

Historic Environment Character Zone

NIA Newbury Industrial Area

Historic Character

This is a densely occupied zone of low-rise industrial and warehousing units and office complexes, established in the 1980s and early 1990s on land around the River Kennet and the Kennet and Avon canal. This zone lies partially within the study area of the Newbury Historic Character Study and this should be referenced for more detailed description.

The zone is bisected by the river and canal and was mostly covered by marsh and meadow land prior to development. Non-industrial areas are few and consist of early 20th century terrace housing, allotments and a football ground.

Historic Environment

HER records are dominated by findspots and are unevenly distributed across the zone. The majority of records are in the north and west and only three exist south of the river and east of Boundary Road. Most buildings were constructed prior to the onset of developer-funded archaeology and work has only been carried out at a few sites, mainly near the A4 and A339, which have been redeveloped since the 1990s.

Mesolithic activity has been discovered in two parts of the zone and both lie north of the river and were found during monitoring of construction work. Work prior to the construction of the A4 roundabout found evidence of activity of this date, although it was unclear what kind of site was represented. Mesolithic material has been found at five locations around Faraday Road. These include a flint working area, a probable occupation site, and a palaeo-channel excavated prior to the construction of council offices. The Kennet, particularly around Newbury and Thatcham, has the highest concentration of Mesolithic activity in the district and includes nationally important sites. The known sites within this zone are important components of this pattern and the potential for the discovery of further sites of this date is high. Evidence of other prehistoric activity is scarce and confined to a Neolithic axe found in a garden on Kings Road and an antler tool found at Ham Marsh industrial estate which is thought to date to the Bronze Age.

A substantial Romano-British cemetery was found during construction of the railway goods yard, now Sainsbury's, in the 1890s. The cemetery was mostly of inhumation burials and contained at least 100 skeletons, but also including some cremations and was dated to the 1st to 2nd century. Such a large cemetery implies the existence of a large contemporary settlement in the zone but other Romano-British evidence is scarce and confined to pottery found in the river bank at Greenham and a coin from industrial units near Arnhem Road. It is likely that a settlement existed and that its location may be within this zone.

Medieval records are not common and consist of a length of stone walling found during construction of the A339 near the river and Greenham Mill, which existed on the island between the two branches of the Kennet. References to a mill at this site suggest it might date back to the 13th century and the mill is recorded as processing corn, wool and silk prior to its demolition in the 1980s. The mill was also used to generate electricity from the 1900s to the 1960s. Its site has been redeveloped into housing, but 16th century water management structures were excavated from the mill race in the 1990s. Evidence of an 18th and 19th century tannery were found at the eastern tip of the island during the redevelopment of the site.

The remainder of the records are post-medieval either relating to transportation or the Second World War. There are four canal locks, and the Southampton to Oxford railway formerly ran through this zone. The railway was closed and removed in the 1970s. Its course has been

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largely redeveloped, but traces of it survive in plot boundaries around Hambridge Lane. Pillboxes existed at Greenham Mill and between the river and A4 near the White Horse pub, both of these structures have been demolished and the land redeveloped. A pillbox and tank trap stood on the north side of the river near the A339, this area is not developed, but it is unclear if these structures survive. The area alongside the canal through this zone has been designated as a Conservation Area.

Historic Environment Potential

Most buildings were constructed prior to the onset of developer-funded archaeology so it is unclear the extent to which any archaeological deposits may have been removed during the development in this zone. The archaeological potential of any open areas, such as the allotments and football ground, is likely to be high. Most of the zone was green-field prior to development so the survival of archaeological deposits between building foundations is also possible. Deposits related to Mesolithic activity, Romano-British settlement, riverside activity such as wharves and fish-weirs and palaeo-channels are likely to be encountered. Environmental preservation may be good close to the river.

Historic Environment Action Plan

Conservation Issues

- Character and historic interest along the canal is threatened by development pressure.

Research Priorities

- What is the nature and extent of Mesolithic activity in the zone? Does this represent permanent settlement, or more transitory activity?
- Does a Romano-British settlement exist in the zone?
- What are the origins of the mills along the river and how did they function within the medieval and post medieval economy?
- Can the evidence of WWII features along the canal side help us understand the military planning in 1939-40?