

## Wimborne Minster Historic Urban Character Area 4 Colehill and Leigh Common

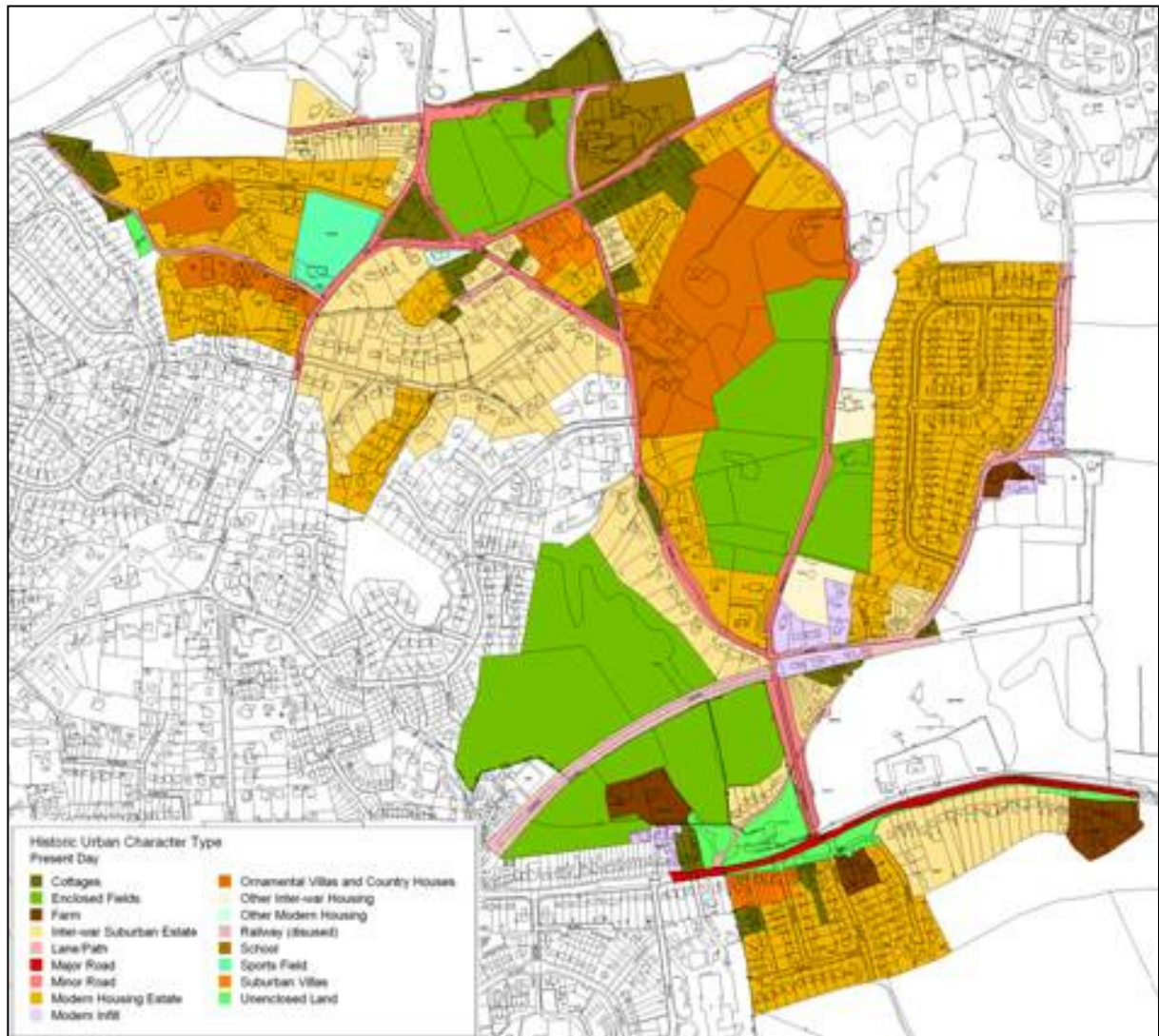


Figure 74: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 4, showing current historic urban character type



Figure 75: Old Manor Farm, Leigh Common,



Figure 76: North Leigh House, North Leigh

## Wimborne Minster Historic Urban Character Area 4

### Structure of Character Area

#### **Overview**

This area lies largely outside the civil parish of Wimborne Minster and within the parish of Colehill. It is dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban housing estates, although prior to WWI it was a rural parish with a dispersed settlement pattern and large areas of unenclosed heath.

#### **Topography and Geology**

Colehill lies at the western end of a rounded E-W aligned ridge on the north side of the Stour Valley. Leigh Common lies at the foot of this ridge to the south. The geology of the area comprises almost entirely clays and gravels of the Lower Bagshot which generate an acidic soil upon which woodland and heath predominate.

#### **Urban Structure**

This character area has a suburban and semi-rural settlement structure. The suburban element consists of inter-war housing built along the roads passing through the area, whilst modern housing estates tended to be built around Culs de sac, notably on the site of the former Leigh Vineries and within the former grounds of 19<sup>th</sup> century country houses. The few remaining large Victorian houses combine with cottages and farms, which are dispersed around the edges of former commons at Leigh Common, Colehill and Giddy Lake.

#### **Present Character**

Figure 74 shows the present day historic urban character types. Leigh Common occupies the southernmost part of the area along Leigh Road. Set back from the road are farms, cottages, suburban villas and a modern housing estate. The line of the disused railway effectively divides Leigh Common from Colehill to the north. A large modern housing estate on



Figure 77: Numbers 47-49 Wimborne Road,

the eastern edge of the area occupies the site of the former Leigh Vineries and former clay pits. The large grounds associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Beaucroft House and North Leigh House (Figure 76) lie on the east side of Beaucroft Lane, which links Leigh Common with Colehill. The part of Colehill village lying within the study area comprises cottages arranged along Wimborne Road and Cobb's Road which are surrounded by modern and inter-war housing estates.

#### **Time Depth**

Leigh was recorded as small manor of a single hide and three villagers at the time of Domesday. The Old Manor Farmhouse was built during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In Colehill isolated cottages existed at Cobbs Lane, Greenhill Close, Greenhill Road, Beaucroft Lane and Giddy Lake by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Country houses at Beaucroft, North Leigh, Highlands, Onslow and Bells House (Figure 78) were built during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The civil parish of Colehill was created in 1896.

#### **Settlement Pattern and Streetscape**

The settlement pattern is dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> century housing comprising large detached houses set within large plots (Figure 79). These housing estates are fitted in around an earlier pattern of dispersed cottages and farms which are arranged around the fringes of unenclosed common or former common. There are also several large country houses and villas set within large grounds, some of which have been infilled with modern housing during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. The streetscape is one of tree lined streets and unmetalled country lanes. This character area is the most verdant and open in Wimborne with large areas of hedge lined fields, common and wooded gardens. Giddylake, Highland Road and Beaucroft Road resemble country lanes with soft verges (EDDC 2005, 8).



Figure 78: Bells House, Boundary Lane

## Wimborne Minster Historic Urban Character Area 4

### Built Character

#### **Building types**

The area is characterised by a high proportion of mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century detached housing. The majority are bungalows with hipped roofs, although later additions tend to be gable ended. However, there are also a significant number of 19<sup>th</sup> century or earlier buildings. The earliest is the Old Manor House at Leigh Common which originated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a single block of three rooms; a kitchen wing was added in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A significant number of vernacular cottages were in existence by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, some of which have survived. Numbers 47 and 49 Wimborne Road were originally a single dwelling of two storeys set perpendicular to the road. There are also several large Victorian Country Houses. North Leigh was built in 1862, Beaucroft in 1876, Bells by 1883 and Onslow, Highlands and Rowney in 1884 (Divall 1996, 1).

#### **Building Materials**

Generally the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century bungalows are built in brick with tile roofs. Traditional building

materials for the Colehill area include brick, timber, tile, thatch and cob. Recent damage has exposed the cob walls at 2 Cobb's Road (Figure 80). Local building stone is in short supply from the Lower Bagshot Beds. Leigh Manor Farmhouse has brick walls with stone detail. The north gable is timber framed and the roof is tiled with stone eaves courses. 47 and 49 Wimborne road has pebbledashed cob walls and a thatched roof. The Victorian villas are generally built in brick with stone dressings and slate roofs.

#### **Key Buildings**

*19<sup>th</sup> century villas:* North Leigh House, Beaucroft, Bells, Onslow, Highlands

*Vernacular houses and cottages:* Leigh Old Manor Farm House, 47 and 49 Wimborne Road; 95 Wimborne Road; 1 Beaucroft Road; 1-3 and 6 Cobb's Road; the Old Cottage and Drovers, Leigh Lane



*Figure 79: View east along Highland Road at the junction with Highland View Close*



*Figure 80: Number 2 Cobb's Road, Colehill. A recent crack in the wall has exposed the cob fabric.*

### Wimborne Minster Historic Urban Character Area 4 Archaeology

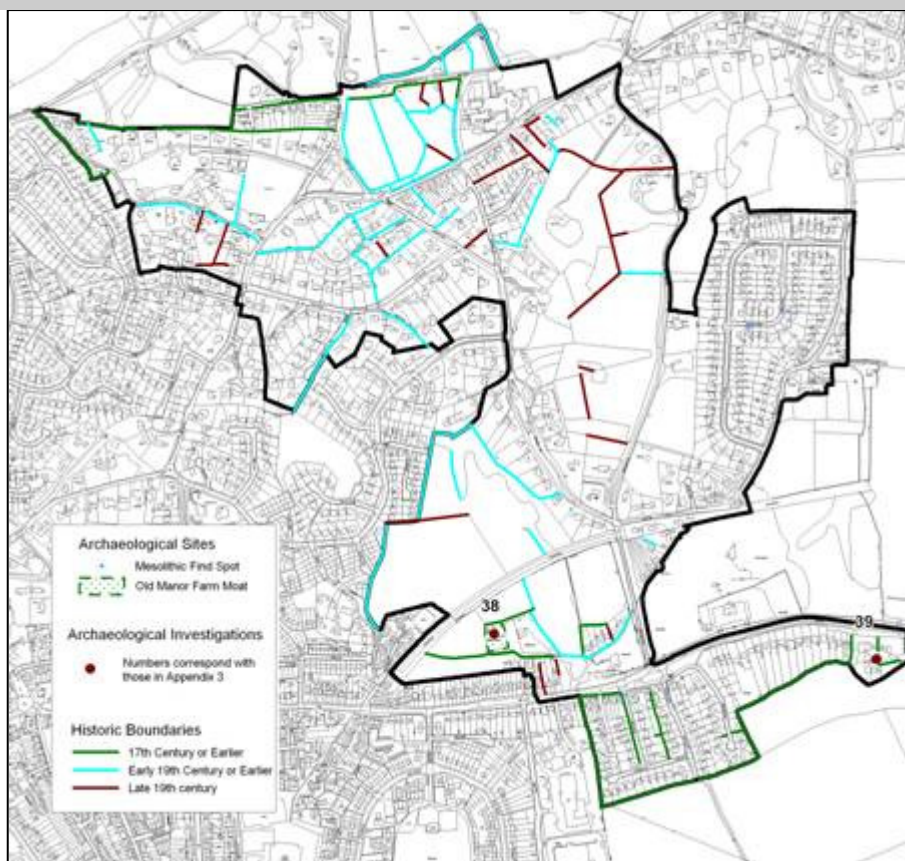


Figure 81: Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 4

#### Archaeological Investigations

Only two archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Figure 81, Appendix 3, Nos. 38-9).

The site of Old Manor Farm in Leigh was investigated under the auspices of the Dorset Archaeological Committee during 1982 whilst at Brookside Farm, AC Archaeology conducted an archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the first phase of residential development. No archaeological features were recorded, although some worked flint was recovered from the alluvial gravels.

#### Archaeological Character

The extent of prehistoric and Roman settlement is unknown, although the area was characterised by dispersed settlement during the Saxon and medieval periods. Isolated finds of Mesolithic flint have been made from the Leigh area. A transect pick and a transverse arrowhead were found at Leigh Vinery before 1951. A further transect pick was found in the garden of a house built during the 1940's on Leigh Road.

Leigh is mentioned as a one hide manor in Domesday, with a small population suggestive

of isolated dispersed settlement in the region. The early 17<sup>th</sup> century map of the Hanham Estate (DHC D/1505/1) suggests that the village of Leigh Common comprised farmsteads and smallholdings arranged around the edge of the unenclosed land. Elsewhere large tracts of unenclosed heath and pasture dominated the landscape. The old manor house of Leigh lies within a medieval moated enclosure. There is documentary evidence for pottery production during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Sperry & Hart 1988, 33), as well as small scale brickmaking (Reeve 2000, 92-106) which developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of the larger clay pits have been developed for housing during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 81 also depicts a number of 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century boundaries fossilised within the modern townscape. The earliest boundaries are shown on the Hanham Estate map and show the edge of Leigh Common and settlement plots around it as well as a major boundary in the north of the area. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century boundaries on the Tithe map show how the former unenclosed common was enclosed as pasture by that time. The later 19<sup>th</sup> century boundaries relate to large Victorian villas and suburban estate plots.

### Wimborne Minster Historic Urban Character Area 4 Designations

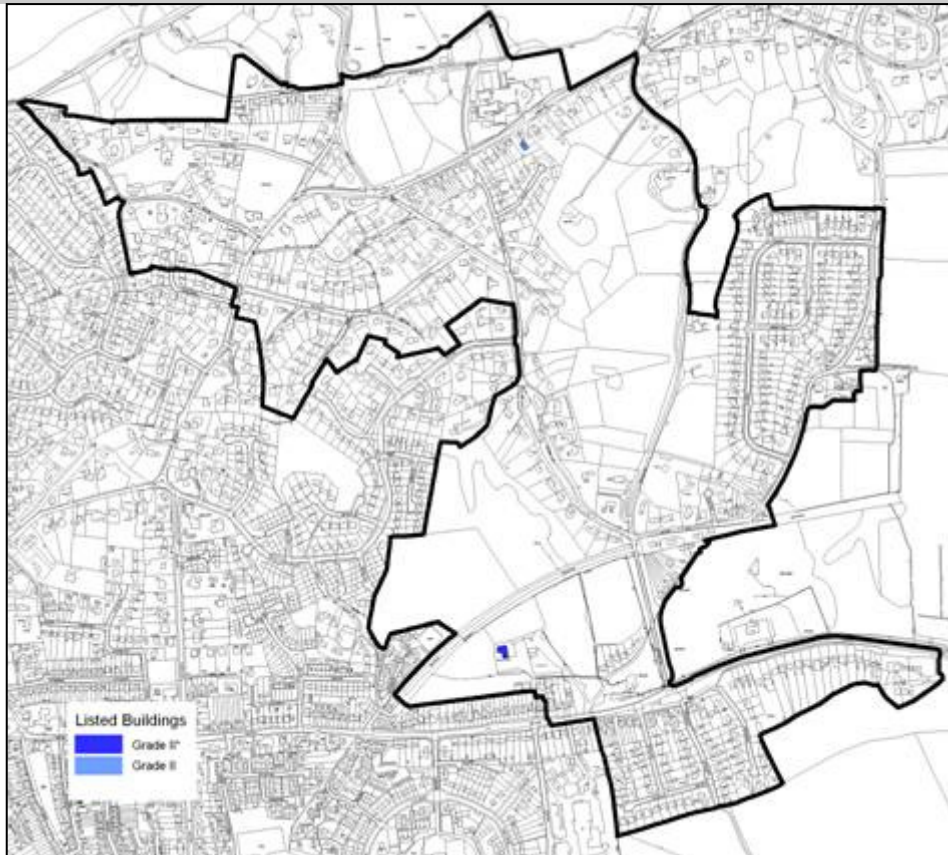


Figure 82: Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments in Historic Urban Character Area 4

#### **Listed Buildings**

There are 2 Listed Building designations in the Character Area; the grade II\* Old Manor Farmhouse and the grade II 47 and 49 Wimborne Road (Figure 82).

#### **Conservation Areas**

The whole of this Character Area lies outside the Wimborne Minster and Rowlands/ St John's Hill Conservation Areas (Figure 45). However, East Dorset District Council has recognised that Giddylake, Highlands Road and Beaucroft Road have a distinctive character and sense of place and has designated them the Giddylake/ Beaucroft Special Character Area in the Local Plan (EDDC 2005, 8-10).

#### **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.

## Wimborne Minster Historic Urban Character Area 4 Evaluation

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

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **medium**. Whilst there is a significant amount of 20<sup>th</sup> century housing development within the character area, this has often taken place along older country lanes and holloways that retain significant tree cover and rural character. There is also a significant proportion of surviving fields and unenclosed common land serving to further enhance the rural character of the area. Large Victorian Villas such as North Leigh and Beaucroft remain within their original spacious grounds, whilst others such as Highlands, Onslow and Bells have modern housing within their former grounds. Leigh Common in particular, retains a sense of its medieval origins as a cluster of cottages arranged around unenclosed common.

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

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change. Approximately half of the area has already been developed with large modern housing estates, whilst the other half remains rural in character. Nevertheless, the housing estates have a particular semi-rural character engendered through a majority of large detached houses within large plots containing significant tree cover. The distinctive character of this area would be at risk if future development did not take this into account.

### ***Archaeological Potential***

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **medium**. Domesday suggests that any medieval settlement within this area was on

a very small scale and dispersed in nature. Leigh Common is the single exception and archaeological deposits relating to medieval settlement might be expected around the fringes of the common here. Industrial activity was on a small 'cottage' scale until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is some potential for isolated remains of medieval and post-medieval pottery and brick production, as well as the larger 19<sup>th</sup> century clay and gravel extraction sites. The topographical position of the south slope of the Colehill Ridge, above the River Stour has some potential for deposits relating to settlement or other human activity dating from the Mesolithic period onwards.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1-2, 4-6, 16, 22-4, 26 and 28-30 (Part 7).

### **Key Characteristics**

- Medieval manor of Leigh Common
- Surviving unenclosed commons and wooded heathland
- Dispersed rural settlement
- Large Victorian country houses and villas
- Modern suburban estates