

# Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 1

## Bridport Historic Core

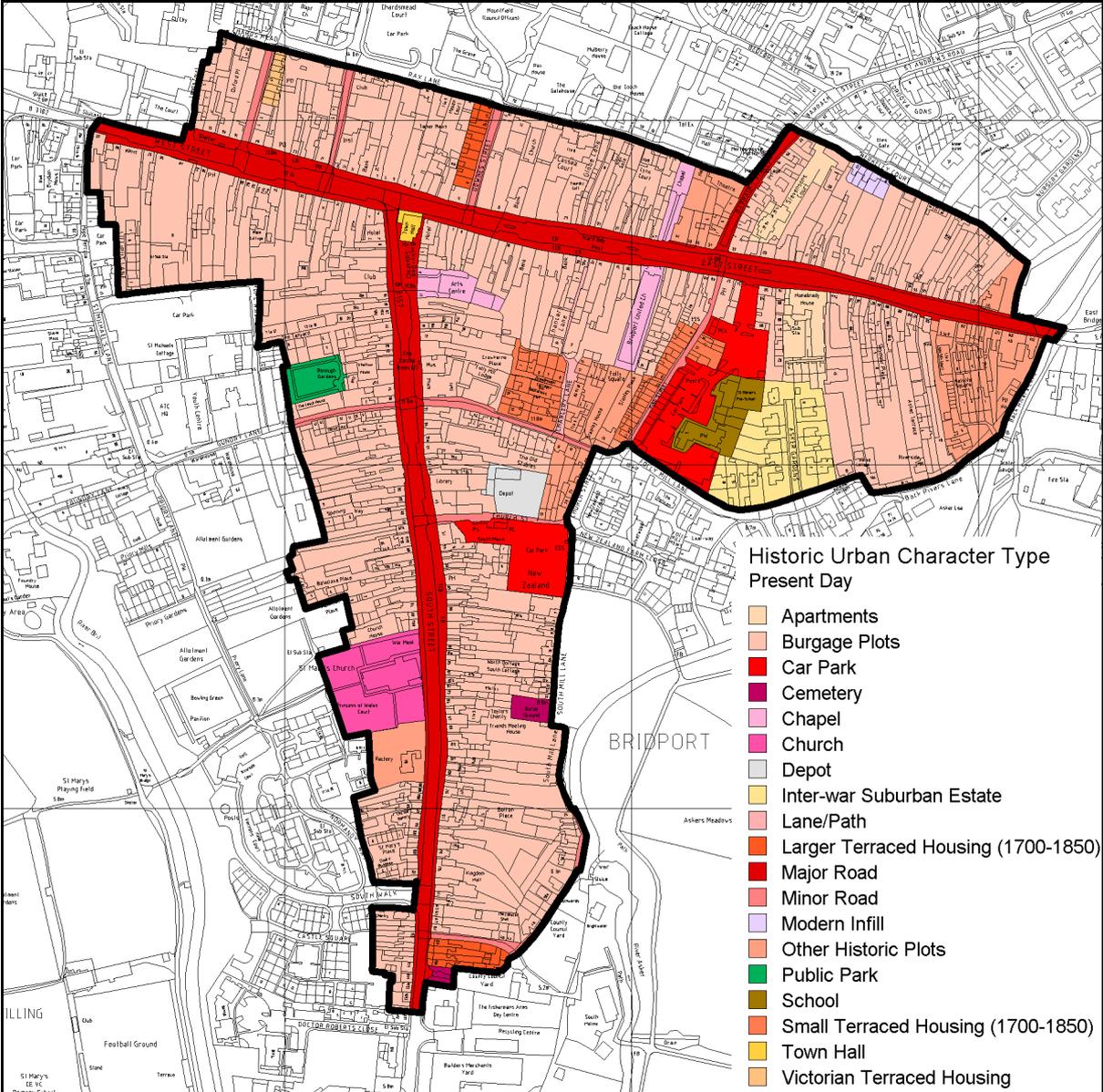


Figure 42: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 43: View down South Street from junction with East Street.



Figure 44: View of north side of East Street.

## Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 1 Structure of Character Area

### Overview

This is the historic and commercial core of Bridport and is broadly the area of the medieval town. It comprises the three main streets of East, West and South Street with their distinctive burgage plots behind. It is defined primarily by its historic dimension as the Saxon and medieval town, its historic boundaries and concentration of historic buildings.

### Topography and Geology

This character area is centred along the spine of the low promontory between the rivers Brit and Asker. The ground rises gradually up from the south towards the base of Coneygar Hill, with East and West streets running down off the promontory to the edge of the rivers. The promontory is formed of siltstones and limestones of the Eype Clay Member.

### Urban Structure

The area is formed by the T-shape of the three wide main streets, which meet at the highest point of the character area. East and West Street form the main through route and the Market House forms a pinch point at the end of South Street creating the small Bucky-Doo square behind. The main streets are largely straight, with some subtle changes in width. Behind the main streets are narrow back lanes and there are a number of narrow streets and passages at right angles, which link the two. The plots are long, narrow, and rectilinear in shape running perpendicular to the main streets.

### Present Character

Figure 42 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area consists predominantly of burgage plots arranged along both sides of the main streets. The regularity of the historic plots decreases at the east end of East Street. The Church of St Mary forms a dominant part of South Street, with other chapels fitted into burgage plots along East and South Streets. There is a small amount of small

and large terraced housing (1700-1850) and Victorian terraced housing. There are two car parks behind the street frontages and a small interwar suburban estate behind East Street. There is a small amount of modern development off East Street.

### Time Depth

This is the historic core of the town, including the area of the Saxon, Norman and Medieval towns. The main E-W street may have its origin as a prehistoric or Roman route and South Street is probably Saxon. St Mary's Church is probably the site of a Saxon minster church. East and West Street form a 13th century extension of the town. The northern limit of the area reflects the position of the medieval town ditch and the majority of the property boundaries are also likely to have their origin in the medieval period. There is a small amount of 18th to 20th century expansion and development.

### Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern comprises high density housing often converted to commercial functions forming ribbon development along South, East and West Streets. The streets are wide and straight falling away from the high point formed by the T-junction of the three main streets. There are almost completely unbroken frontages of buildings set directly on the street, with a few minor streets, lanes, passageways and occasional buildings set back from the frontage to punctuate the slightly sinuous building line. St Mary's Church on South Street is the only large open area on the street frontage. There is a mixture of two and three storey buildings and terraces, with smaller two storey buildings further away from the centre. Behind the street frontages are long narrow gardens, many formerly ropewalks. Public green spaces are rare other than the churchyard, Unitarian Chapel garden and the Borough Gardens, but there are a number of views to the countryside beyond and a number of small street trees.



Figure 45: View along West Street, looking towards the Town Hall.



Figure 46: Former workers cottages at 83-113 East Street.

## Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 1 Built Character

### **Building types**

The area is characterised by a large number of 18th and 19th century buildings, with a small number of earlier structures. Many of the buildings are of high quality with a number of coherent groups, particularly on the north side of East Street and along South Street. Some houses were refronted in the 18th and 19th centuries and may contain earlier fabric. There are relatively few modern buildings. The street frontages are mainly lined with two and three storey 18th and 19th century houses with inserted shops (some with interesting 18th and early 19th century shopfronts).

There is a mixture of large town houses closer to the centre and *ad hoc* terraces of smaller workers' or artisans' dwellings further out along East and South Streets. Downes Street contains the best example of Georgian terraced housing in Bridport and has an interesting mix of domestic and industrial features. Prospect Place in King Street is a high quality planned terrace of workers' housing of early 19th century date. The rear plots to the south of East Street contain some examples of mid-late 19th century infilling, either along existing rope walks or burgage plots (Seymour Place) or terraces of houses across several plots (Melville Place). There are a number of industrial or combined residential and industrial buildings, mainly dating from the mid-18th to mid-19th centuries. These tend to have three storey frontages of predominantly domestic appearance, occasionally incorporating loading doors and with cart entrances through the frontages giving access to industrial buildings behind.

The early buildings include St Mary's Church, with fabric dating from the 13th to 19th centuries, the 13th-14th century Chantry, the 16th century 'Castle' and Daniel Taylor's almshouses and the adjacent Friends Meeting House dating to the 15th-17th centuries, all on South Street. Nos. 16 & 18 South Street is timber framed with partial survival of a jettied front wall. Other timber framed buildings are found at 9 East Street,



Figure 47: Nos. 20 and 22 South Street.

37 & 39 East Street, and the Bull Hotel, the latter three were refronted in the 18th or 19th century.

### **Building Materials**

Many houses are built of local bricks and local Bothenhampton stone and Inferior Oolite is used for both larger and smaller houses. The Literary and Scientific Institute is of high quality Portland stone ashlar. There are a small number of timber-framed buildings and cob-walled buildings. The roofs are mainly Welsh slate and clay tiles.

### **Key Buildings**

Public Buildings: Town Hall, Bridport Literary and Scientific Institute, former Bridport General School.

Religious Buildings: St Mary's Church, Unitarian Chapel, Bridport United Church, Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (Arts Centre).

Medieval Buildings: The Chantry, Bridport Museum, Friends Meeting House

Early Post-medieval Buildings: 9 East Street, 37 and 39 East Street, 16 and 18 South Street.

Town Houses: Granville House (25 West Street), 34 West Street, 74 East Street, Jesoppe House (79 East Street), Bridge House Hotel (115 East Street), Nos. 124- 128 East Street, 32 South Street, Downes Street.

Commercial Buildings: Bull Hotel, Greyhound Inn, Palace Cinema.

Industrial Buildings: 20 and 22 South Street, 72 and 74 South Street, 3 Rax Lane, 13 Downes Street, 8 Folly Mill Lane.

Workers' Housing: 99-117 South Street, 83-113 East Street, Prospect Place, King Street.



Figure 48: 74 East Street, an 18th century merchant's town house.

### Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 1 Archaeology

#### Archaeological Investigations

Twenty-six archaeological investigations have been done in this area, mainly small evaluations and watching briefs, with one larger excavation at 43 South St and building recording at The Chantry (Figure 49; Appendix 3, Nos. 1-26). Most were along South St and have revealed evidence of medieval property boundaries and pits. Robbed out medieval buildings were found at 43 South St. The medieval town ditch was found at 41-43 East St; otherwise only post-medieval activity has been recorded along East and West Streets. The remains of a post-medieval tannery were found at 22 South St.

#### Archaeological Character

Archaeological investigations in this area give some indication of archaeological character, but most were small in scope, restricting the quantity and quality of the results.

There has been little evidence for pre-medieval activity, so it is difficult to understand the character of the pre-urban archaeology. Nothing has been recovered to indicate the precise extent of the late Saxon town. It is likely that remains of the Saxon burh defences lie within this area and potentially some evidence for the property divisions and use of the plots within these defences.

The medieval and later archaeology is typified by the remains of buildings, industrial features, pits and a range of other minor features across the area. Palaeoenvironmental sampling at 43 South St has demonstrated its value in providing information on diet and craft activity.

Figure 50 shows boundaries depicted on maps dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Most are likely to be medieval burghage plots fossilised in the modern townscape.

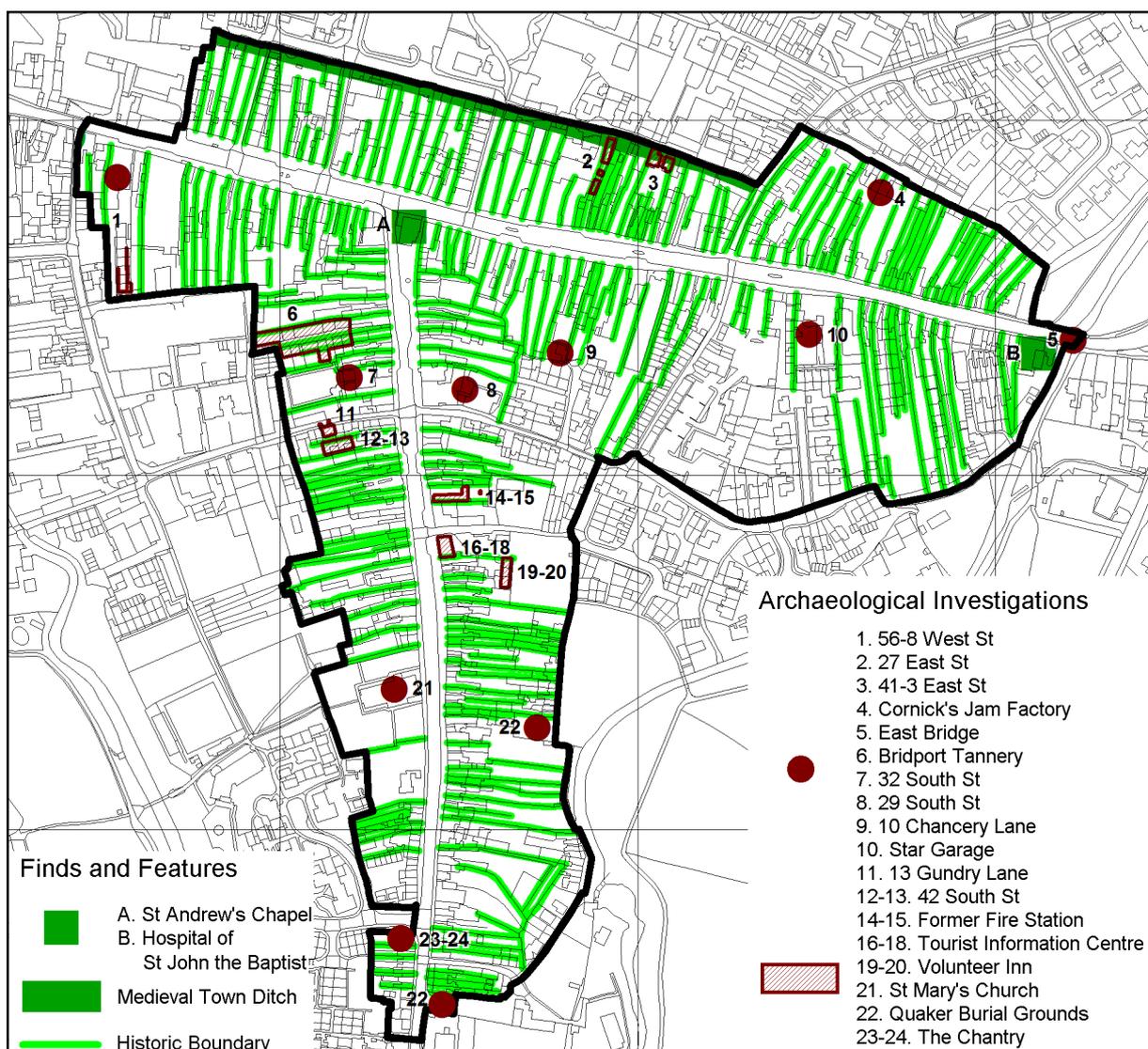


Figure 49: Archaeological Investigations, findspots and features in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

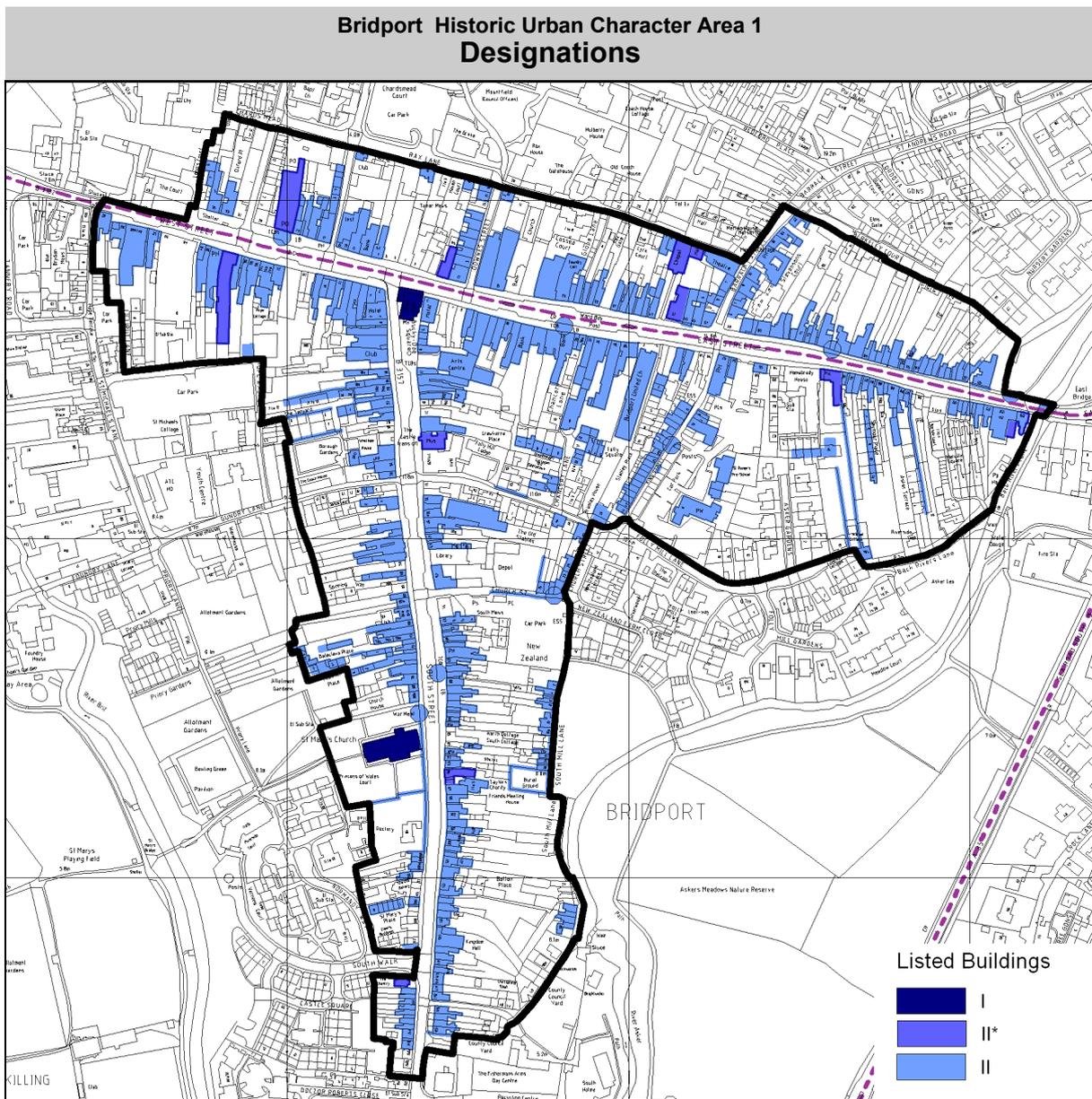


Figure 50: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

**Listed Buildings**

There are 226 Listed Buildings in the Character Area. St Mary’s Church and the Town Hall are Grade I. Ten buildings are Grade II\* (Granville House (25 West Street), 34 West Street, 9 East Street, Unitarian Chapel, Literary and Scientific Institute (51 East Street), 74 East Street, 126 East Street, Daniel Taylor’s Almshouses, Bridport Museum, The Chantry) and the remaining 214 buildings are Grade II.

**Conservation Areas**

The whole of this Character Area lies within the Bridport Conservation Area.

**Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**

There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the Character Area.

**Scheduled Monuments**

No Scheduled Monuments lie within this character area.



Figure 51: Literary and Scientific Institute, 51 East Street.

## Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 1 Evaluation

### ***Strength of Historic Character***

The historic character of this area is judged to be **strong**. It has good survival of the medieval town layout with its market place, wide main streets and distinctive long narrow burgage plots. There is an extremely strong contribution from the large number of historic buildings, primarily of 18th and 19th century date (together with a few notable earlier survivals). There is a range of different building types from gentry town houses to artisan's cottages, combined domestic and industrial buildings, non-conformist chapels, historic inns and hotels and historic shop fronts. The widespread use of local materials creates a pleasing whole to the built character.

### ***Sensitivity to Large Scale Development***

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. The scale and shape of the historic streets and plots reflect considerable time depth and provide the underlying structure which gives the town its historic character. The street frontages formed mainly by historic buildings are very sensitive to anything other than small-scale change and any opening up of the frontages would have a major impact upon the character.

### ***Archaeological Potential***

The archaeological potential of this character area is judged to be **high**. It has the potential to answer crucial questions about the origins and the character of Saxon and medieval Bridport and the nature of their defences. Investigations to the rear of the street frontage may reveal information about the history of property divisions, small-scale craft industries and the economy and diet of the inhabitants. The survival of archaeological deposits and features is medium.

The large number of historic buildings and outbuildings has a high potential to provide detailed information on the survival of earlier structures hidden behind later frontages and to contribute to the understanding of the development of houses and shops in post-medieval Bridport. There is also potential for recovering archaeological information on the pre-urban activity (as suggested by the prehistoric finds from 42 South Street).

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1, 2, 5–21, 23–29 (Part 7).

### **Key Characteristics**

- Historic core of Saxon, medieval and post-medieval town
- T-shaped street layout
- Wide main streets
- Historic Market Place and Town Hall
- Burgage Plots
- Historic Street frontage with distinctive mix of larger houses and small outworker's cottages and a number of historic shopfronts
- Combined residential and industrial buildings
- Remains of ropewalks and spinning ways
- St Mary's Church
- Buried medieval town defences and other medieval archaeological remains