

Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 2

The Town

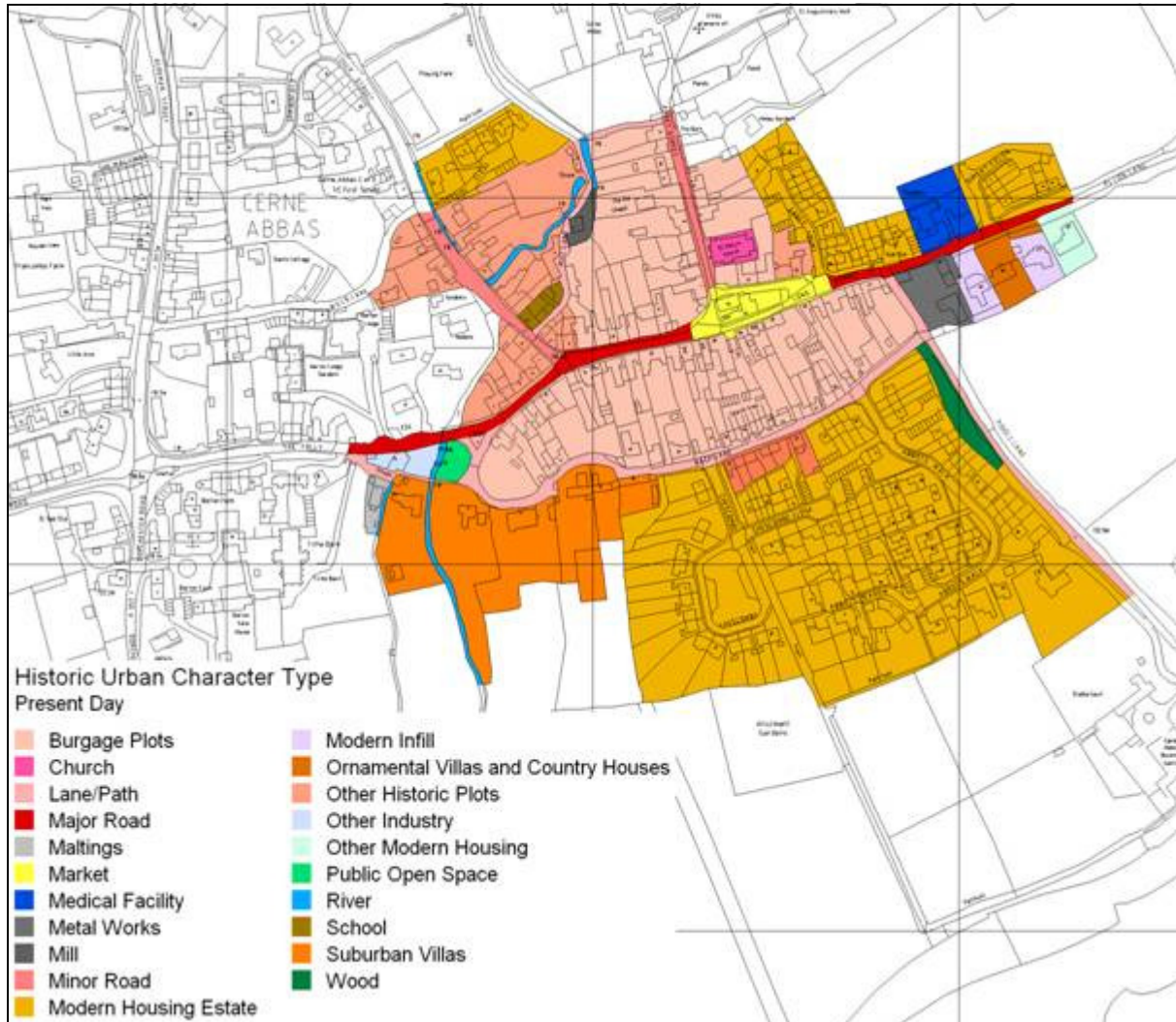


Figure 49: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 50: View south along Abbey Street.



Figure 51: View east along Long Street..

Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 2 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area represents the historic core of the medieval town. The character area is defined partly by its historic dimension and partly by the perceived geographical limit of the river.

Topography and Geology

This part of the town lies on a gentle west-facing slope down to the River Cerne. The axial street of Alton Lane, Long Street and The Folly follows a minor hollow with slightly raised areas to the north and south. These raised areas represent the tail ends of promontories projecting from the valley sides at Giants Hill and Black Hill. The area is largely situated on Upper Greensand, although chalk occurs on the higher ground to the north and south.

Urban Structure

The late medieval town has a classic nucleated structure. Abbey Street and Long Street form a T-junction at the market place. Plots fronting on to these streets are arranged into regular rectangular burgage plots. The rear of the burgage plots on Long Street were serviced by a back lane (Back Lane). Long Street forms part of an east-west through route. Duck Street runs north from the end of Long Street and it has less regular divisions than elsewhere in the town. Modern housing estates are small, located near the edge of the settlement, and accessed by curvilinear culs-de-sac.

Present Character

Figure 49 shows the present day historic urban character types. The market place sits at the centre of the town, with the parish church close by. Burgage plots line Abbey and Long Streets (Figures 50 and 51), with irregular historic plots on Duck Street. There is a group of large villas adjacent to the river in the south-west and another villa, with its grounds reduced by modern infill, to the east. Modern housing

estates form a large block to the south and smaller areas around the northern and eastern fringes. Other minor character types include small-scale industrial character types including the mill, maltings, metalworks, and other industry. There is also a medical facility (doctor's surgery) and former school within the area.

Time Depth

The roads generally follow the medieval layout, with Long Street and Piddle Lane representing the remains of much earlier routes. There are no visible signs of the probable late Saxon settlement. The market place, Abbey Street and parish church are medieval in origin as, probably, are the plots along Long Street and Abbey Street. There is later development at the rear of the plots fronting on to Back Lane. Development along Duck Street probably dates from the post-medieval period onward. The various small industrial sites mainly date from the 18th-early 19th centuries. The suburban villas are mainly early 19th century. The modern housing estates date from the period after 1970.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is one of a planned late medieval town, with buildings tightly packed along the frontages of Abbey Street, Long Street and encroaching on the market place. Long Street has a curving road line, tightly edged with a more-or-less continuous development of buildings with a consistent early 19th century façade, including shop fronts (Figure 52). The triangular market place at the junction of Long and Abbey Streets is partly infilled. The west tower of St Mary's church dominates the turn into Abbey Street. Abbey Street comprises generally two-storey houses in varying styles and materials, although the timber-framed medieval tenements are of particular importance.



Figure 52: View west along Long Street showing 19th century shop fronts.



Figure 53: View of the New Inn, Long Street..

Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 2

Built Character

Building types

The buildings can be subdivided into four main types. Medieval tenements on Abbey Street are two-storey timber-framed houses with jettied first floors and stone bressumers forming fire-breaks. Early 19th century houses with ground floor shops and first floor accommodation, central doorways and symmetrical windows are found along Long Street and Duck Street. The third type comprises larger 17th and 18th century houses in a variety of styles, including former agricultural buildings, such as the several large former farmhouses on Long Street. The New Inn may have 13th century origins but is essentially an 18th century coaching inn with a central carriage arch. The final type of buildings are late 20th century detached and semi-detached houses and short terraces.

St Mary's Church is a good example of a late 13th century to early 16th century church developed in a piecemeal fashion in which the west tower and clerestory probably attest to late medieval prosperity and monastic patronage. The Congregational Chapel, set behind the Abbey Street frontage, is a good example of Victorian polychrome brickwork built in 1888. It is at odds with the general character of the village but retains important ironwork and other details (WDDC 2007, 20-21).

Building Materials

The surviving Abbey buildings and the parish church are built of Oolitic Limestone and flint, with Portland/Purbeck limestone and Ham Hill Stone dressings. The roofs are lead or stone slates.

Extensive use is made of local building materials such as flint and clunch (chalk block). These are often combined with other building materials. Various fragments of stone from the Abbey were also reused in many buildings. Timber is used in framing and in the 19th century shop fronts. Brick was used from the mid-late 18th century, both in gentry houses and in more mundane buildings, particularly for quoins and with flint banding. Cob is also used in some boundary walls. Many of the houses with rubble and flint walls have been rendered or stuccoed. A mixture of stone tiles, thatch, clay tiles and imported slates are used for roofing in the town.

Key Buildings

Public Buildings: St Mary's Parish Church, The Old Chapel (Congregational Chapel).

Medieval Houses: 6-9 Abbey Street, 15 Abbey Street

17th and 18th century houses: The Old House, Abbey Street; The Old Manse, Long Street; The Old Farmhouse, Long Street; The Old Vicarage, Back Lane.

Commercial Premises: New Inn; Royal Oak; 1 Duck Street



Figure 54: Abbey Cottage and the Pitchmarket; late medieval timber-framed tenements at 3-5 Abbey Street.



Figure 55: The Old Congregational Chapel, Abbey Street.



Figure 56: The Old Bell, Long Street.

Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 2 Archaeology

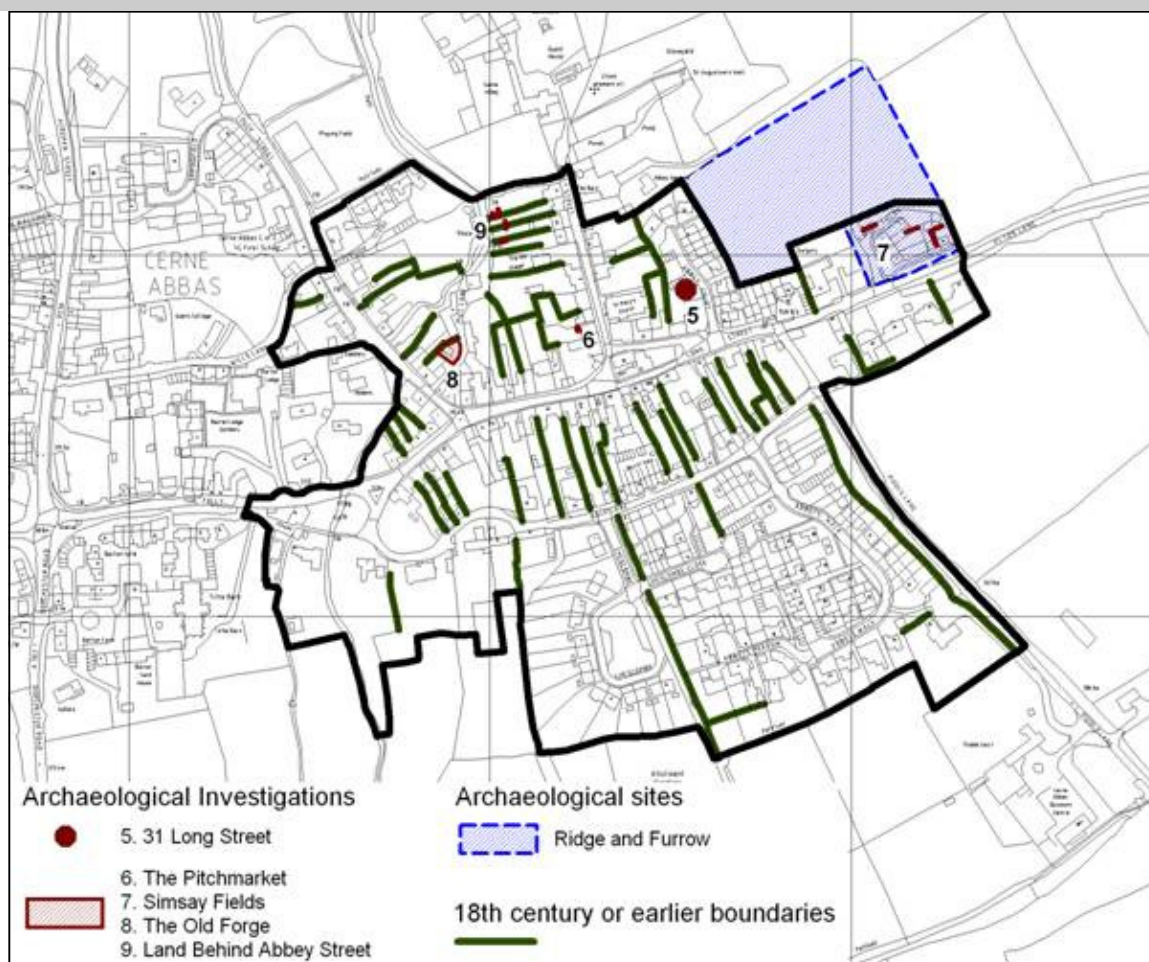


Figure 57: Archaeological investigations and features in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Archaeological Investigations

Archaeological investigations have taken place in five locations in this character area (Figure 57; Appendix 3, Nos. 3-7). Minor observations during small-scale works to the rear of 31 Long Street and the Pitchmarket revealed no significant archaeological finds or features (Wallis 1995; Butterworth 1995, 141). A watching brief during works to the rear of the Old Forge on Mill Lane also revealed little of archaeological significance (Oakey 2002).

Two archaeological evaluations on adjacent sites at Simsay revealed some significant archaeological results. A series of ridge and furrow earthworks were identified and some 13th-14th century pottery recovered (Freeman 1998). An Iron Age ditch, along the same alignment as Piddle Lane and the Abbey earthworks, was found as well as a Romano-British burial and grain-drying oven. Significantly, some ditches containing Late Saxon pottery were found at the western end of the site, between the medieval town and Abbey (Robinson and Valentin 2004).

The archaeological evaluation of land adjacent to the river behind Abbey Street revealed some medieval activity, evidence for tanning dating from the late 17th to the late 18th century and two 19th century buildings (Bellamy and Montague 2004).

Archaeological Character

The sites at Simsay and behind Abbey Street indicate a complex archaeological character. At Simsay, there is evidence for Iron Age and Late Saxon activity close to the junction of two pre-urban routes at Alton Lane and Piddle Lane. The eastern fringe of the town, in the angle formed by Long Street and Abbey Street, may have been the earliest focus for secular settlement at Cerne Abbas. Unfortunately much of this area was later occupied by a brewery and was recently redeveloped as Abbey Court housing. It was also the focus for medieval and post-medieval settlement. The burgrave plots on Abbey and Long Streets are likely to contain evidence for medieval and later structures, craft and industrial activity and other evidence for the medieval and post-medieval economy.

Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 2 Designations

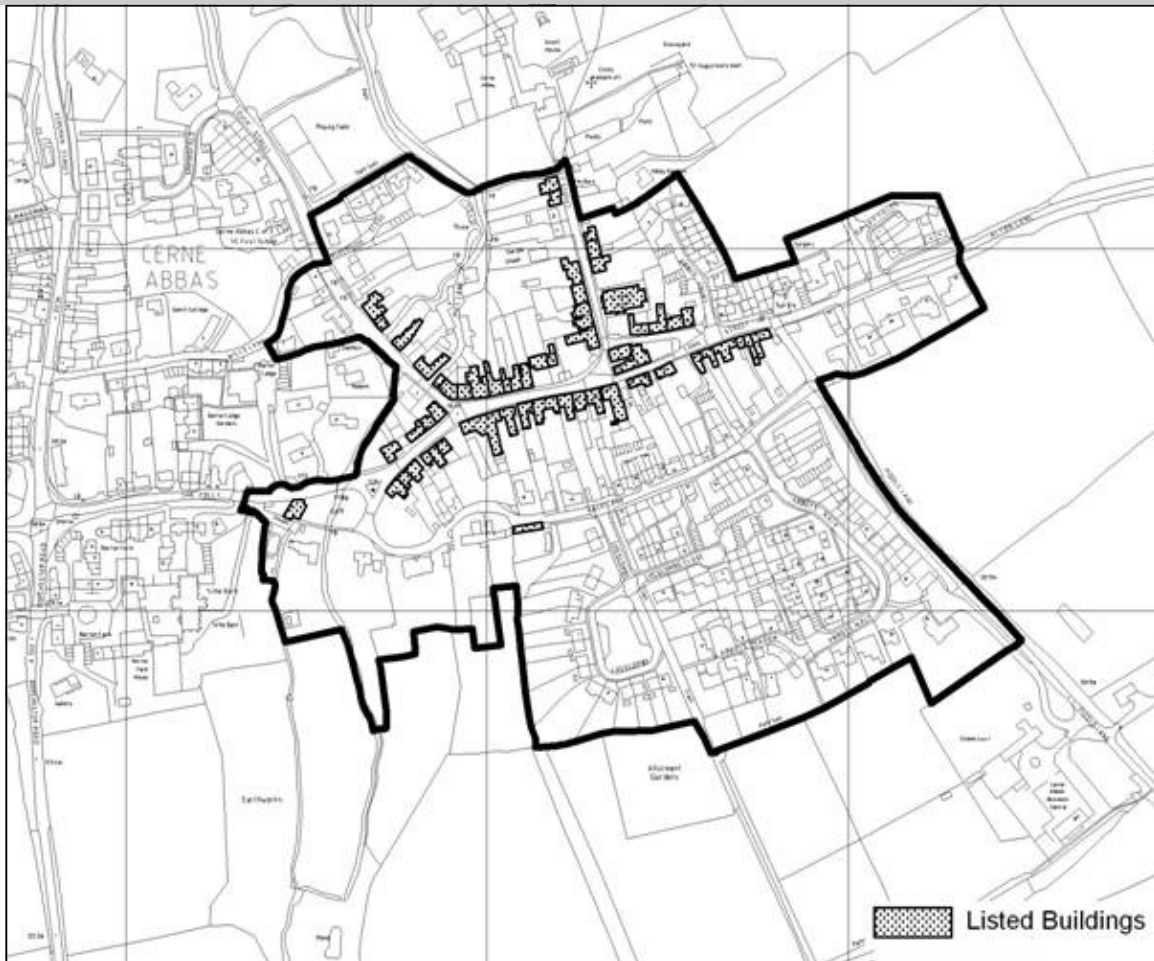


Figure 58: Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Listed Buildings

There are 51 Listed Building designations in the Character Area (Figure 58); four Grade I (Parish Church of St Mary and nos. 3 & 5, 7, 9 Abbey Street), three Grade II* (New Inn, The Old House and The Old Farmhouse) and the remainder Grade II.

Conservation Areas

The majority of the character area falls within the Cerne Abbas Conservation Area (Figure 38). Only the southern and eastern fringes - the modern housing estates of Chescombe Drive, Abbots Walk, Simsay Fields and Abbey Court - lie outside.

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

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

Scheduled Monuments

There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Character Area.



Figure 59: The Old Manse, Long Street.

Cerne Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 2 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **high**. The area retains a virtually intact medieval town layout, with many surviving burgage plot boundaries. This survival of the medieval layout is complemented by a very large number of surviving historic buildings dating from the medieval period onwards. The whole of Abbey Street and the whole of Long Street form an important group of historic buildings. Of particular note are the medieval timber-framed and jettied tenements at 3-9 Abbey Street. The 19th century shop fronts along Long Street also make a significant contribution to the historic character. The consistent use of local flint, chalk block, thatch, brick and vernacular building styles gives an overall unity to the village. The modern developments, in general, are confined to the margins of the historic core and most are partially obscured from the rest of the town, so do not detract too much from the overall historic character.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

Overall the area has a **high** sensitivity to major change, although this does vary between the historic core and the modern fringes. The historic core has a consistency and integrity of style which would obviously be seriously compromised by anything other than small-scale renovation of existing plots. Major development has already taken place in the form of suburban housing developments at Riverside Close, Simsay Fields and particularly at Chescombe Drove and Abbots Walk. These developments lie outside the medieval core and have a relatively low sensitivity.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. The eastern part of the area, in particular, has a high potential for remains relating to the origins of the secular settlement at Cerne Abbas. Furthermore, the potential for significant deposits relating to the economy of the medieval and post-medieval town has been demonstrated through the evaluation of back plots on the west side of Abbey Street. A comparison of results from trench evaluations and watching briefs makes it clear that watching briefs produce unsatisfactory and unreliable results in an urban context. Furthermore, this report has presented a possible outline for the development of Cerne Abbas, and archaeological evidence from this area has the potential to corroborate or refute this scheme. For example, if there is survival of earlier medieval structures hidden within later buildings fronting on to Abbey Street, then the suggestion that it represents late medieval planning would be compromised. The potential for surviving medieval architectural components and their distribution could therefore contribute to the further understanding of the town's development.

There is also potential for recovering archaeological information concerning pre-urban activity, considering the position of the area close to the spring line and close to Romano-British and Iron Age deposits excavated at Simsay Fields.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 5, 7, 9-11, 14-24 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Site of Late Saxon secular settlement
- Medieval market and Church
- Later medieval planned town
- Surviving medieval houses on Abbey Street
- Surviving medieval burgage plots
- Unbroken group of historic buildings in Abbey Street and Long Street
- 18th century gentry houses
- Early 19th century shop fronts