

## Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 3 Southgate and Whitcombe

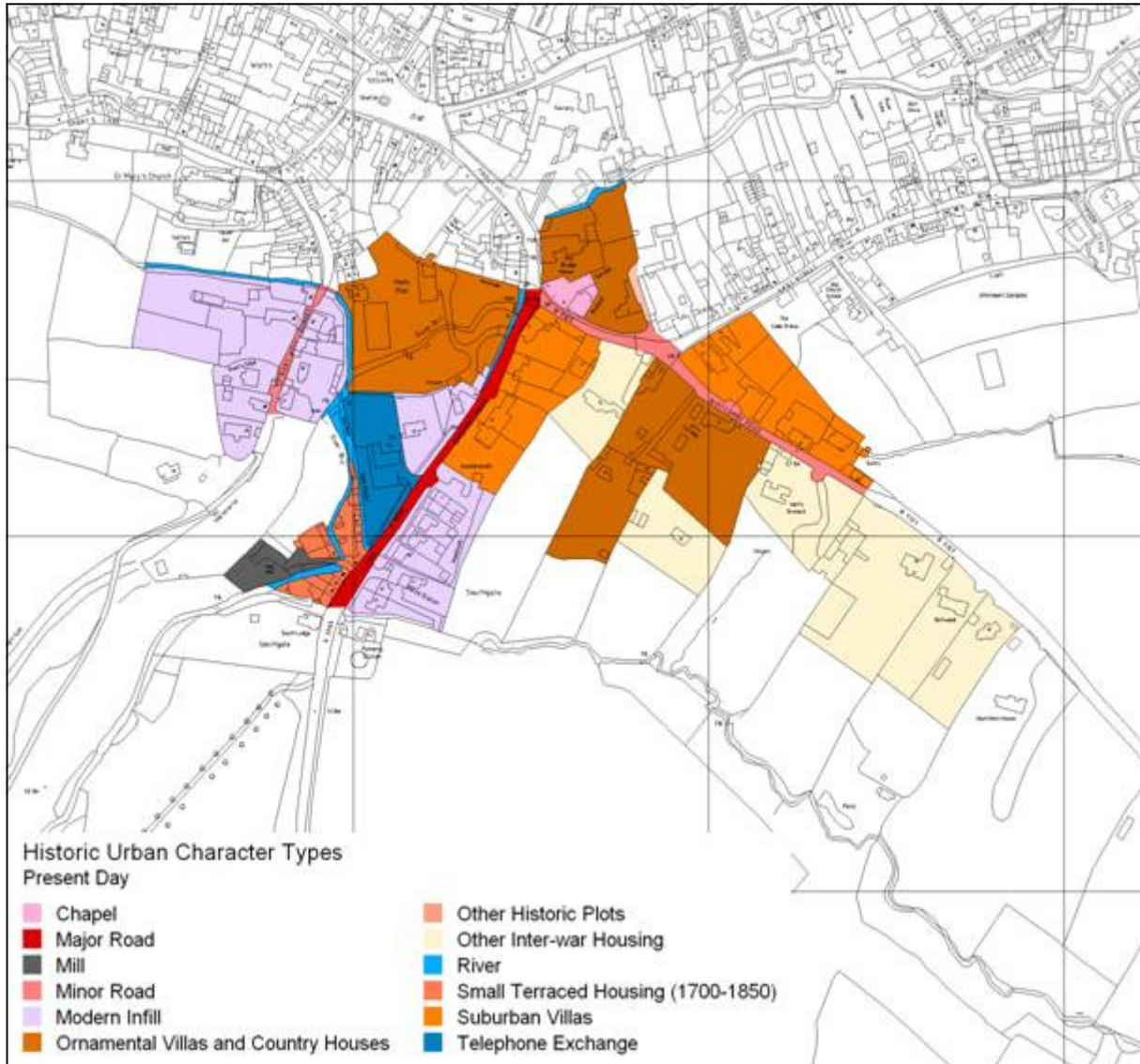


Figure 58: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 3, showing current historic urban character type



Figure 59: View along Bridport Road from Southgate.



Figure 60: View along Whitcombe Road at the junction with East Street.

### Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 3 Structure of Character Area

#### Overview

This is a southern extension of Beaminster beyond the area of the medieval town, focused on Bridport Road and Whitcombe Road. It is defined primarily by its relationship to the medieval historic core, the current urban limits and the concentration of large 17th century houses.

#### Topography and Geology

The area lies on the edge of the river Brit, which runs along the northern edge and then through the west side of the character area. The area next to the river is low-lying floodplain. Whitcombe Road lies along a slight ridge running down towards the northwest. The underlying geology is Fuller's Earth Clays and Inferior Oolite, with a small area at the southern end on Bridport Sands.

#### Urban Structure

This area is focused on two major routes into the town, Bridport Road and Whitcombe Road, which meet at right angles to each other, and a minor route, St Mary Well Street, which runs parallel to Bridport Road on the west side of the river Brit. Whitcombe Road has a series of large rectilinear properties running off its southern side, with a more limited number of properties on the northern side of the road. The large properties continue round into Bridport Road, but here they have been subdivided by modern infill. Along both sides of St Mary Well Street are irregular modern rectilinear plots. The course of the river Brit has an influence on the layout and orientation of the plots.

#### Present Character

Figure 58 shows the present day historic urban character types. Town houses and ornamental villas make up the major part of the area, together with a significant portion of inter-war



Figure 61: 'Farrs' 3 Whitcombe Road, a 17th and 18th century house.

housing along Whitcombe Road. The north side of Whitcombe Road has an area of historic plots. At the southern end of Bridport Road is an area of historic small terraced houses and a mill. Most of the rest of the area comprises modern elements including a telephone exchange and modern infill housing. Also included in the area is a chapel.

#### Time Depth

This area was probably incorporated into the town during the 16th or 17th century, though some of the former field boundaries are probably considerably earlier in date. The roads and streets are one of the earliest elements, dating from at least the medieval period and probably much earlier. The present course of Whitcombe Road and Bridport Road are the result of 18th century turnpiking. Beaminster Mill may be on the site of a late Saxon mill mentioned in Domesday. Most of the plots probably date to the 17th century. There has been some subdivision of plots in the 20th century.

#### Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is primarily low density housing in a ribbon layout along Bridport Road and Whitcombe Road, with most of the houses set well back from the street frontage behind stone perimeter walls. The street frontages are fairly open and varied with large gardens and grounds with many houses hidden behind and with occasional buildings along the frontage or at right angles to it.

The modern developments are mainly infill of earlier properties with varying degrees of visibility from the roads. The Woodlands development is hidden from the road by an earlier hedge, but the adjacent police house development is a very visible interruption to the overall pattern.

Trees and green spaces form a significant component of this area, which lies on the urban edge. There is a sharp transition into the rural landscape to the south, west and east, which provides a green backdrop to this part of the town. The preponderance of large gardens (particularly on Whitcombe Road) and the trees along the river on Bridport Road contribute to the strong green character of this area.

### Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 3 Built Character

#### **Building types**

The area is characterised by a number of large high quality 17th century houses. 'Hitts House' (14 Whitcombe Road) is a late 17th century house, remodelled in the 19th century, with an early 18th century shell hood over the door and fine 18th century gate-piers and garden walls (Figure 13). The adjacent cottage is probably late 16th century in date. 'The Yews' (6 Whitcombe Road) is of late 17th century date, but with some modern additions. Bridge House (3 Prout Bridge) is a large early 17th century house (Figure 12). 'Farrs' (3 Whitcombe Road) has a 17th century north wing, but most of the house as seen today is 18th century (Figure 61). In general, the 17th century buildings tend to have an asymmetrical plan with their ground floor rooms in a line and off-centre main entrances, but the later houses have a more symmetrical façade.

'Hams Plot' and 'Woodlands' are both 17th century buildings rebuilt in the early 19th century in a Regency style with stuccoed walls and low pitched hipped roofs with wide eaves.

At the south end of Bridport Road is a group of terraced and attached small houses.

There are a number of large two-storeyed detached 1920's-30's houses of varied form and design, along Whitcombe Road. The modern houses include a number of standard semi-detached estate houses of no local distinctiveness. The small development at Woodlands is in a neo-Regency style, reflecting the style of the adjacent Woodlands House.

There are a small number of industrial buildings within this area. Beaminster mill is a typical 19th century mill building now converted to housing (Figure 17). The largest industrial building is a three to four storey probable former flax mill on Whitcombe Road (Figure 63). The utilitarian modern telephone exchange building is the most visible modern industrial building in the area.

#### **Building Materials**

Local yellow-brown Inferior Oolite stone is used for the majority of the historic buildings. Bothenhampton Forest Marble stone is used in some garden walls. Brook House (1 & 3 Bridport Road) is partly brick and partly rendered. Hams Plot and Woodlands are stuccoed. The roofs are predominantly slate, but 'Farrs' has a stone roof, which is unusual in Beaminster and Edgeley Cottage (9 Whitcombe Road) has a fancy tiled roof (Figure 64).

The modern buildings are brick or stone-clad with tiled roofs and some have rendered walls.

#### **Key Buildings**

*Large 17th and 18th century houses:* Hitts House, Farrs, The Yews, Bridge House, Edgeley Cottage.

*Large 19th century houses:* Hams Plot, Woodlands, Brook House.

*Industrial Buildings:* Flax Mill House, Beaminster Mill, Gas Works Manager's House,

*Other Buildings:* Congregational Chapel.



Figure 62: Brook House 1 & 3 Bridport Road.



Figure 63: Flax Mill House, Whitcombe Road, a former industrial building.



Figure 64: Edgeley Cottage, with Flax Mill House in background.

### Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 3 Archaeology

#### **Archaeological Investigations**

No archaeological work has been undertaken in this character area.

#### **Archaeological Character**

The lack of below-ground investigation constrains any consideration of the archaeological resource of this character area. It lies beyond the historic core of the town, probably representing a post-medieval suburban expansion. For this reason it probably has a limited amount of below ground archaeology relating to the urban archaeology of Beaminster. The exception to this is Beaminster Mill, which may be the site of one of the Domesday mills.

A number of historic boundaries survive along Whitcombe Road, forming a series of regular

large rectangular plots running down to the river (Figure 65). These probably pre-date the suburban expansion of the town and could be of considerable antiquity. The remains of associated boundary ditches may survive below ground.

There is an historic quarry at Clampits of possible 17th-18th century date or earlier (Figure 65).

Prehistoric flintwork and Late Iron Age and Roman finds have been recovered close to this area to the west and southwest (Farrar 1962; 1965), indicating the possibility of surviving archaeological evidence of pre-urban activity also being found in this character area.

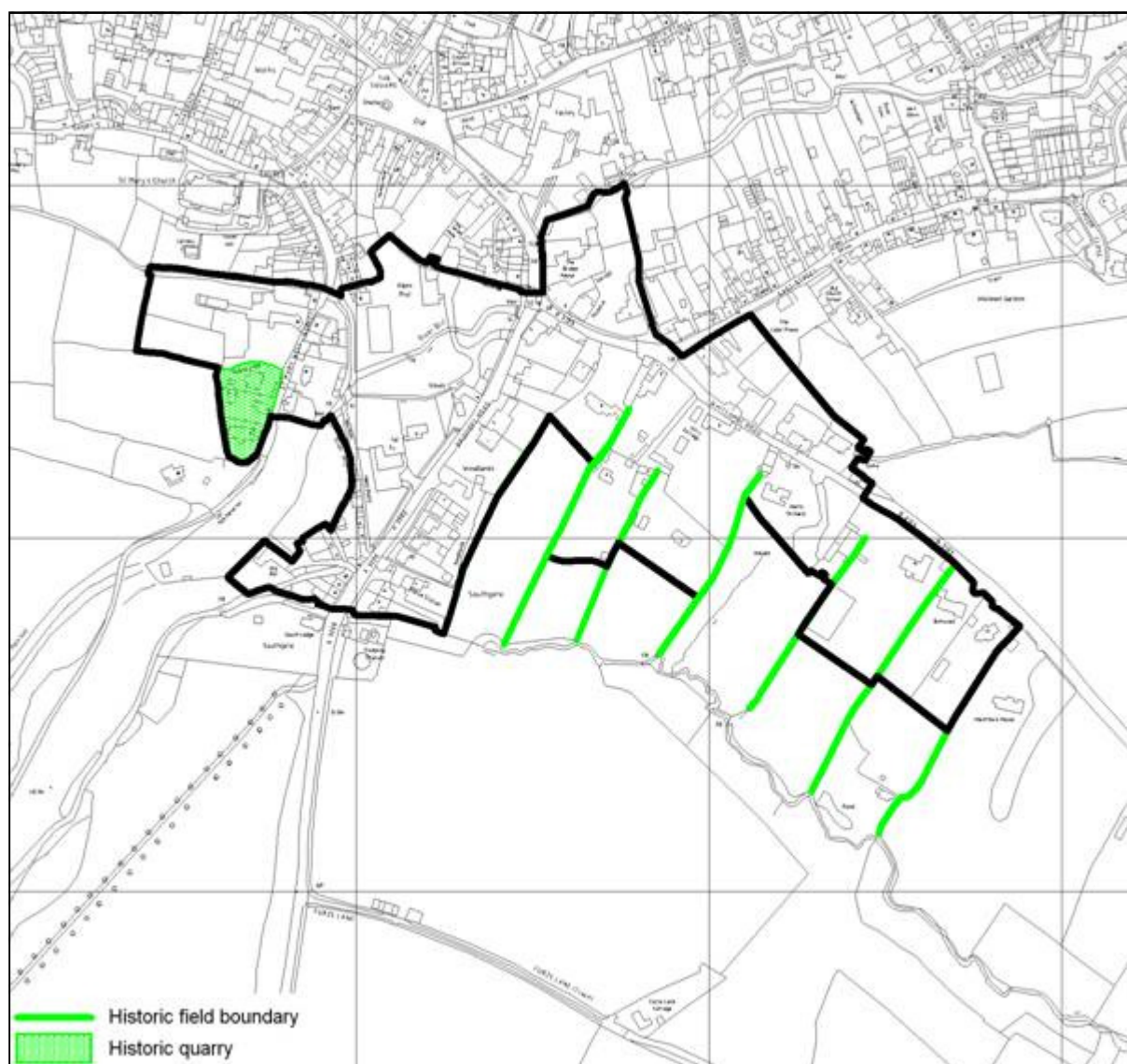


Figure 65: Archaeological features in Historic Character Area 3.

### Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 3 Designations

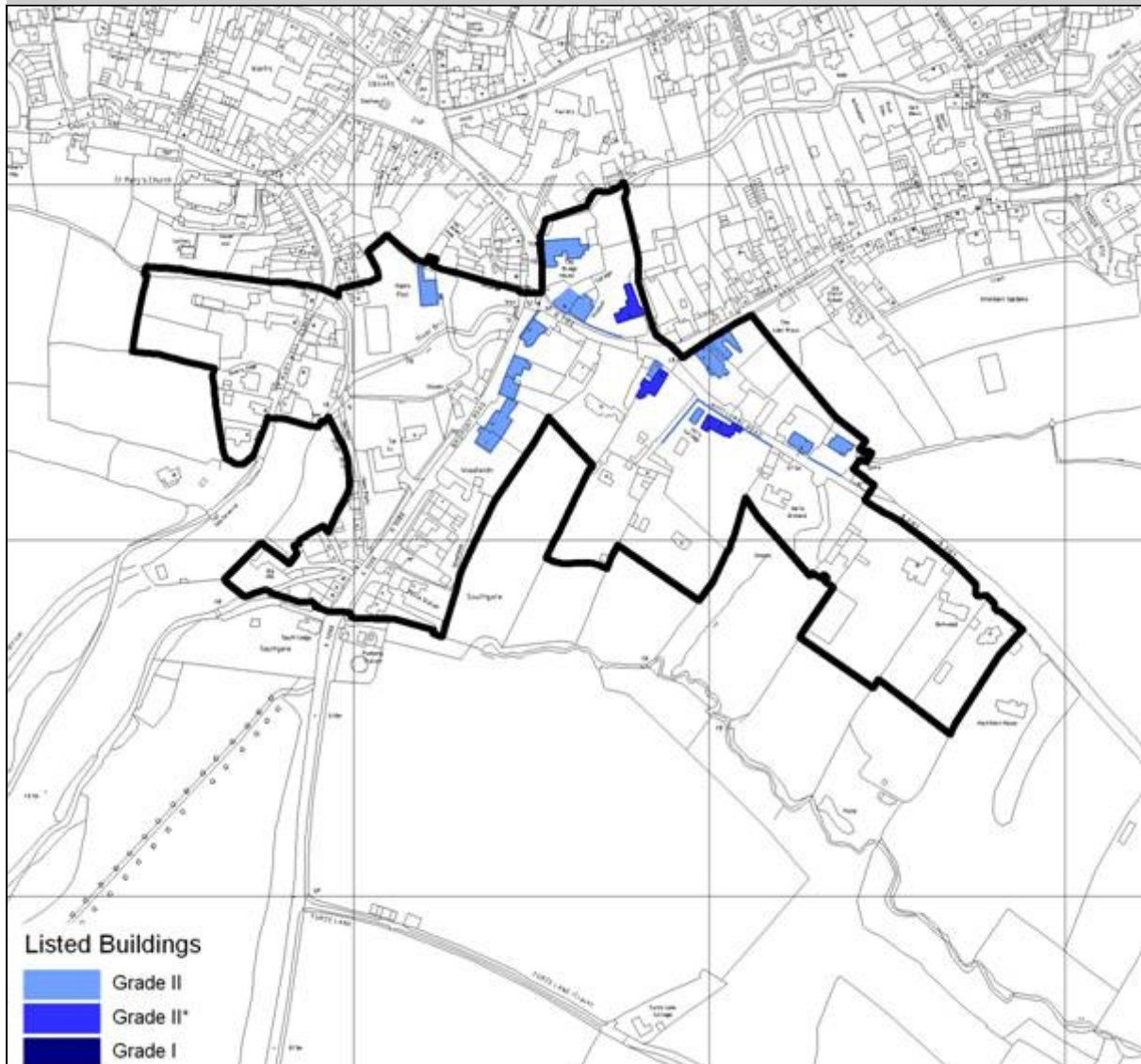


Figure 66: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 3.

#### **Listed Buildings**

There are 17 Listed Buildings in the Character Area: three are Grade II\* (Hitts House, The Yews and Fars) and the remaining 14 are Grade II.

#### **Conservation Areas**

The majority 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 Parnham House lies just to the south of this area.

#### **Scheduled Monuments**

No Scheduled Monuments lie within this character area.



Figure 67: Former Congregational Chapel, Whitcombe Road.

### Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 3 Evaluation

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

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. It has good survival of historic plots dating from at least the 17th century. There is a strong contribution from a group of large 17th century houses, some of the best examples of historic buildings in Beaminster, which gives this part of the town its own distinctiveness. The boundary walls and large gardens contribute to the character of this area. There is also a significant contribution made by the remains of a number of former industrial buildings.

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

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change. The scale and shape of the historic streets and plots reflect an underlying historic plot pattern, which gives this area its historic character. Whitcombe Road with its consistent grouping of historic houses within large grounds is the most sensitive to change. Bridport Road has already witnessed some intrusive modern development, so is probably slightly less sensitive to change. Any development that would reduce the treescape would have a significant effect on the character of this area.

#### ***Archaeological Potential***

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **medium**. It lies beyond the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval town in an area of probable 17th century expansion.

There is some potential for industrial archaeological remains associated with the possible flax mill in Whitcombe Road and Beaminster Mill. The mill may mark the site of the Domesday mill and there is potential for surviving evidence of the earliest periods of settlement and industry in Beaminster.

There is also potential for recovering archaeological information on the pre-urban activity. Its location close to the river Brit means that it can be considered a favoured location for earlier pre-urban activity. A significant number of Iron Age and Roman finds have been made to the southwest and west of this area (Farrar 1962; 1965).

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1-2, 14, 16-18 (Part 7).

#### **Key Characteristics**

- Significant high quality 17th century houses
- Early 19th century villas
- Two major turnpike roads (Bridport Road and Whitcombe Road)
- Regular large plots off Whitcombe Road
- Beaminster Mill
- Former Gasworks
- Former flax mill on Whitcombe Road