

Lyme Regis Historic Urban Character Area 1

Coombe Street and the Lim Valley

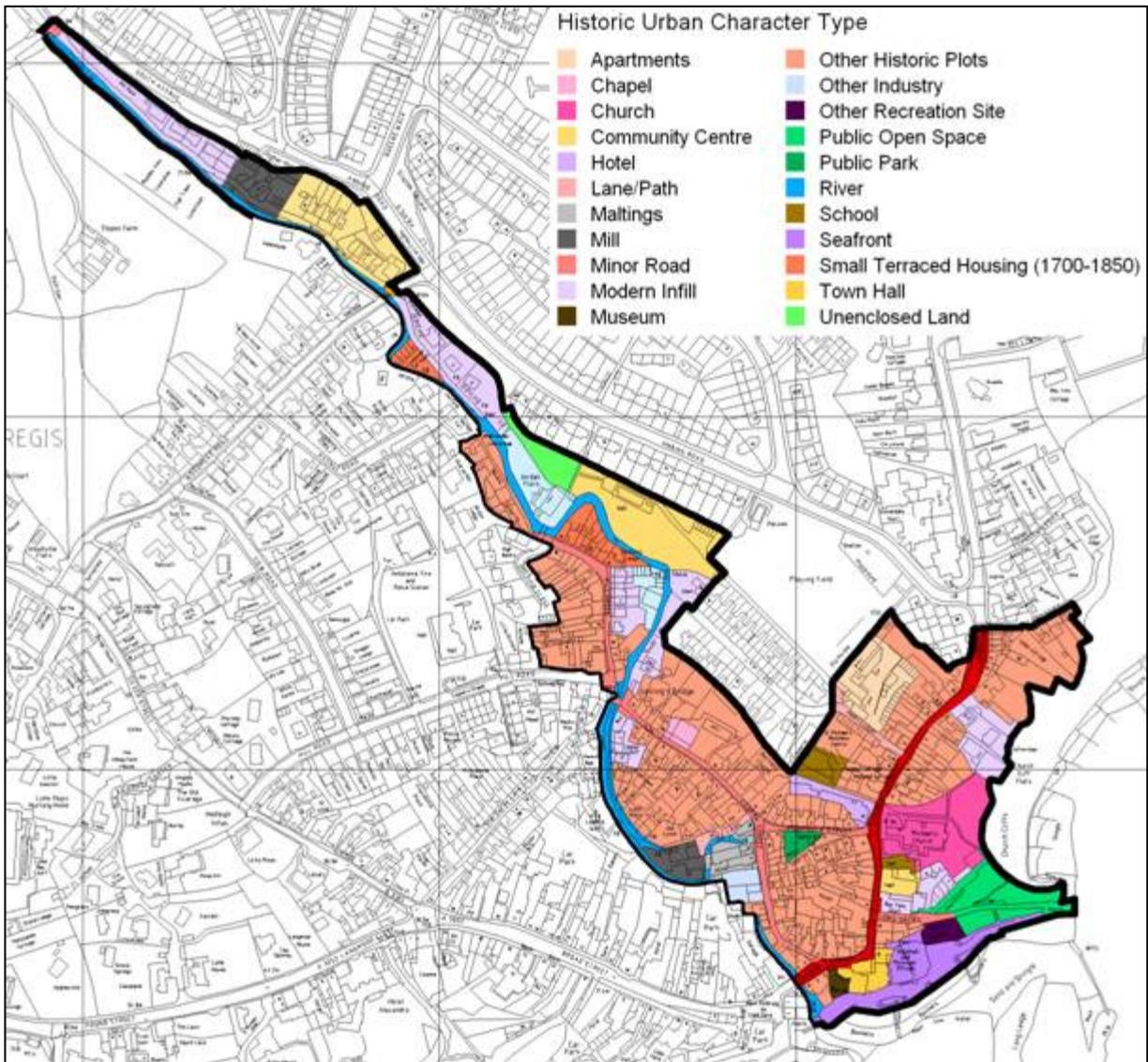


Figure 37: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 38: Coombe Street with former police station on left.



Figure 39: View along the river and the Lynch towards Gosling's Bridge.

Lyme Regis Historic Urban Character Area 1

Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area comprises the earliest surviving part of the town including the original main route along the river. It is defined by the pattern of narrow streets and associated density of historic buildings, the course of the river, and by the location of historic industrial remains.

Topography and Geology

This area lies in the base of the Lim valley which flows southeastwards to the sea. The river has a sinuous course in the central part of this area, but the lower part has been altered and straightened. The base of the valley is narrow with the slopes rising steeply to the east and west. The geology is Lower Lias clays overlying Blue Lias limestones and shales.

Urban Structure

This area is primarily arranged along two roads, Church Street/Bridge Street and Coombe Street. Church Street forms the major route into the town from the east. Coombe Street is a narrow road running along the river to Gosling's Bridge. It is continued by Mill Green and beyond this by a track along the side of the river to Horn Bridge. Church and Coombe Streets are joined by Monmouth Street. The roads are generally narrow and winding. The plots along these streets are mainly rectangular or rectilinear in shape and irregular in their proportions.

Present Character

Figure 37 shows the present day historic urban character types. These are predominantly historic plots along Coombe Street, Monmouth Street, Mill Green and Church Street. The church lies between Church Street and the sea with a former school and halls to the south. On Bridge Street are the Town Hall and Museum, behind which lies the seafront, the theatre and open public space. There are several mills along the river and areas of modern housing

infill on Church Street, Coombe Street and Mill Green. Other minor historic urban character types include a community centre, inter-war housing, modern apartments and a hotel.

Time Depth

This core of this area represents the earliest surviving settlement focus at Lyme, close to the mouth of the river. Coombe Street may be the earliest street and is likely to be Saxon or earlier in date. The church is probably Saxon in origin. Church Street /Bridge Street are probably Saxon or early medieval in date. The Town Mill is also likely to be on the site of a Saxon mill. The property boundaries along Coombe Street and Church Street are likely to be of considerable antiquity in their origin, but have been altered and adapted over time, so it is difficult to determine their exact date.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is primarily one of high density housing in an irregular organic perimeter block or ribbon layout, with the houses set directly on the street frontage. The streets are narrow and winding with relatively few breaks in their built frontages, which gives a great sense of enclosure. There is a small public park on Monmouth Street, which together with the churchyard provides the open green space in this core area. Long Entry and the Guildhall car park lead through into the sea front with its promenade and sea walls.

To the north of Mill Green, the pattern is different with lower density housing set back from the frontage and a more non-urban feel, with the riverbank and dense vegetation and trees. This is continued further down into the town centre by the Lynch with its views of the Leper's well and gardens. The overall character is one of enclosure, with few areas providing more distant views, most notably the churchyard and the seafront.



Figure 40: George Square, Monmouth Street.



Figure 41: View down Church Street towards the Guildhall, formerly the 'Butter Market'.

Lyme Regis Historic Urban Character Area 1

Built Character

Building types

The area is characterised by a large number of late Georgian and early Victorian buildings, with a few surviving earlier buildings dating from the 16th to 18th centuries. There is a small number of modern houses in the area, generally infilling earlier plots.

The houses are predominantly three storey attached or terraced houses, interspersed with small two storey cottages and workers' houses, many of which are narrow-fronted. The surviving early houses include the Old Tudor House on Church Street, which has its origins as a 16th century timber-framed house enlarged in the 18th century and the former Monmouth Hotel, 16 Church Street, which was probably built early in the 16th century (RCHME 1952).

There is a group of distinctive public buildings, the Guildhall, Museum and Marine Theatre. The Guildhall is an 1887 rebuilding of an earlier building, with a distinctive stair tower and cupola. The museum is an elaborate brick building topped by an octagonal lantern, and adjacent to the Guildhall. The Marine Theatre is a former drill hall converted into a cinema in the 1930s.

There are several surviving historic industrial buildings, most notably the Town Mill and Higher Mill, both of which clearly retain many industrial characteristics. The Town Mill has been restored as a working mill. The higher and lower cloth mills have been heavily converted to housing but retain a number of industrial features. Other industrial buildings include the old malthouse in Mill Street that once served as an electricity generating station; the ruined 1830s round stone tower built for a patent process for fulling cloth by steaming; and the last remains of the gas works. Other important historic structures include Buddle and Gosling's bridges, which both have surviving medieval fabric.

There is a small number of typical inter-war semi-detached houses and some modern buildings of varying quality and prominence.

Building Materials

Most of the historic buildings are constructed from the local Blue Lias limestones, but because of its poor weathering properties, the majority have been rendered, stuccoed or rough-cast. A small number have been slate-hung. There is a small number of brick buildings, usually of late 19th or 20th century date. These include the old police station in Coombe Street, which has been faced in knapped chert and the Museum, which has stone dressings. The roofs

are mainly slate. The London Inn is thatched.

Key Buildings

Public Buildings: St Michael's Church, Guildhall, Museum, Marine Theatre, Congregational Church.

Houses: 1 Mill Green, Tudbold Almshouses. Old Tudor House, Old Police Station.

Commercial Premises: London Inn, Old Monmouth Hotel.

Industrial Buildings: Town Mill and adjacent malthouse, Jordan Mill, Higher Mill.



Figure 42: The Guildhall, Bridge Street.



Figure 43: Houses on Mill Green.



Figure 44: Remains of old fulling mill, behind Coombe Street.

**Lyme Regis Historic Urban Character Area 1
Archaeology**

Archaeological Investigations

There have been four investigations in this study area, most of which have largely involved the recording of standing structures (Appendix 3, Nos. 1-5). The investigations at the Town Mill during restoration revealed a large quantity of information about the development of this important industrial building. Both Buddle Bridge and Gosling's Bridge have been investigated, the former revealing a priest's or toll keeper's chamber and the latter revealing a complex history of building and repair. The observation of engineer's test pits adjacent to the museum revealed disturbed deposits and a stone drain.

Archaeological Character

The limited below ground archaeological investigation paints a contrasting picture, with a

significant depth of surviving stratigraphy at the Town Mill, but large-scale disturbance at the Museum. The disturbance at the latter site may be the result of the failure of the adjacent sea walls. Neither investigation gives a clear picture of the likely surviving archaeological resource. Nevertheless, the location within the historic core of the town would suggest that a series of medieval and post-medieval features may exist in the rear of the historic plots that have not been completely built up, together with evidence for earlier property boundaries and structures.

The location along the river valley and at the mouth of the river may suggest that some evidence for earlier pre-urban activity may exist in this area, but this is speculative in the absence of archaeological evidence.

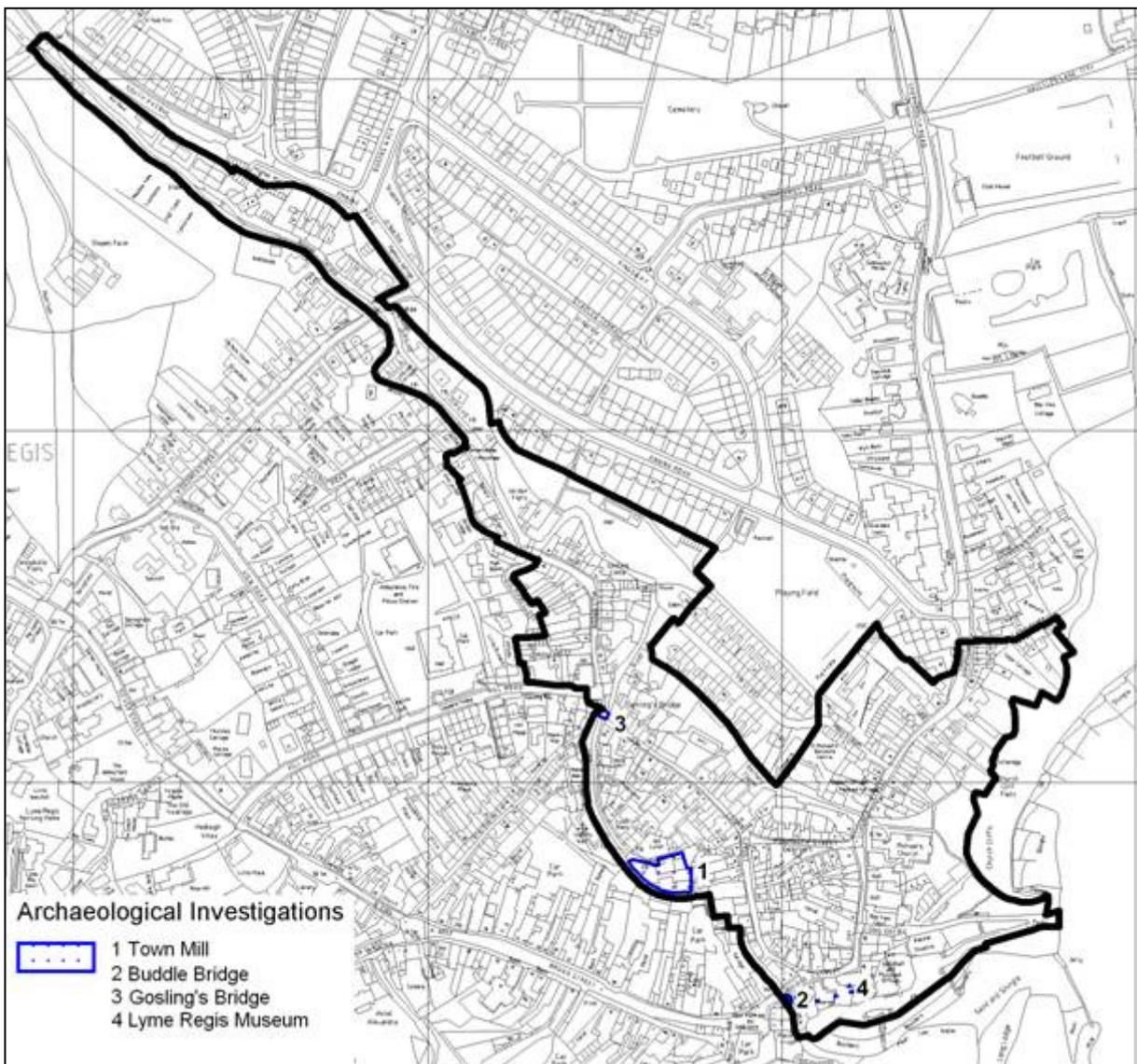


Figure 45: Archaeological Investigations and findspots in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

Lyme Regis Historic Urban Character Area 1 Designations

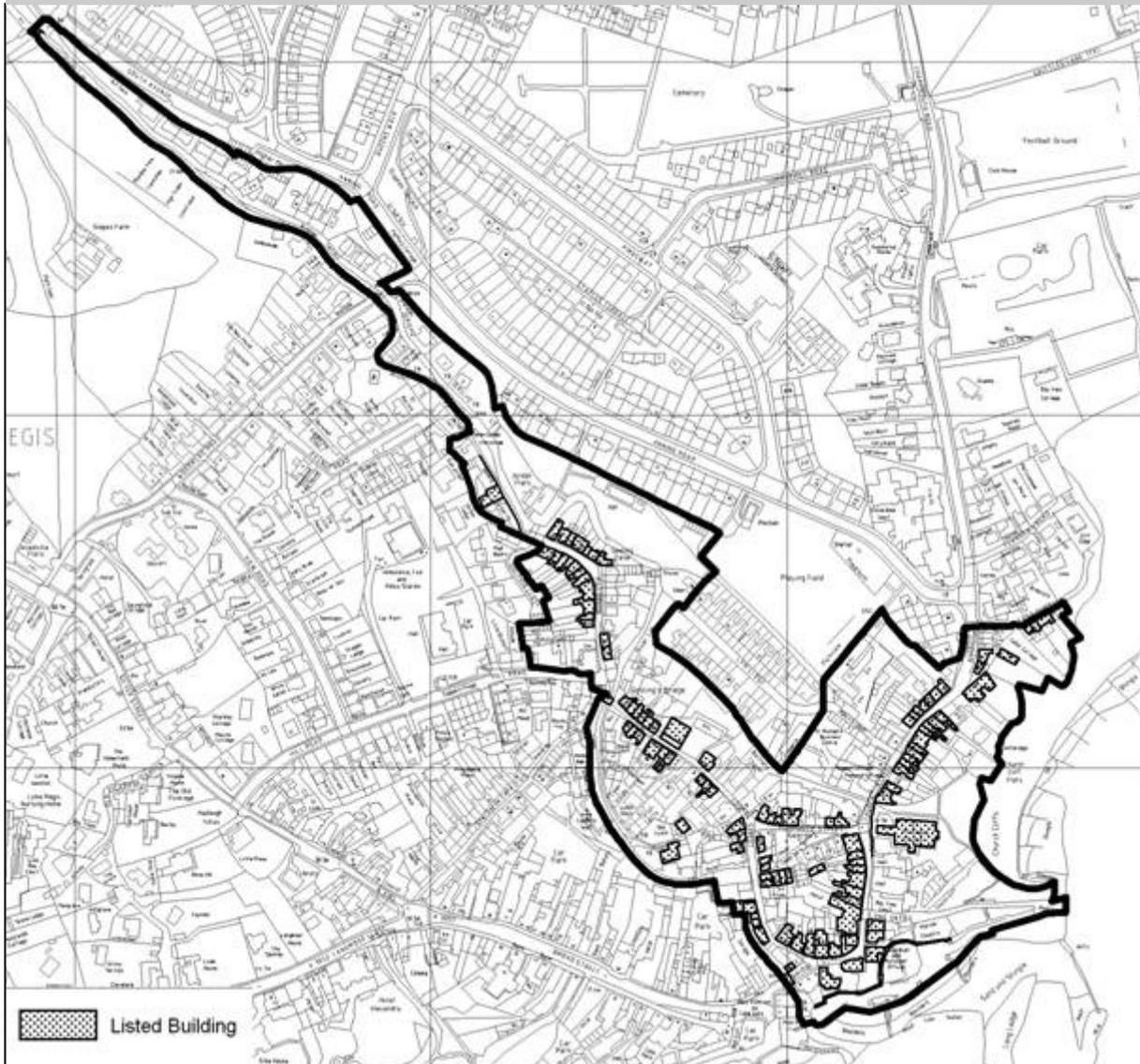


Figure 46: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

Listed Buildings

There are 78 Listed Buildings in the Character Area. Four are Grade I (St Michael's Church, Congregational Church, Buddle Bridge and the Bridge 15 yards North East of Buddle Bridge). Two buildings are Grade II* (Shelby House, The Guildhall) and the remaining 72 buildings and structures are Grade II.

Conservation Areas

A large part of this area, to the south of Jericho, lies within the Lyme Regis Conservation Area, excluding the area of St Michael's Business Centre and the former gas works, behind Church Street (Figure 36).

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 47: Lyme Regis Museum, Bridge Street.

Lyme Regis Historic Urban Character Area 1 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. It has a dominant characteristic of narrow winding streets with tall narrow built-up frontages, probably following the lines of medieval and earlier streets and roads. There is a strong contribution from the large number of Georgian and early Victorian buildings and from a number of landmark buildings such as St Michael's Church, the Guildhall, the Museum, the former Congregational Church, the Town Mill and Higher Mill.

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, particularly along Coombe Street.

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 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 medieval and post-medieval Lyme Regis.

There is also potential for recovering archaeological information on pre-urban activity.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1,2, 4, 5, 6 7,8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Historic core of medieval town
- Narrow winding streets
- Tall narrow historic street frontages
- Historic church and chapel
- Interesting ensemble of Guildhall and Museum buildings
- Former National School buildings
- River and millstream
- Historic route along river
- Former industrial buildings concentrated along riverside
- Historic bridges
- Small public park on Monmouth Street
- Seafront promenade incorporating former Gun Cliff fortifications