

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 6 Peacemarsh

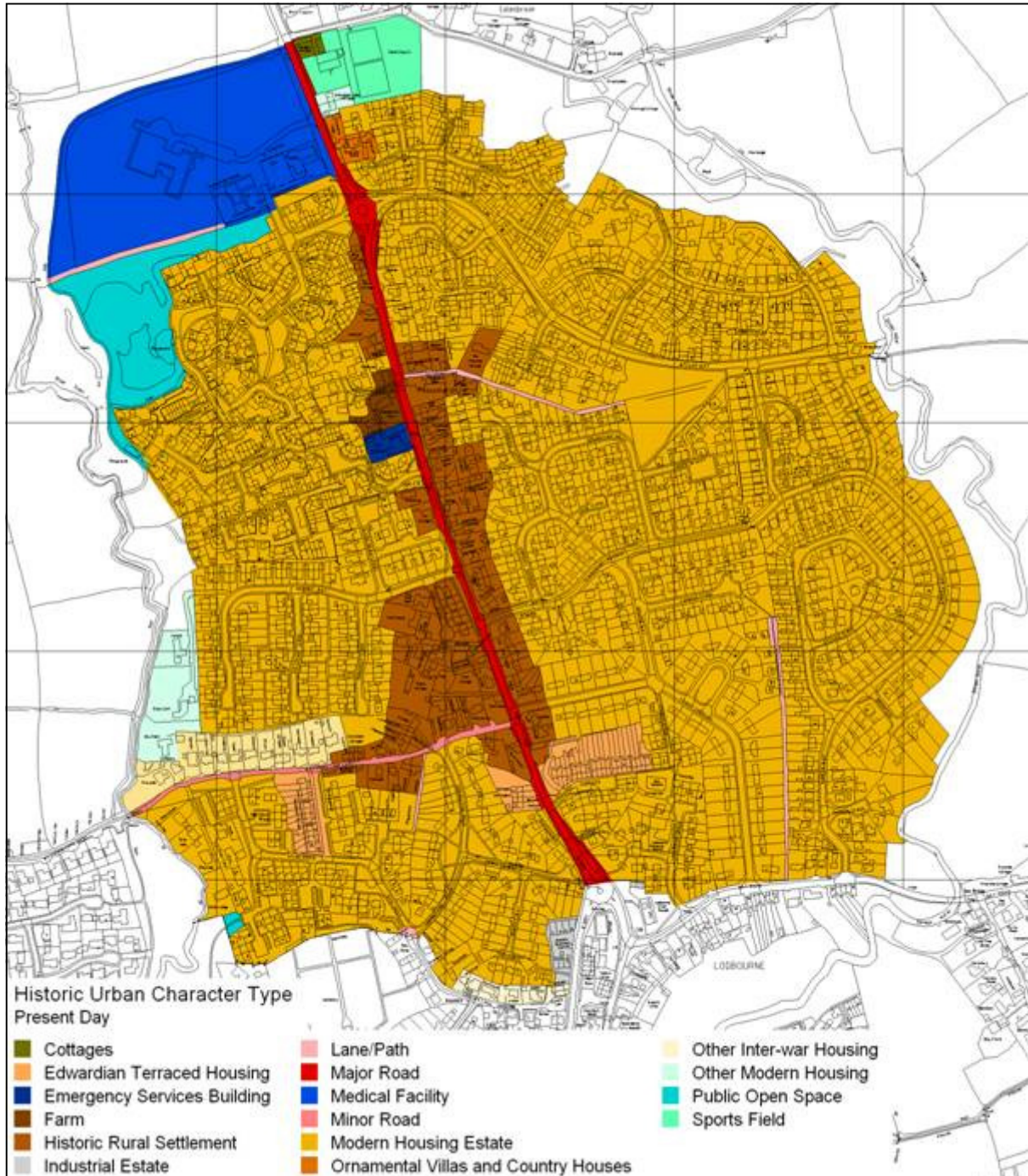


Figure 82: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 6, showing current historic urban character type.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 6 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area comprises the northern suburb of the town of Gillingham, centred on the historic rural settlement of Peacemarsh, which is itself aligned on the main road north of the town to Milton-on-Stour. Large modern housing estates lie on either side of the main road, behind the historic street frontage.

Topography and Geology

Peacemarsh lies on a low rounded hill between the upper courses of the rivers Stour and Shreen Water in relatively flat terrain. The geology of the area consists entirely of Kimmeridge Clay.

Urban Structure

There is a major road, Peacemarsh Road, running N-S and a minor road, Wavering Lane, joining from the west towards the southern end. A series of relatively shallow irregular plots line these roads in a discontinuous fashion. Almost the whole of the area comprises a range of different housing estate developments distinguished by their road alignments, plot sizes and linear boundaries between estates. The estate layouts range between relatively simple linear or curvilinear road arrangements to complex curvilinear looped networks and culs-de-sac and dendritic road patterns. A modern edge of town development has been constructed around Middlefield House, north of the housing estates.

Present Character

Figure 82 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area is dominated by Modern Housing Estates. Along Peacemarsh Road and Wavering Lane are areas of Historic Rural Settlement, which form a large block in the angle between the two roads. There are small areas of Inter-war Suburban Estate in the southern part. At the northern end of the area is a group of larger plots comprising Medical Facilities, Sports Field and Public Open Space. Other character types along the main road include Cottages, Farm, Emergency Services Building and an Industrial Estate.

Time Depth

The earliest element of this area is Peacemarsh Road, which was originally a track through Gillingham Forest and is probably of considerable antiquity. Peacemarsh is not named in early documents. The earliest mention appears to be in the 1624 forest map where its location is depicted but it is not clear whether or

not it represents a settlement or merely a landscape feature. Nevertheless, the form of the settlement is similar to others at Newbury, Ham Common and Bay, in which a medieval manor or farmstead developed through the enclosure and settlement of roadside commons into a large post-medieval hamlet. Peacemarsh Farm may represent the earliest component of the settlement, although this assertion remains to be proved. The historic rural settlement is probably post-medieval in date, and many of the cottages date from the 18th and 19th centuries. The earliest suburban housing dates from the 1920s-30s, with some post-war estates at the southern end of the area, but the majority of the suburban area was not developed until the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern along the two historic roads comprises low density housing in fairly shallow irregular rectilinear plots, with many of the houses set back from the street frontage on differing orientations with no common building line, which reflects their history as plots enclosed from a former open roadside common. This is particularly apparent at the junction of Peacemarsh Road and Wavering Lane where a former open triangular green is now subdivided into house plots. There are medium density short terraces of inter-war council housing along short straight roads at right angles to the historic routes. The post-war housing estates are low density semi-detached housing set well back from the street edge behind front gardens and with a number of greens incorporated in the road network. The modern housing estates are low to medium density housing set in typical modern suburban estate fashion. Along the edge of the river Stour are a series of larger houses set within large plots.



Figure 83: View north along Peacemarsh Road.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 6 Built Character

Building types

The buildings of this area primarily comprise a range of 20th century suburban house types, together with some 18th and 19th century rural vernacular buildings.

The 18th and 19th century vernacular cottages include Dorset long houses with their gable ends presented to the main street; The Dolphin Inn and Peacemars Farm for example (Figure 84). The inter-war housing comprised short terraces (Figure 86). The modern housing estates behind the Peacemars Road frontage have been constructed over a long period of time, beginning in the mid 20th century with semi-detached council housing with hipped roofs arranged on the geometrically designed Fairey Close. This was followed in the 1960s and 70s with the development of semi-detached bungalows arranged around geometric culs-de-sac to the north of Fairey Close and on the west side of Peacemars Road at Wessex Way. Later 20th and early 21st century housing estates at the northern end of Peacemars comprise a variety of smaller detached, semi-detached and short terraced houses in smaller plots.

Building Materials

The 18th and earlier 19th century vernacular houses in Peacemars are built in coursed Corallian Limestone rubble, usually with tile or slate roofs and the occasional surviving thatched roof. The late 18th century Lodbourne Farmhouse has an ashlar façade with chequerwork side walls in Corallian rubble and squared greensand blocks (Figure 89). Brick chimney stacks are common from the 19th century and brick is increasingly used in walling from the mid 19th century onwards. A mixture of slate and tile roofs is common in later 19th century houses with tile becoming more common in the 20th century. Later 20th and early 21st century housing estates again have a mixture of slate and tile. Modern industrial buildings to the north of Middlefield House are in a prominent position and built with a blue roof and wooden walling (Figure 87).

Key Buildings

17th-19th century vernacular houses: Dolphin Inn, Peacemars Farm, The Thatched Cottage, Peacemars House, Knoll House, Lodbourne Farm House

19th century Houses and villas: Grosvenor House

Inter-war council housing: Peacemars Terrace, Lodbourne Terrace, Waverland Terrace



Figure 84: Peacemars Farm House and attached outbuilding, with modern housing to the rear (left).



Figure 85: The Thatched Cottage, Dolphin Lane.



Figure 86: View east along Lodbourne Terrace.



Figure 87: Neal's Yard Remedies, Peacemars Road.

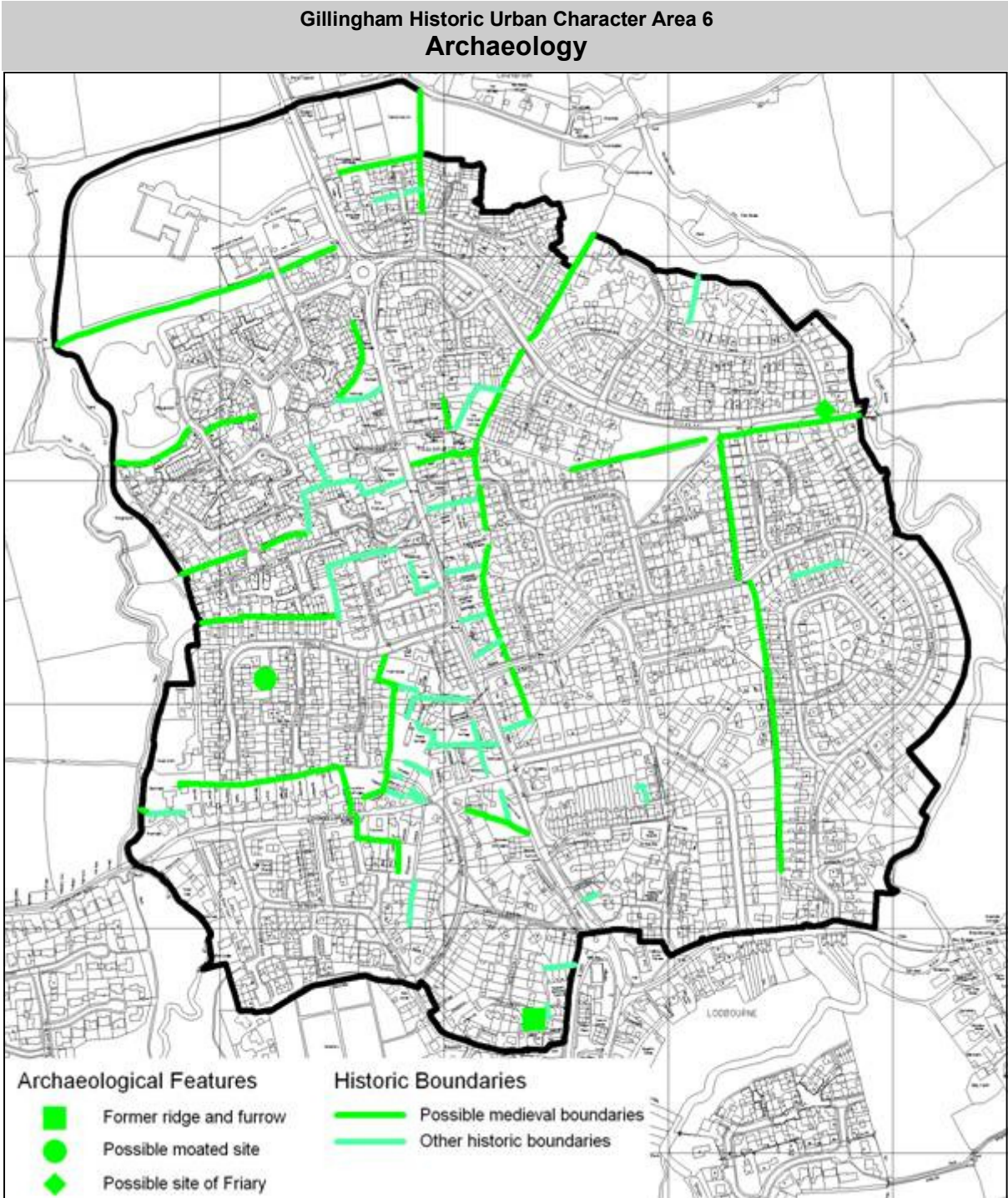


Figure 88: Archaeological investigations in Historic Urban Character Area 6.

Archaeological Investigations

No archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area.

Archaeological Character

Despite the lack of archaeological investigations in this area, the archaeological character can be expected to tie in with the medieval history of the area as a dispersed settlement, and as the location of one of the major medieval arable fields of the town. Gillingham had a number of

medieval arable fields, one of which appears to have been in the Peacemash area, to the west of the main road, where Middlefield field names abound. The area to the east of the main road was glebe land. Aerial photography has recorded the former existence of ridge and furrow cultivation remains, prior to the development of the Peacemash housing estates. Another feature visible on air photographs in this area has been interpreted as a possible moated site. The housing estates on the east side of the main road may also have

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 6 Archaeology

been the former location of a Dominican Friary, mentioned on the 1624 forest map. This was located at the modern Cherryfields, close to the point at which Dolphin Lane crossed the Shreen Water.

Settlement remains relating to Peacemash probably form the most significant aspect of the area's archaeological character and are likely to comprise pits, boundaries and structures. These could inform not only the history and origins of the settlement, but also its function and

economic base. The position of Peacemash, on a low hill between two rivers, is also a likely location for prehistoric and Roman dispersed settlement sites.

A small number of historic boundaries are marked on Figure 88. These are the remnants of the edge of the medieval roadside common and arable field boundaries (either medieval or later enclosure boundaries). Later 19th century subdivisions recorded on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map are also shown.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 6 Designations

Listed Buildings

There is only one Listed Building in the Character Area (Figure 89); the Grade II Lodbourne Farmhouse.

Conservation Areas

The entire character area lies outside the Gillingham Conservation Area (Figure 39).

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 89: Lodbourne Farm House, Lodbourne Green.

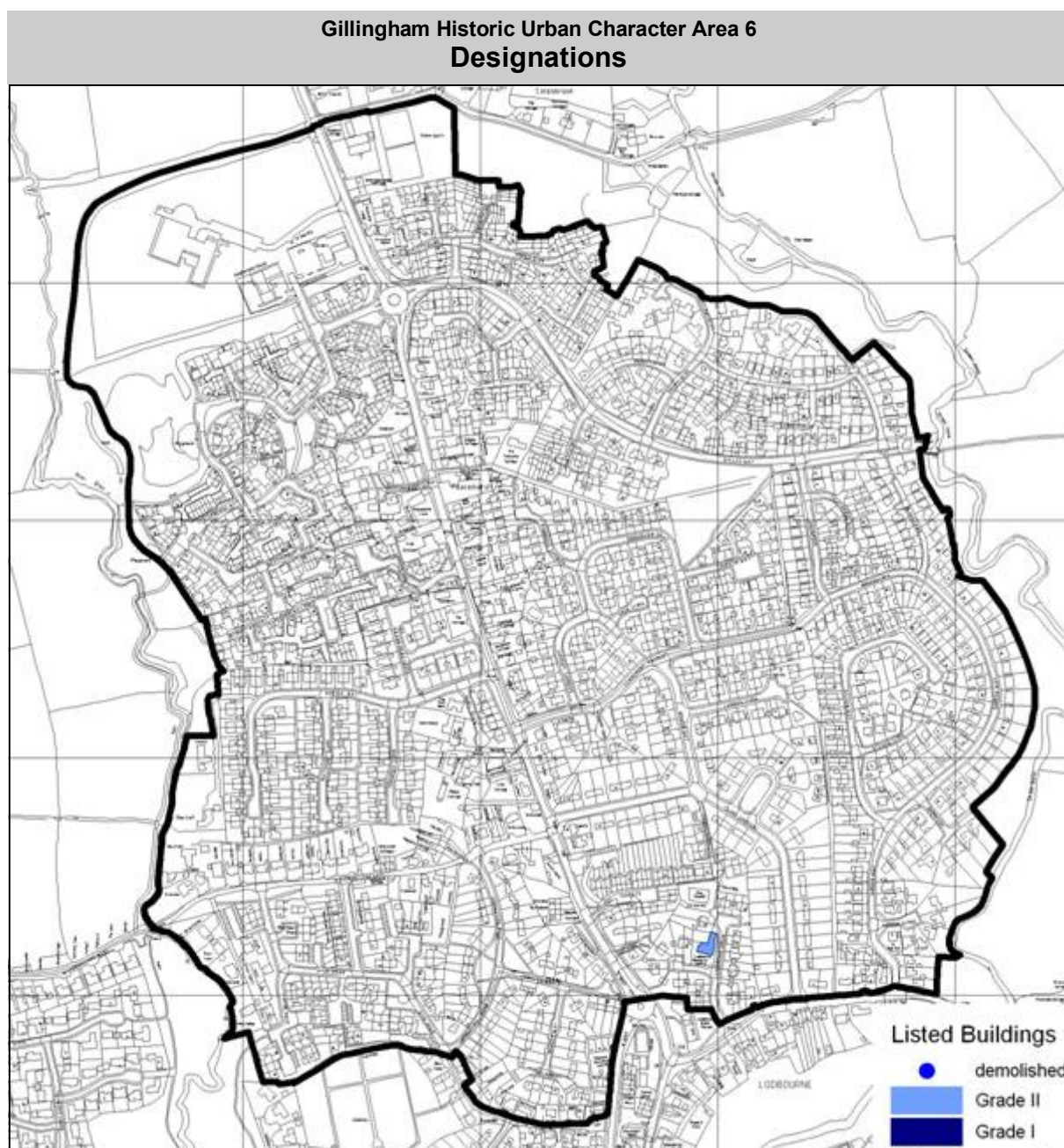


Figure 90: Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 6.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 6 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **medium**. This is a combination of a relatively high rating for the historic rural settlement core of Peacemarsh and a low rating for the modern housing estates behind. The historic settlement of Peacemarsh contains a rare concentration of 18th and early 19th century buildings outside the town centre. The two foci of the Dolphin Lane/Peacemarsh Road junction and the Wavering Lane/Peacemarsh Road junction, both contain well preserved groups of stone built vernacular houses and cottages. The intervening frontage of Peacemarsh Road contains buildings from a variety of periods including modern, although the boundaries of the medieval roadside common is preserved in sections behind. Avering Lane and Dolphin Lane have a particularly well preserved historic rural character. The character of the modern housing estates retains little of an historic nature apart from the occasional former field boundary preserved in property boundaries.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change. Currently the street frontage along Peacemarsh Road retains its historic character because the housing estates behind do not impact upon it visually. This is partly due to the fact that the street runs along the crest of a low hill with the housing estates below it, but also because the modern building heights do not overshadow those of the historic buildings. Large scale development is likely to have a low impact on the historic character as long as its

scale does not impinge on the historic settlement. Care should also be taken in the region of inter and post war suburbs such as Lodbourne Terrace and Fairey Crescent which retain a character of their own.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **medium**. There is a high potential for information relating to the medieval settlement of Peacemarsh. Many parts of the settlement remain within medieval plot boundaries suggesting that pits, boundaries and structures may survive in the back of current plots fronting on to Peacemarsh Road. Because the roadside common was unlikely to have been enclosed until the 17th century or later, evidence for medieval structures will be behind the modern street frontage. This provides the potential for answering questions not only on the origins of the settlement at Peacemarsh, but also on its economy. There may also be surviving deposits relating to the Dominican Friary and a potential medieval moated site.

The topographic location of the area also suggests that there is potential for the survival of prehistoric and Romano-British deposits, which is significant considering that the history and distribution of dispersed settlement in the region is poorly understood.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 3, 11, 14 and 19-25 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Medieval and post-medieval settlement of Peacemarsh
- Location of the medieval Middle Field
- Surviving medieval and post-medieval field boundaries
- Historic street frontage
- Modern housing estates