Grade II listed), c.1922, stand in an isolated position within the loop of the racing track. Contemporary small-scale buildings situated along the eastern edge of the racecourse enclosure have a different character from the stands. These may have been designed by the same architect as the indicator board, Walter Brierley. These are generally single storey in height and are in a consistent, simple vernacular style. More recent buildings along this eastern edge of the enclosure, fronting Racecourse Road, have generally been designed in a similar fashion.

The white painted concrete pedestrian bridge across Racecourse Road also appears to date from the 1920s. The bridge is typical of its period and is a significant feature of this area.

Park Pavilion Field is the open space to the east of Racecourse Road. It is often used as a car park during race days and is the site of a large and popular car boot market. This open, grassed space is fringed by trees and allows view of the main stands and the major buildings of the factory. Immediately to the south are the Bustardthorpe allotments and the College of Law beyond.

This character area is distinct from adjacent residential areas such as South Bank and Dringhouses. The racecourse forms an important part of York's heritage relating to horse racing while the Knavesmire provides a valuable local recreational and community event space. This area is also included on the York City Sightseeing open top bus tour highlighting its importance as an historic and contemporary asset to the city.

## Significance

**Archaeology:** The area in general has remained relatively free from large scale destructive works such as the construction of the factory and gravel extraction nearby. Medieval ploughing, where it occurred, may have had a negative effect on any surviving archaeology. However, it is unlikely that this flood prone area will have been occupied in the past but may contain stray finds.

**Architecture:** The racecourse contains a number of buildings dating from the 18th-20th century several of which are listed. The original 18th century grandstand was designed by John Carr, a stone mason, who was chosen in a competition over other popular architects of the day. It was this commission that launched him as one of the most successful provincial architects of the time. Carr later designed Bootham Hospital.

The indicator board and clock tower were designed by York architect Walter Brierley. Brierley is known for his work at Goddards and on several York primary schools. He may also have designed several ancillary buildings on Racecourse Road. Brierley also designed the racing stables on Tadcaster Road in 1914. The stables have been nominated for inclusion on the Local List of Heritage Assets.

**Historic:** Horse racing is known to have occurred in York, including on Clifton Ings, since the Roman period. It moved to its current site on the Knavesmire in 1731. It is a nationally known characteristic of York.

The Knavesmire was also historically known as a place of public execution. The Knavesmire Tyburn was responsible for the death of Dick Turpin, a well-known historical figure.

As an open space, the Knavesmire has changed little since at least the early 17th century with the exception of the creation of the racecourse.

Approximately 10% of the historic field boundaries remain readable in the landscape basically forming the boundary of the site.

To the south-east of the racecourse the field boundaries shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey plan have virtually all been removed to create the law college and racecourse expansion. Green Lane running across the southern portion of the racecourse is known to have existed before 1785. The boundaries of the Knavesmire to Tadcaster Road and the rear of Dringhouses village are also known to date to at least 1624.

The social and communal value of this area cannot be over emphasised as the Knavesmire is used year round for recreational activities and community events. During race meetings the whole city benefits from an increase in visitor numbers. On the fringes of the area, Scarcroft, Hospital Fields and Bustardthorpe allotments are a popular community asset originally forming part of the Stray.

Knavesmire Wood is also a popular place for dog walkers, runners and nature enthusiasts.

**Streetscape components:** Footpaths and carriageways are generally asphalt. Lighting is provided by a mixture of late 20th to early 21st century units.

**Aesthetics:** The large stands of the racecourse are prominent features when looking across the Knavesmire from the west and are focal points in views from Tadcaster Road. Expansive views of the racecourse may also be found at the junction of Campleshon Road, Knavesmire Road and Racecourse Road.

A key view of the racecourse, Terry's and the Minster can be gained from the south on the A64 and other locations. This view is significant as it illustrates York's historic landscape – the medieval stray, the racecourse (a social focal point) and the former Terry's factory (industrial monument).

## Opportunities and recommendations

It is recommended that any extensions, new development or re-development in the area should be sympathetic in terms of style, material, proportions and density and should complement and enhance existing character. Street furniture, including street signage and streetlights, should integrate with the character of the area.

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).

The scale (height in particular) of lighting columns should always respect the character of the street. Further guidance is contained in the City of York Streets and Spaces Strategy and Guidance.

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 where retained as part of historic development, efforts should be made to ensure their continuing survival as part of any future development opportunities.

Great care should be paid to the retention of socially valued buildings and spaces, with appropriate weight given to local opinions.

Hedgerows and trees should be carefully managed and opportunities for planting new trees along grass verges and in existing hedgerows should be identified in partnership with local residents. A programme of regular monitoring of original hedgerow boundaries and grass verges should be secured.

Key views of heritage assets and local landmarks should be maintained and enhanced to help orientation and enhance local distinctiveness.

Development should not be permitted where it would prevent views of the Terry's factory tower, the Grandstand, and of the towers of the Minster beyond.

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 the area.

The area contains several buildings that should be considered for listing or at least inclusion on the forthcoming Local List of Heritage Assets such as the ROC bunker, stables and cast iron railings along Tadcaster Road. Those buildings that have been recommended for inclusion on the Local List of Heritage Assets add significant value to the area. Some, such as the stables, are intimately connected with one of the key social and economic activities in the area, horse racing. Every effort should be made to ensure that these buildings and structures are retained, maintained and kept in productive use. Their loss or inappropriate alteration would have significant impacts on the character of this area.



## Character Area 74: Images



*Mounting block, relocated to Tadcaster Road in 2004.*



*View of the Bustardthorpe allotments from Racecourse Road.*



*1908 race meeting - City of York Archives*



*Medieval boundary stone*



*The Royal Observer Corps bunker*



*1909 showing the original 18th century stand to the left - City of York Archives*



*Site of the Tyburn - note the white railings.*



*Small housing estate of St. James Mount.*



*Entrance on Racecourse Road.*





*Entrances on Racecourse Road with The Ebor and Knavesmire stands in the background.*



*View from Campleshon Road.*



*The Racecourse and Terry's Clock Tower viewed from Tadcaster Road.*



*Entrances on Racecourse Road with The Ebor and Knavesmire stands in the background.*



*View across the racecourse showing stands and Terry's factory in the background (right).*



*Key view as identified in the Core Conservation Character Area Appraisal Document (Chapter 3).*



*Entrances on Racecourse Road with The Ebor and Knavesmire stands in the background. The white concrete pedestrian bridge is visible on the left.*



*View from the south towards stands and the old indicator board to the left hand side.*

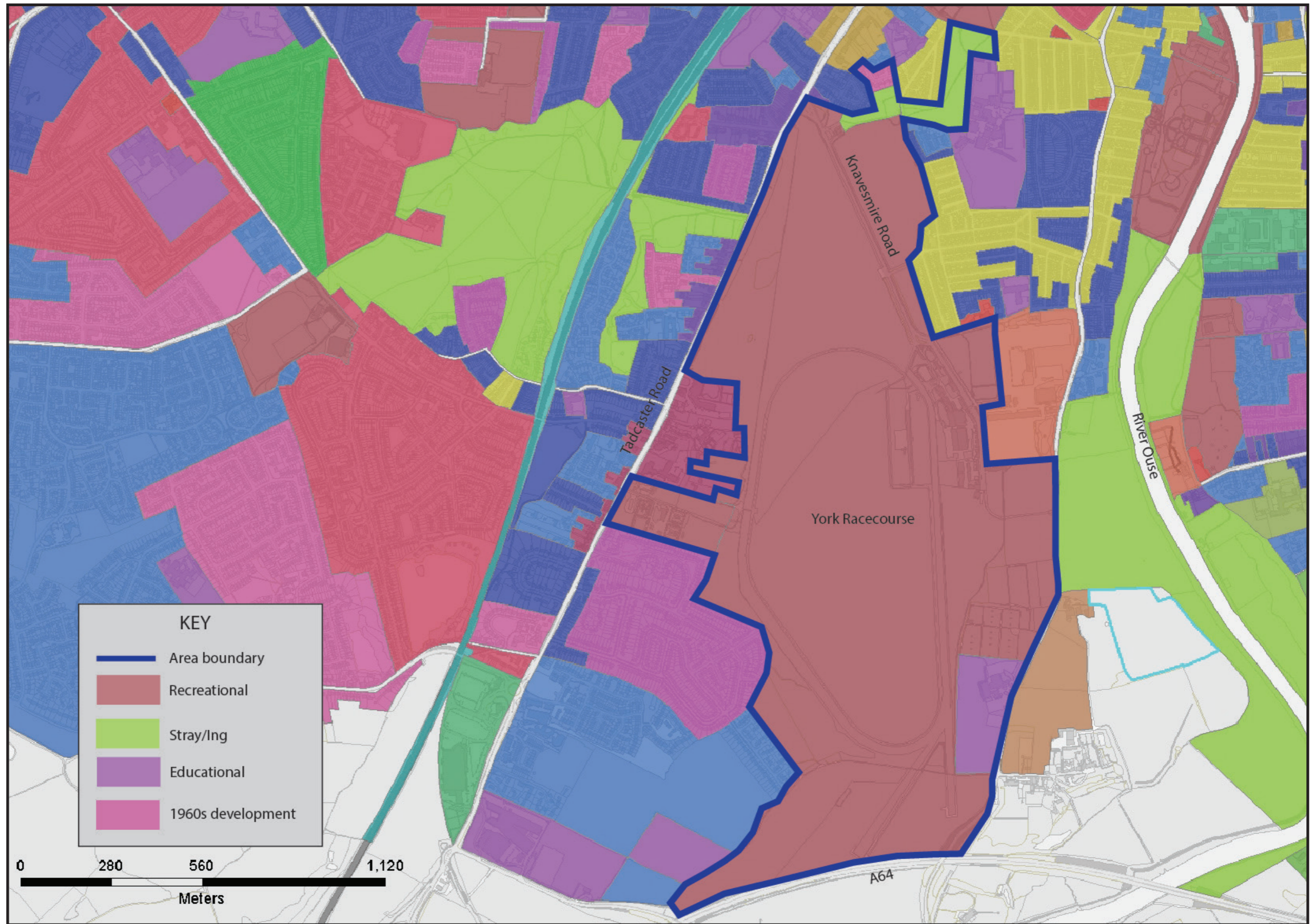


*Knavesmire Road*



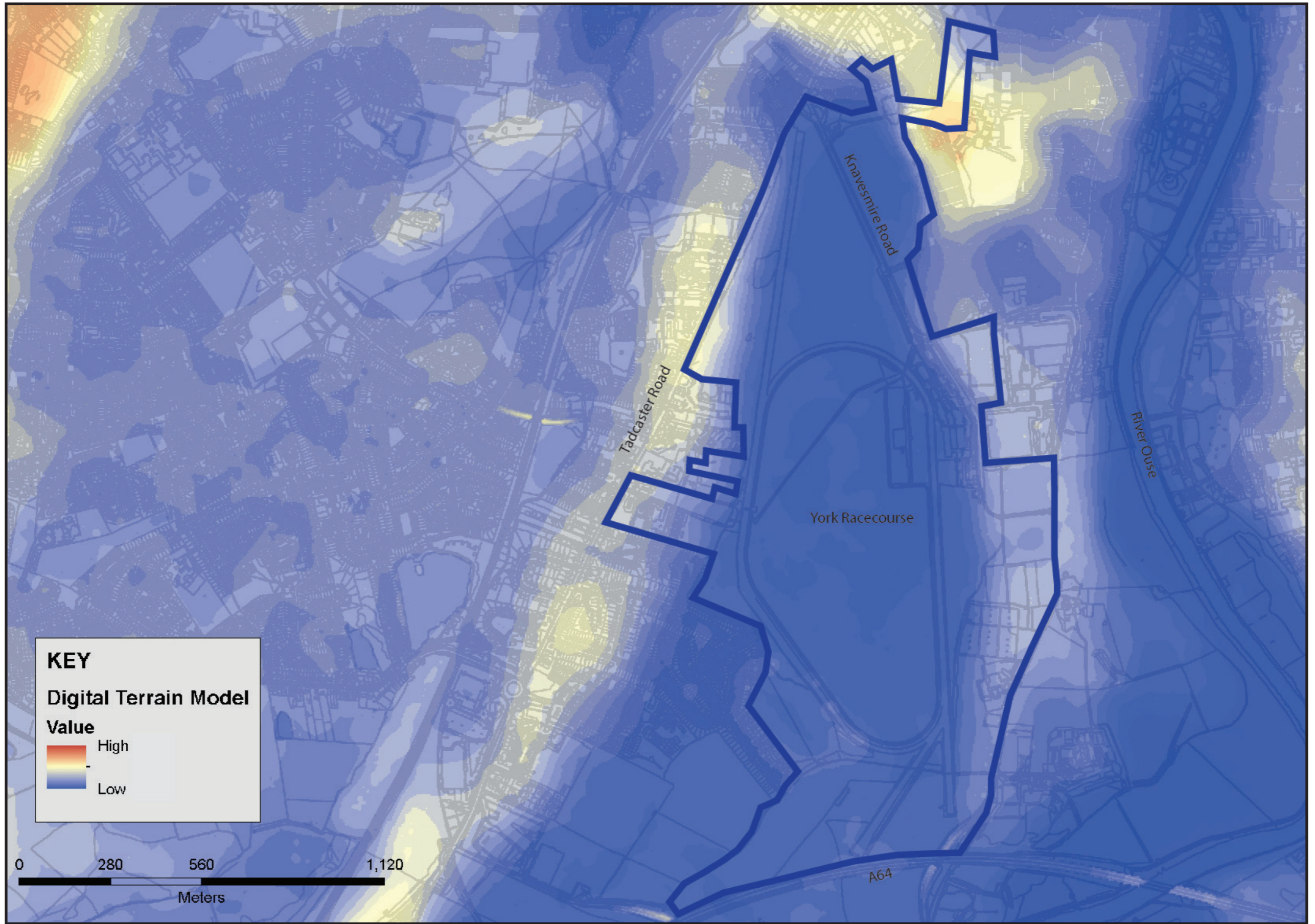
## Character Area 74: Maps

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



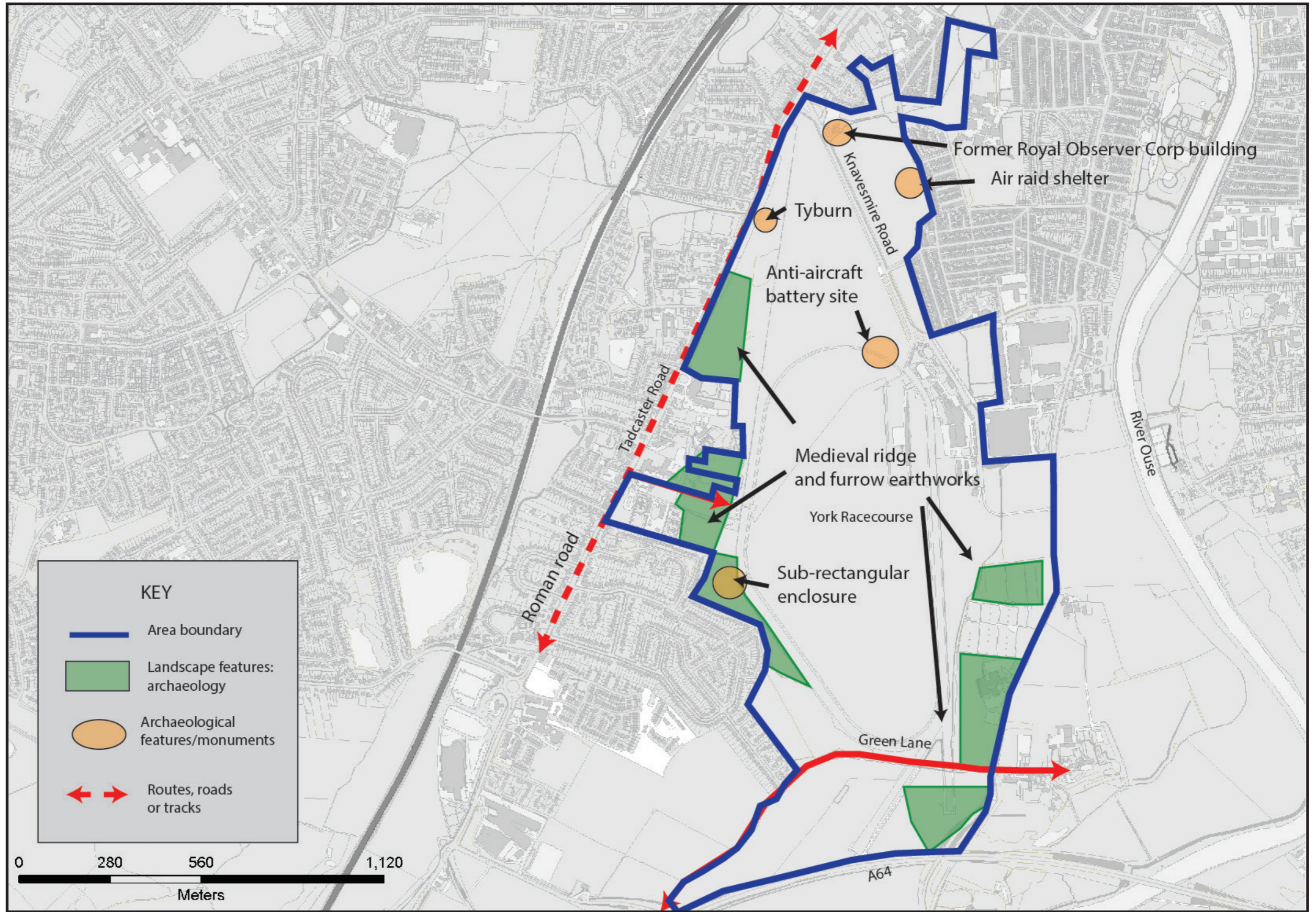


Topography





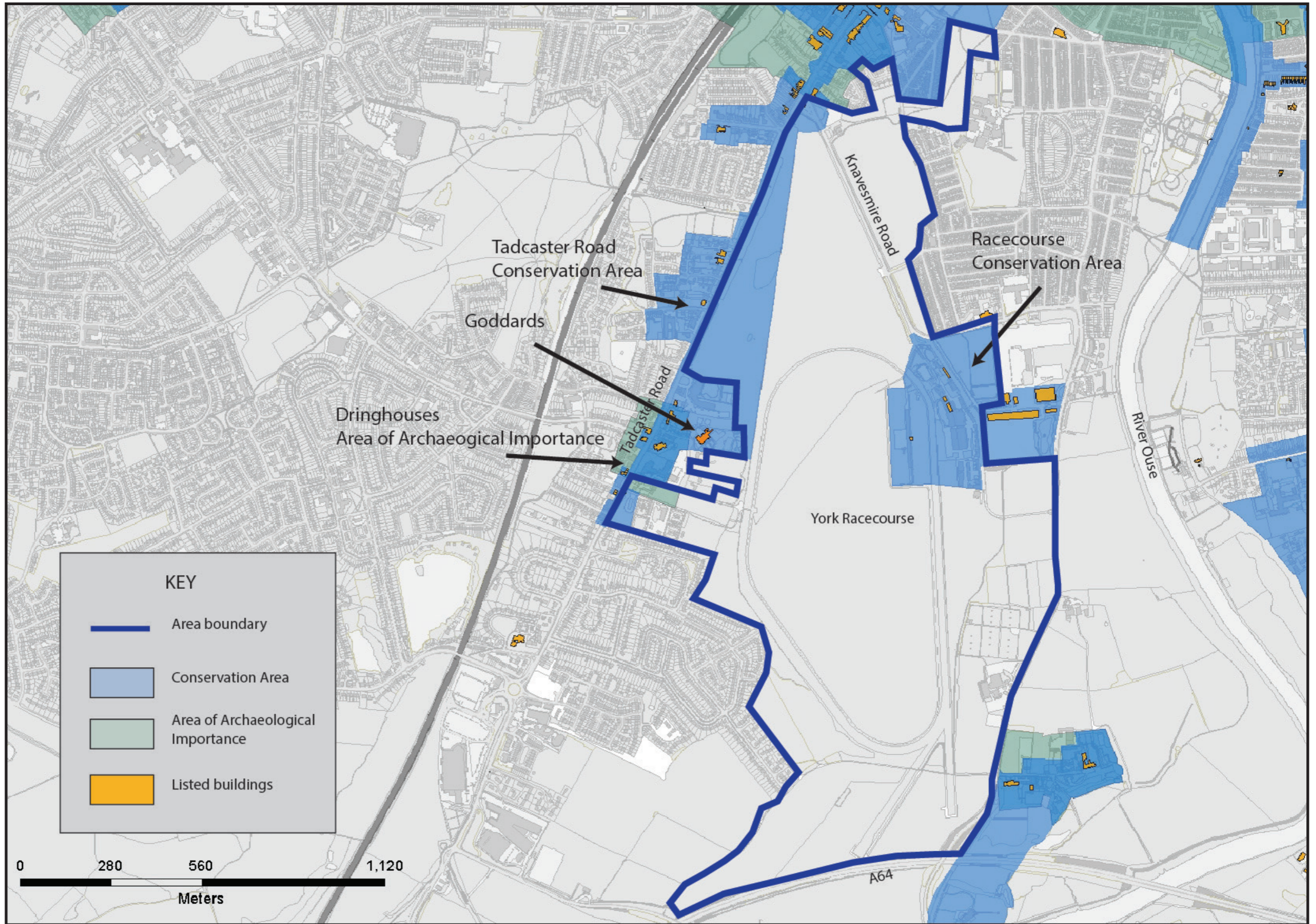
Archaeology and heritage assets



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Designated heritage assets





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

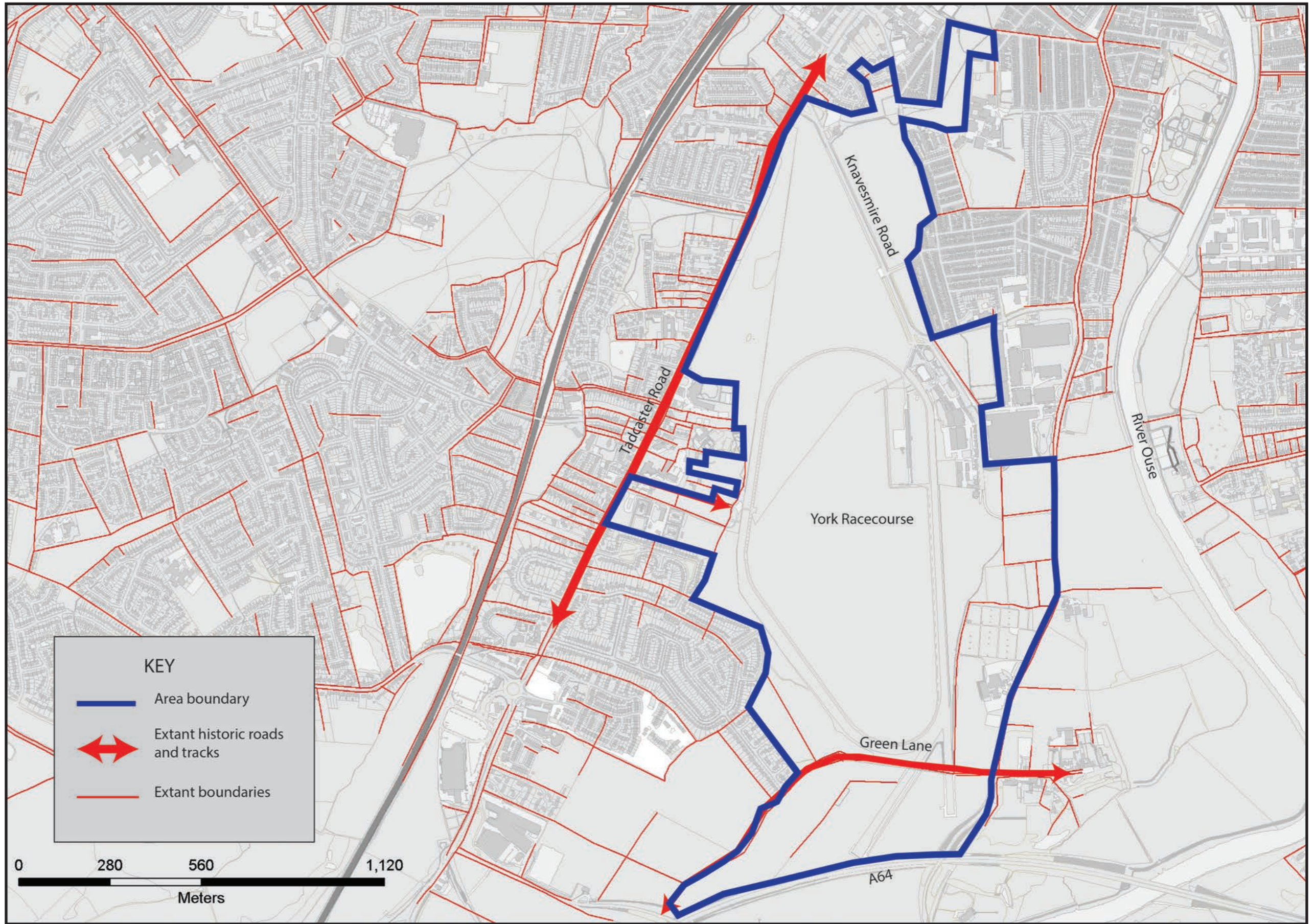




Figure ground map showing the relationship between open space (black) and the built environment





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**Graphics:** Bob Sydes and Claire MacRae

**Edited by:** Bob Sydes

**Funded by:** English Heritage

**Issued:** November 2013

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