

Charmouth Historic Urban Character Area 1

The Street

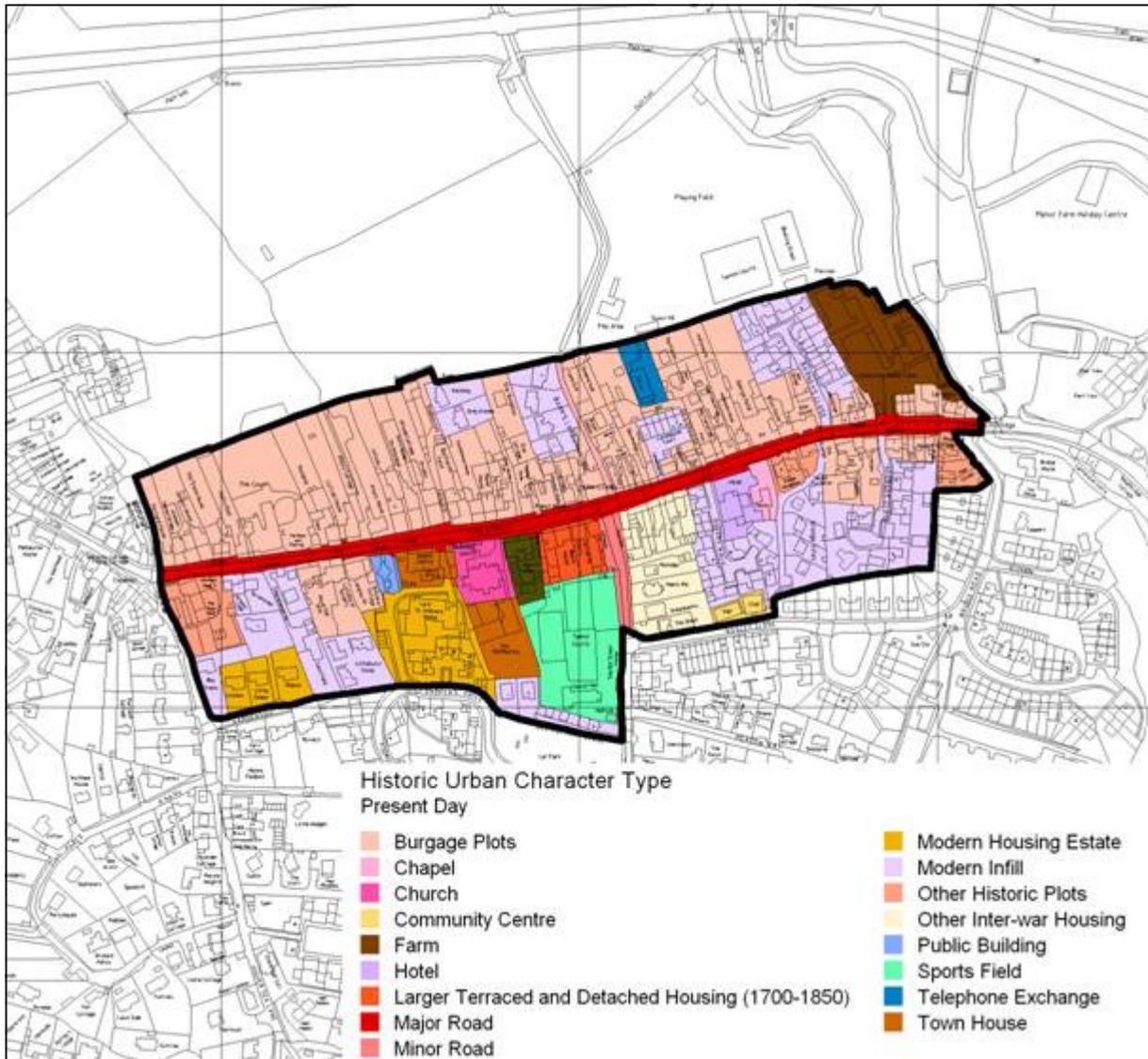


Figure 26: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 27: View down The Street from junction with Higher Sea Lane.



Figure 28: View up The Street with The George on the right.

Charmouth Historic Urban Character Area 1 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This is the historic core of Charmouth and it broadly covers the area of the medieval and early post-medieval town. It is defined primarily by its historic dimension, the concentration of historic buildings and the survival of burgage plot boundaries.

Topography and Geology

The ground slopes quite steeply down to the east, becoming less steep as it approaches the floodplain of the river Char and its tributary at the east end of the town. The ground also dips down to the south. The area lies on Lower Jurassic Liassic clays.

Urban Structure

This area has a linear plan form comprising a single major east-west route, The Street, with a series of properties along both sides. There are two minor routes, Barr's Lane and Lower Sea Lane, which form a minor crossroads and form the central focus of the area. The plots are generally regular long narrow rectangular shape, particularly noticeable on the northern side. The boundaries are less regular on the southern side.

Present Character

Figure 26 shows the present day historic urban character types. The northern side of The Street is predominantly burgage plots, with some areas of modern infill and a telephone exchange. The northeast corner of the area is taken up by the former Catherston Manor Farm. To the south of The Street the character is more diverse with some small areas of remnant burgage plots, other historic plots, the church, and other historic buildings, There is a block of interwar housing on the east side of the junction between The Street and Lower Sea Lane. The remainder of the street frontage and most of the area behind is taken up by modern housing

estates and modern infill housing,

Time Depth

This is the area of the late 12th or early 13th century planned town. The burgage plots and the location of the church all have their origin in this period, though the buildings are later. The roads and lanes are much earlier, but their period of origin is uncertain. The Street was thought to be on the Roman road between Dorchester and Exeter, but this is now thought to run further to the north near Hogchester Farm. To the south of The Street a number of plots probably date to the 17th-18th century. A block of houses on the east side of Lower Sea Lane date to the 1930s. Most of the remainder of this area dates to the second half of the 20th century. The Tennis Courts on Lower Sea Lane are late 19th century in origin.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is low to medium density housing primarily in a ribbon layout. The houses facing on to The Street are either set directly on the frontage or set back slightly behind small front gardens or paved areas. The frontage is punctuated by a number of small lanes giving access to the rear of the plots. The modern houses are generally accessed by short cul-de-sac and many are set back from the street in their own gardens.

The Street has a subtle double curve along its length and climbs steeply to the west. Trees play an important part in the character of this area, both large individual trees and groups of trees, which add considerable interest to the townscape and help frame and link the views to the surrounding countryside. The two main open green spaces are the churchyard and the tennis courts.



Figure 29: Littlecote and Carrum House, 1840s villas on corner of The Street and Lower Sea Lane.



Figure 30: 1930s shops and houses, The Street, to the east of junction with Lower Sea Lane.

Charmouth Historic Urban Character Area 1 Built Character

Building types

The area contains a range of different building types, giving a varied character to the built environment. These include 16th-17th century large houses, smaller 17th-18th century vernacular houses, 19th century villas, later Victorian houses and modern estate houses.

The 16th-17th century large houses are of two storeys and include cross passage houses and houses with subsidiary wings. The smaller vernacular houses are of two storeys and tend to have their entrances to one side. The early 19th century villas are typical two storey stuccoed houses with shallow pitch hipped roofs. The later 19th century houses are two and three storey in a variety of sizes and details.

The modern houses are primarily in a variety of neo-vernacular styles, which integrate with varying degrees of success with the surrounding historic buildings.

There are very few non-domestic buildings within this character area. St Andrew's Church is of early Gothic Revival design. The 1815 Congregational Chapel has an attractive wooden cupola. St Andrew's Parish Hall has some Arts and Crafts elements to its design. There is a good group of farm buildings at Catherston Manor Farm. A small number of coach houses to the larger houses still survive.

In addition to the buildings, the area has a large number of surviving rubble stone boundary walls, many in excess of two metres high, which define the edges of former burgage plots, particularly on the north side of The Street.

Building Materials

The major building materials used in the historic buildings in Charmouth are Upper Greensand chert and Blue Lias limestone. Both materials probably came from the beach in the form of pebbles and cobbles. The walls were generally rendered or stuccoed. Some buildings have slate or tile hanging to protect the walls from the elements. Brick is used increasingly in the later 19th century buildings. The roofs of many of the historic vernacular houses are thatched, otherwise the historic houses are predominantly of slate. The modern houses are of red and brown brick, some rendered and some are stone clad or with tile hanging. The roofs are a mixture of tile, 'slate' and a small number are thatched.

Key Buildings

Public Buildings: St Andrew's Church, St Andrew's Parish Hall, Congregational Chapel.

16th - 18th Century houses: Queen's Armes, George Hotel, Albury House, Charmouth House, Stone House, Bow House, The Manor House.

Regency/Early Victorian Villas: Hillside, The White House, The Rectory, Carrum House, Littlecote.

Later Victorian Houses: Devonedge, Mintaka, 4-6 Jasmine Cottages, Luttrell House, Perla, Dolphin House.

Other Buildings: The Court, Coach and Horses, Albury Cottage, Catherston Manor Farm.



Figure 31: Congregational Chapel, The Street.



Figure 32: Albury House, The Street, a 17th century house.



Figure 33: Devonedge, a late 19th century hotel.

Charmouth Historic Urban Character Area 1 Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

Five archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Figure 34; Appendix 3, 1-5). All were watching briefs in areas behind the street frontage. No significant archaeological discoveries have been made. A former boundary wall footing was revealed behind Mintaka (Hollinrake 1994), the footings of a probably 18th or early 19th century building were found on the site of the former Fire Station (Tatler and Bellamy 2003) and a small pit was revealed behind the Queens' Armes (Terrain Archaeology 1999).

might be expected that evidence for medieval and post-medieval occupation and craft activity would survive within this area. Also there may be evidence for medieval and early post-medieval buildings hidden within later buildings, particularly along The Street. However, the archaeological results to date have been generally negative, suggesting that the extent of medieval and early post-medieval settlement within the town was fairly limited, thus, providing some confirmation of the hypothesis that the medieval town was not successful.

Archaeological Character

This is the area of the planned medieval town and perhaps also of Saxon and medieval activity pre-dating the town's foundation. It

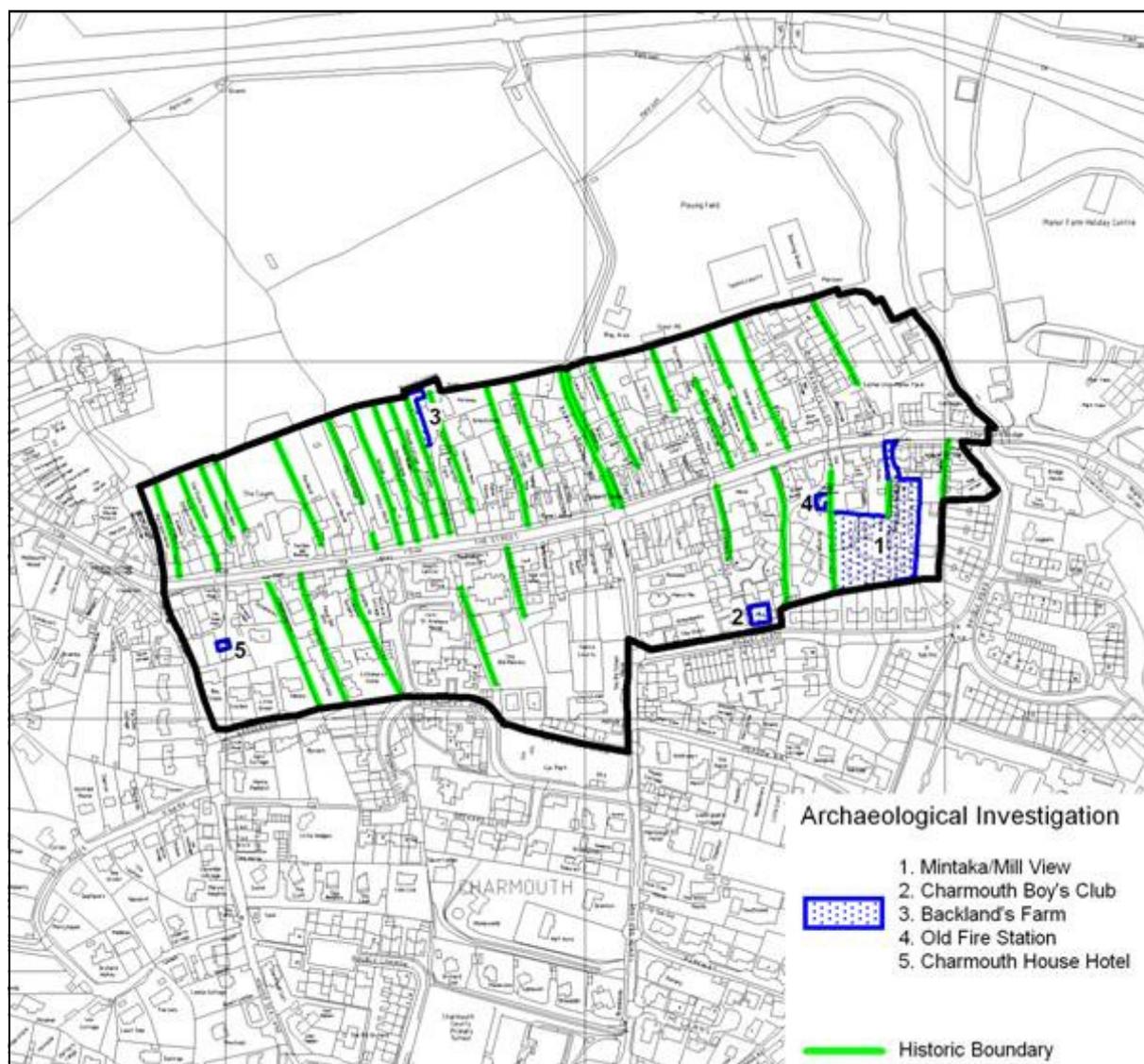


Figure 34: Archaeological Investigations and findspots in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

Charmouth Historic Urban Character Area 1 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. There is good survival of the medieval town layout and historic plots, particularly to the north of The Street. There is an extremely strong contribution from the large number of historic buildings, including large late medieval or early post-medieval houses and inns, 17th-18th century vernacular houses and cottages and Regency/Early Victorian Villas, which reflect the general history of the town's development from an agricultural and roadside settlement to an early 19th century resort. High stone boundary walls, particularly in the northern part of the area define many of the former burgage plot boundaries.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. The scale and shape of the long narrow historic burgage plots reflect a planned layout of considerable time depth, which gives this part of Charmouth its character and any further erosion of the plot pattern would have a detrimental effect on the historic character.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. This area includes the area

of the original planned medieval town. Historically, Charmouth is unusual being a Cistercian foundation and also one of the last planned medieval towns. Archaeologically, there is potential for the remains of medieval and post-medieval settlement and craft activity, which can contribute to our understanding of the economy and diet of the inhabitants. Negative archaeological information from within the planned town is almost of equal importance as the discovery of archaeology, as it helps to build up the picture of the density of settlement within the town and will contribute to our understanding of the success of the planned town. Potentially, there may also be traces of structures associated with Forde Abbey's administration of the town and of settlement that pre-dates the establishment of the town.

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 Charmouth.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1-3, 5-10, (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Area of planned medieval town
- Street pattern of single major road and minor cross-roads
- Large number of surviving burgage plots
- Several surviving 16th and 17th century large houses
- Wide range of 17th and 19th century houses
- Large number of high stone boundary walls
- Historic inns and hotels
- Steeply sloping topography
- Mature trees in churchyard and gardens