

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 4 Coneygar Hill

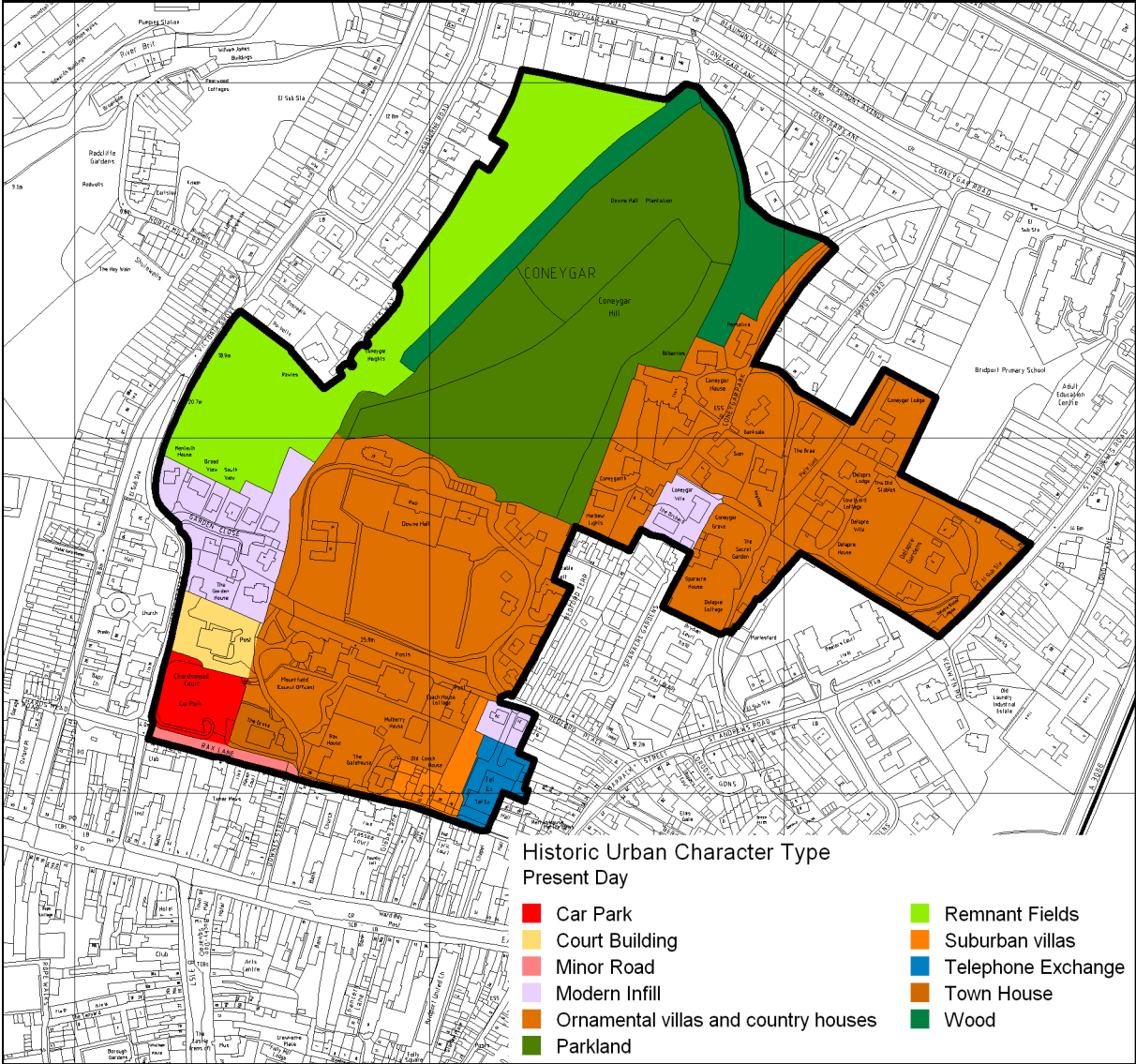


Figure 72: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 4, showing current historic urban character type.

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 4 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This character area lies immediately north of the medieval town, in an area formerly part of Bradpole parish, and centred on Coneygar Hill. The heart of this character area is the gardens and miniature landscape park of Downe House, which covers the summit and southern slopes of the hill. The green character is continued by the gardens of the large villas and the grassy slopes on the western side. The southern fringe of this area is rather more urban in character.

Topography and Geology

The area is centred on the rounded Coneygar Hill which has relatively gentle lower slopes that rise up more steeply especially on the western side. The northern part of the area forms a saddle between Coneygar Hill and Watton Hill. Coneygar Hill is formed of sandstones of the Bridport Sand Formation. Along the southern edge of the area the geology siltstones and limestones of the Eype Clay Member.

Urban Structure

There is little in the way of urban structure in this area, as it is based on large houses set in spacious grounds and green spaces around Coneygar Hill. There has been erosion of these grounds by modern development and subdivision of gardens. The former net and sailcloth works of Wykes Court were demolished in 1976 and replaced by a car park. The former kitchen gardens of Mountfield have been developed for modern housing. The narrow plots, telephone exchange, and the narrow Rax Lane in the southeast corner of this character area give a more urban feel, linking to the rear plots of the area of the medieval town to the south.

Present Character

Figure 72 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area predominantly consists of Ornamental Villas and Country Houses and Parkland, with a strip of Remnant

Fields along its western side. Other minor historic urban character types include the Town House of The Grove with adjacent Car Park at Wykes Court and adjacent Court Building, areas of Modern Infill, and Suburban Villas and Telephone Exchange on Rax Lane.

Time Depth

This area was first developed in the late 18th and early 19th century for large houses in spacious grounds, following the opening up of the area by the creation of Downes Street. There has been some modern infilling of the gardens and grounds in the 20th century.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is of low density housing in an organic layout. The larger houses are mainly hidden from view behind mature vegetation and gardens which form a dominant part of this area. There is a modern detached house estate arranged around a cul-de-sac at Garden Close with green fields beyond. Rax Lane, which forms a back lane to the main street, has a rather irregular streetscape with different sized plots and a lack of a common building line.



Figure 73: View of Coneygar Hill from St Mary's Church.



Figure 74: View west along Rax Lane.

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 4 Built Character

Building types

This area is characterised by large detached villas of late 18th and early 19th century date, set in spacious grounds. Most of these houses have been subsequently enlarged and remodelled. The largest and grandest house at the top of the social hierarchy in Bridport is Downe Hall, with its refined neo-Classical frontage and its extension and formal gardens by E S Prior. In terms of scale and position, Mountfield can be viewed as the next house in the social hierarchy of this area, set back on the upper southern slopes in its large grounds, with The Grove and Rax House lying further downslope on the southern edge of this area. Both Mountfield and Rax House were remodelled in a Classical Revival style and The Grove has an austere classical facade. Coneygar House was built in 1842 and was enlarged in 1904 by Alfred Colfox.

Delapre House on the eastern slopes was built in 1803-5 in a classical style as the officer's quarters and mess for Bridport Barracks and later became a private dwelling.

There are also a number of outbuildings, stables, coach houses and historic garden and other boundary walls that are an important integral part of the built character of this area.

Building Materials

The buildings are of stone or brick, both local and imported red and yellow brick, with stone dressings. Downe Hall has a Portland stone ashlar front. Delapre House is of stucco with stucco dressings. The roofs are principally of slate.

Key Buildings

Downe Hall, The Grove, Mountfield, Rax House, Delapre House, Coneygar House.



Figure 75: Downe Hall.



Figure 76: Mountfield.

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 4 Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

There have been no archaeological investigations within this character area. A Palaeolithic handaxe was found on Coneygar Hill, but this appears to be a chance stray find.

Archaeological Character

The lack of any below-ground investigation constrains consideration of the archaeological resource. However, its position outside the historic core of the town on a hillslope and hilltop location in a former pastoral landscape suggests there is likely to be a low density of archaeological features. The handaxe findspot indicates the possibility of prehistoric features and finds in this area but the probability and precise form is uncertain.

Figure 77 shows historic boundaries depicted on 19th century maps, which are remnants of earlier field boundaries.

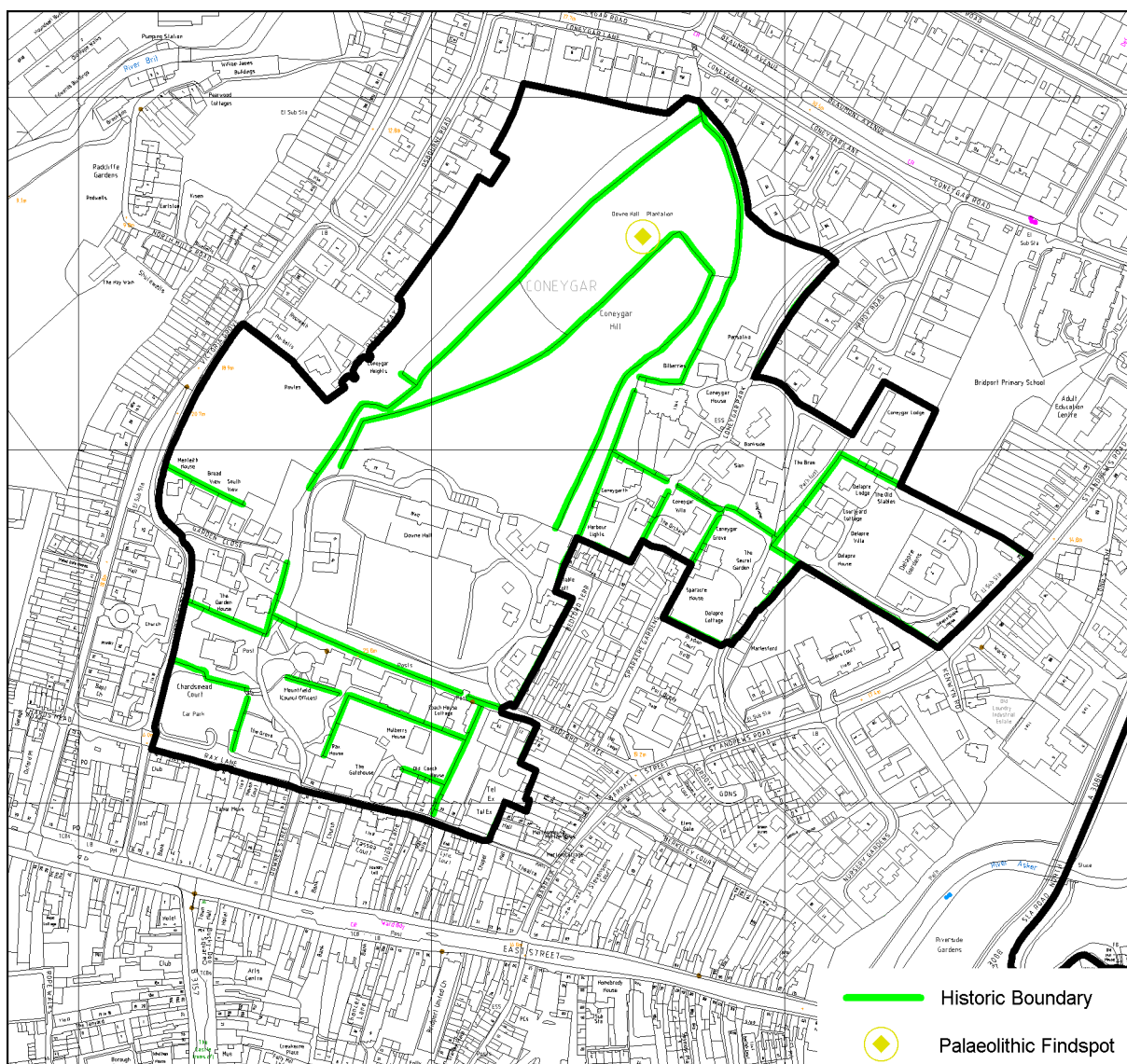


Figure 77: Archaeological findspots and features in Historic Urban Character Area 4.

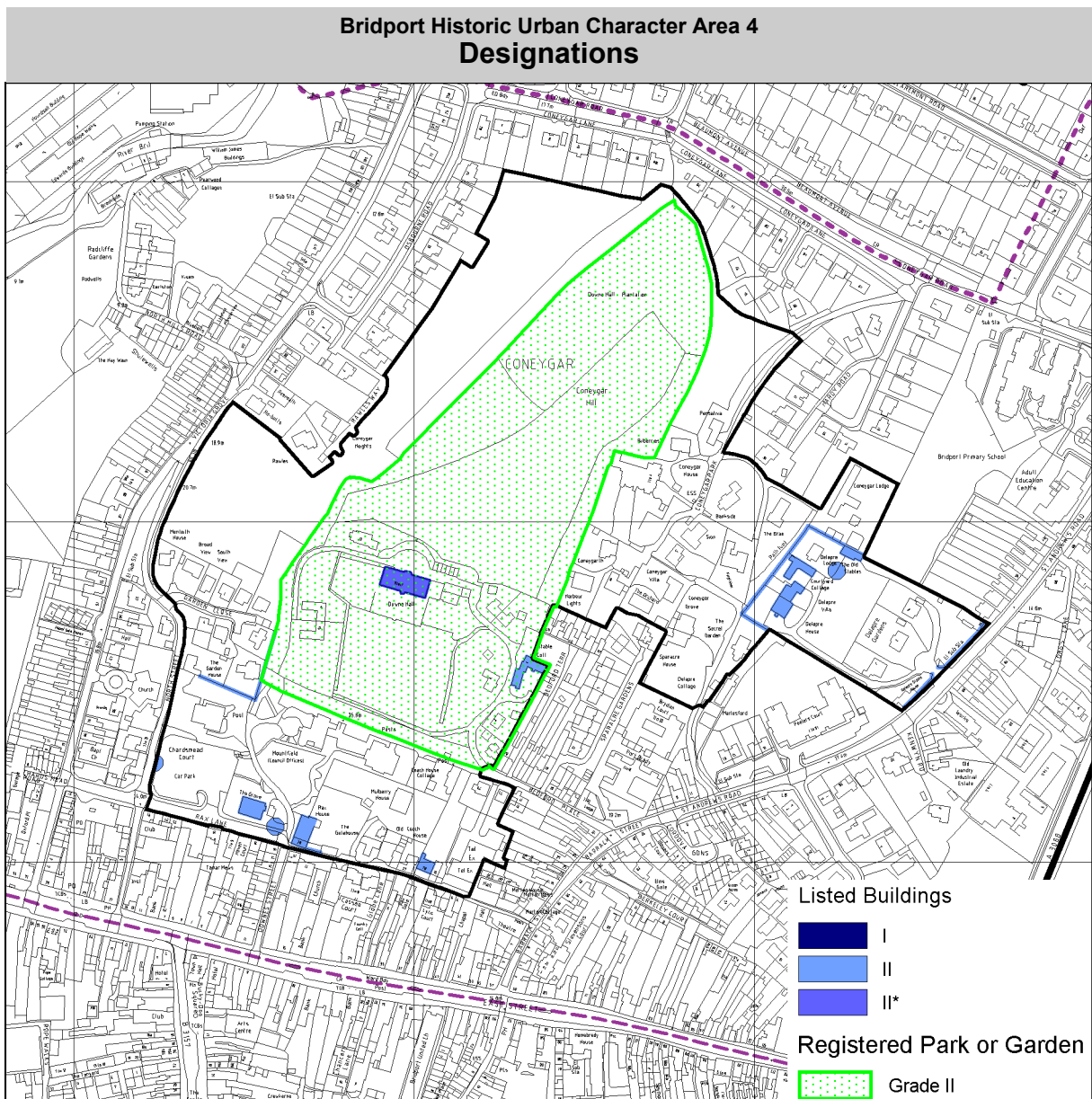


Figure 78: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 4.

Listed Buildings

There are 14 Listed Buildings in the Character Area. Downe Hall is Grade II* and the remaining 13 buildings and structures are Grade II.

Conservation Areas

The whole of this Character Area lies within the Bridport Conservation Area (Figure 41).

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

The Grade II Downe Hall Registered Park and Garden lies within this Character Area.

Scheduled Monuments

No Scheduled Monuments lie within this character area.

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 4 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **Strong**. It has largely retained its late 18th and early 19th century layout of large houses and villas set in spacious grounds. It forms an important part of the story of the move away from the town centre and its industry by the wealthiest inhabitants of Bridport. There has been some erosion of the grounds by modern infill, but the mature trees and vegetation of the gardens still dominate.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **High** sensitivity to major change. There has been some erosion of the character of the area with the infill of gardens with housing during the twentieth century, but the area still retains its essential historic character. Any further large-scale development is likely to have a major detrimental effect to this character by infilling and reducing the historic gardens and grounds to a level where the modern development potentially predominates. The removal of mature vegetation as part of any large-scale development will make it very visible from the surrounding area, particularly given the elevated topography of this area.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **Medium**. Its position outside the historic core of Bridport, its hillslope topography, and its primarily pastoral landscape prior to the eighteenth century suggest low archaeological potential. There is also potential for recovering archaeological information on the pre-urban activity (as suggested by the Palaeolithic findspot).

The southern part of the area immediately outside the historic medieval town has a high potential for providing information on early extramural development. The potential buried industrial remains of Wykes Court have a high potential to contribute to the industrial archaeological heritage of Bridport. There are no data on the survival of archaeological deposits and features in this area, but given its settlement and agricultural history, this is likely to be high.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1, 25-28 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Downe Hall gardens and park
- Large detached villas
- Gardens and grounds to villas
- Boundary walls
- Buried industrial remains at Wykes Court