

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 1

Beaminster Historic Core

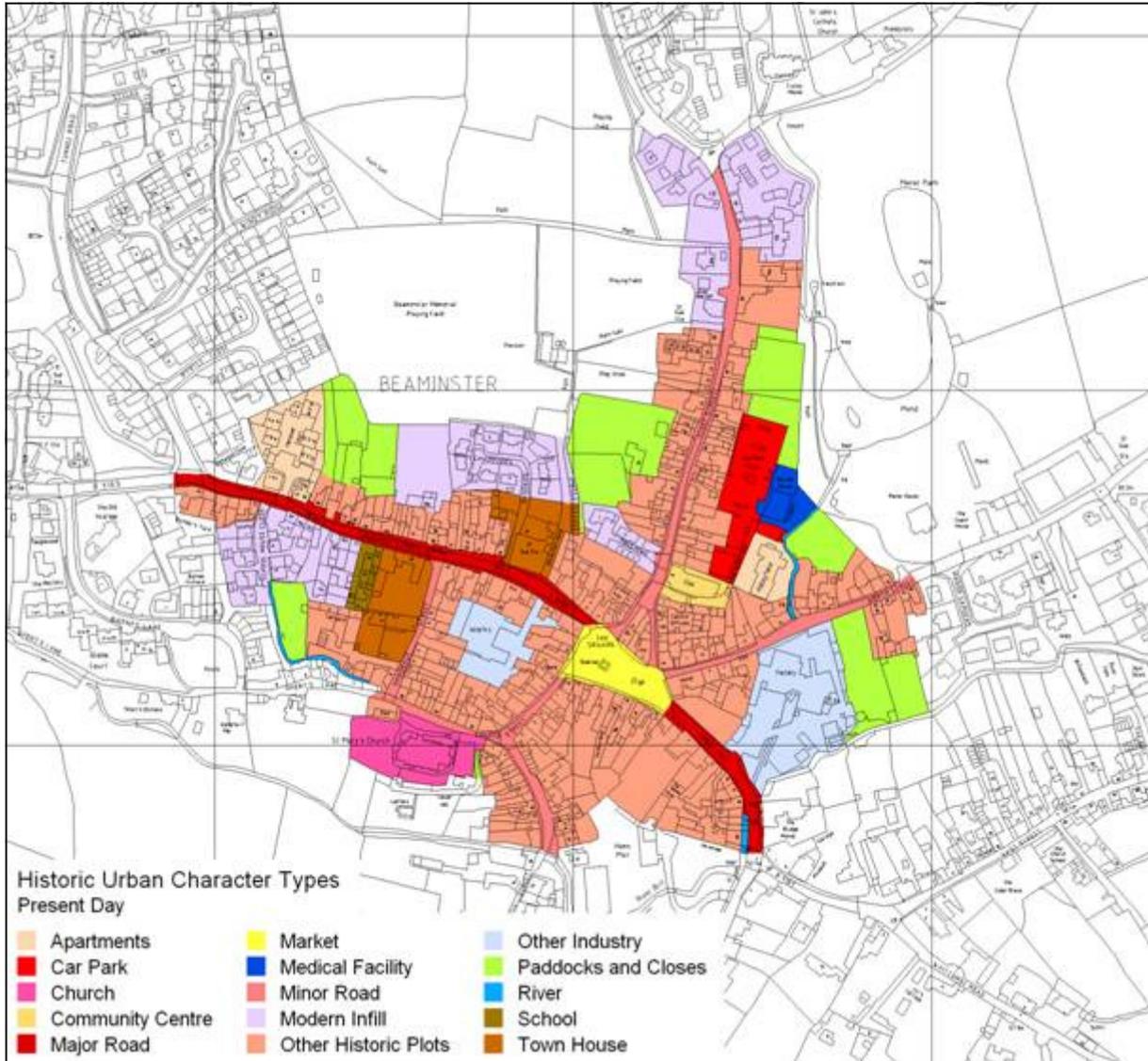


Figure 34: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 35: View of The Square.



Figure 36: View along North Street towards the market place.

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 1

Structure of Character Area

Overview

This is the historic and commercial core of Beaminster and broadly covers the area of the medieval and early post-medieval town, other than the area of possible planned development along East Street. It is defined primarily by its historic dimension and the concentration of historic buildings.

Topography and Geology

Generally, the ground slopes down from the north, west, and east towards the valley of the river Brit, which runs along the south east side of the area, with a tributary stream along the south west part of the area. The ground dips away most steeply south of the market place. Most of the area lies on Fuller's Earth Clays, but the southern end is on Inferior Oolite geology.

Urban Structure

The focus of the area is the market place, with a radial array of five streets running off it, largely following the lines of watercourses that are now channelled underground. The streets have a sinuous character with subtle changes in direction and width. Hogshill Street and Prout Hill form the main through route, along the north side of the market place.

The plots are generally rectangular or rectilinear in shape but are irregular in their proportions. Behind the frontages, particularly along the north side of Hogshill Street and along Fleet Street and North Street, are some larger plots.

Present Character

Figure 34 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area predominantly comprises historic plots arranged around the market place and along the main streets, with some larger town houses along Hogshill Street. There are some larger gardens and closes

behind the historic plots on the street frontages. A small number of areas of modern infill housing are found along Fleet Street and Hogshill Street. There are two significant areas of industry between North Street and Prout Hill and behind the Hogshill and Shadrack Street frontages. Other minor historic urban character types include the car park at Yarn Barton behind Fleet Street, the adjacent medical facility and public building, and the former school on Hogshill Street.

Time Depth

This area represents the historic core of the town and includes a number of primary elements, namely the triangular market-place and the church. The market place was probably deliberately laid out at the very beginning of the town's development in the 13th century. The church is probably on the site of the Saxon minster church, which accounts for its peripheral location away from the market place, close to the edge of the river valley.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is high density housing in an irregular organic perimeter block or ribbon layout, with the houses set along the street frontage, except for a few notable exceptions where the buildings are set back and the street frontage is defined by stone perimeter walls. The frontages are almost all completely built up, with a few narrow access routes into the spaces behind the frontage.

There are few open spaces in this area. The most significant are the market place, the churchyard and the car park at Yarn Barton. Trees and green spaces form only a small element, being limited to gardens of larger town houses and the churchyard. Views of the surrounding countryside can be glimpsed from many parts of the area.



Figure 37: View along Hogshill Street towards the market place



Figure 38: View along Shadrack Street towards Hogshill Street.

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 1 Built Character

Building types

The area is characterised by a large number of 18th and early 19th century buildings, with a smaller number dating to the later 19th and earlier 20th century. There are relatively few modern buildings within the historic core. They include attached houses, short terraces and attached small cottages, larger houses (some with 18th and 19th century shop premises built into them) and a number of large town houses. Some industrial buildings also survive, mainly converted to domestic or commercial uses.

The houses are two or two-and-a-half storey attached houses or short terraces, with occasional three storey buildings. The houses are all different in size, window arrangement and detail, and roof pitch. In general, there are very few architecturally remarkable buildings in the centre of Beaminster, but the similarity in scale and use of local building materials, together with the diversity of individual architectural details gives the houses of the town a very pleasing group character. Some historic 18th and 19th century shopfronts survive, adding distinctive character, particularly in The Square and along Hogshill Street.

Building Materials

Local yellow-brown Inferior Oolite stone is used for the majority of houses and lias ashlar blocks are found in a small number of facades. Brick is relatively uncommon and a small number of buildings are rendered. Ham Hill Stone and brick are used for dressings. The roofs are predominantly slate.

Key Buildings

Public Buildings: St Mary's Church, Beaminster Institute.

Town Houses: 'Champions' 10-14 Hogshill St, 'Devonia' 19 Hogshill St, 'Daniels House' 29 Hogshill S, 'London House' 34-38 Hogshill St, 5-7 Fleet St, 'Barton End' 50 Fleet St, 9 The Square.

17th Century houses: 56 Hogshill Street, 19-21 North Street, 12-14 North Street, 5 Church Street. 9 The Square, 12 The Square

Commercial Premises: 1-3 Fleet Street, The White Hart, The Red Lion, Former Lloyds Bank,

Industrial Buildings: Milk factory chimney, 1 Church St, Former twine manufactory in Shad-rack St.



Figure 39: Fleet Street, looking north.



Figure 40: 'London House' Hogshill Street — a late 19th century town house with commercial premises.



Figure 41: Houses and shops along west side of The Square.



Figure 42: 'Daniel's House' Hogshill Street — an 18th century town house.

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 1 Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

Three archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area — a watching brief at 6 Prout Hill and two building recording surveys at St Mary’s Church and 12 The Square (Figure 43).

The watching brief at 6 Prout Hill was to the rear of the property and limited in scope. The area was disturbed by 18th and 19th century activity, but revealed some details of an earlier building on site (Clarke 2007).

The recording at St Mary’s Church was focused on the tower and revealed details of the structure and various periods of repair and renovation (Graham 2005).

The recording of 12 The Square revealed a

complex history of rebuilding and adaptation of a late 17th century house (Rodwell 2006).

Archaeological Character

The very limited below-ground investigation constrains any consideration of the archaeological resource. Nevertheless, the location within the historic core of the town would suggest that a series of medieval and post-medieval pits may exist in the rear of the historic plots, together with evidence for earlier property boundaries and structures.

A small number of Roman finds have been recovered from the area indicating the presence of Roman activity, but its precise form is unclear on present evidence (Anon 1968, Farrar 1965a, Clarke 2007).

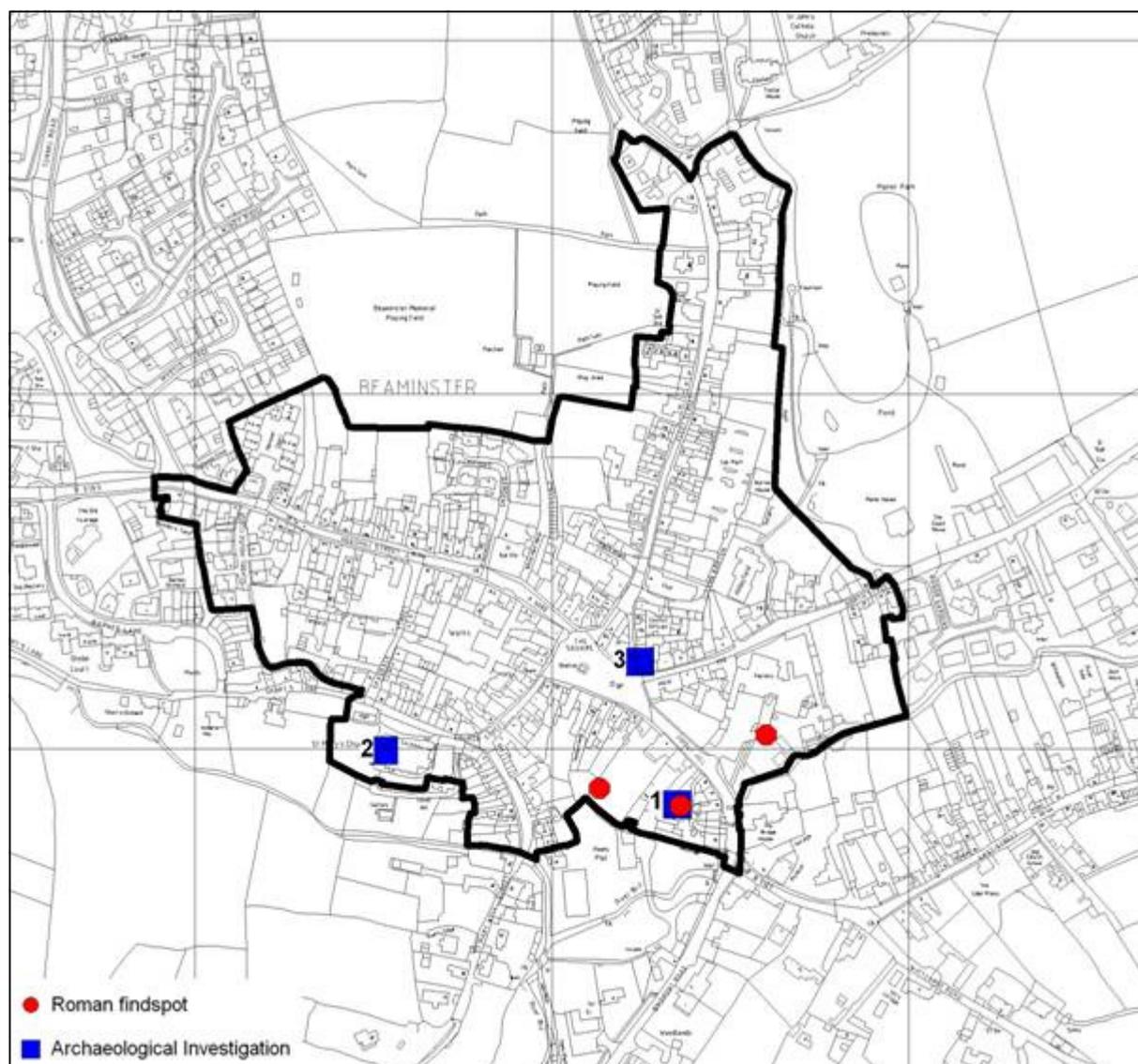


Figure 43: Archaeological Investigations and findspots in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

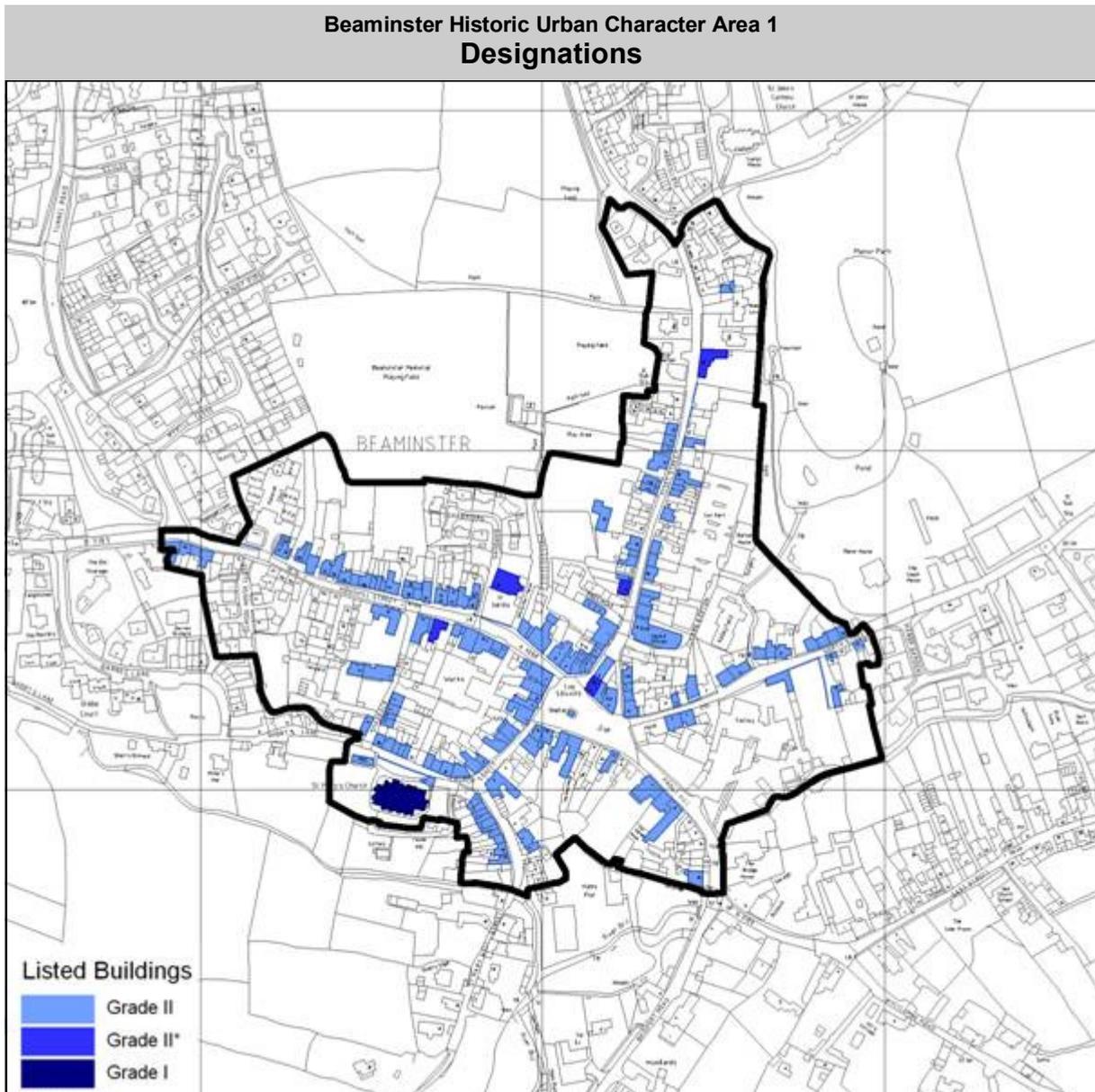


Figure 44: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

Listed Buildings

There are 107 Listed Buildings in the Character Area. St Mary's Church is the only Grade I building. Five buildings are Grade II* (Barton End, 9 The Square, Champions, Devonian and 7 & 9 Fleet Street) and the remaining 101 buildings and structures are Grade II.

Conservation Areas

The whole of this Character Area lies within the Beaminster Conservation Area (Figure 33).

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the Character Area. The Grade II park and garden of the Manor House lies immediately northeast of this area.

Scheduled Monuments

No Scheduled Monuments lie within this character area.



Figure 45: 'Champions' 10-14 Hogshill Street.

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 1 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. It has good survival of the medieval town layout with its market place and associated historic 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. 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.

The varied nature of the topography of the town and its surroundings means that majority of the character area is overlooked from a number of

vantage points within and just outside the town with the result that any large-scale development would be very visible.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. It lies in the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval town and has potential to reveal details on the development of the town, the history of its property divisions, small-scale craft and other industries and the economy and diet of the inhabitants.

The large number of historic buildings and outbuildings have 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 Beaminster.

There is also potential for recovering archaeological information on the pre-urban activity (as suggested by the Late Iron Age/ Roman findspots) .

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1-18 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Historic core of medieval and post-medieval town
- Triangular medieval market place
- Radial street pattern
- Generally narrow sinuous streets
- Church located away from centre on knoll on edge of river
- Irregular rectilinear historic plots
- Wide range of 18th and 19th century attached houses
- 18th and 19th century town houses, some incorporating commercial premises
- Historic shopfronts
- Historic inns and hotels
- Prominent chimney of milk factory