

Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 2 Melcombe Regis Historic Core

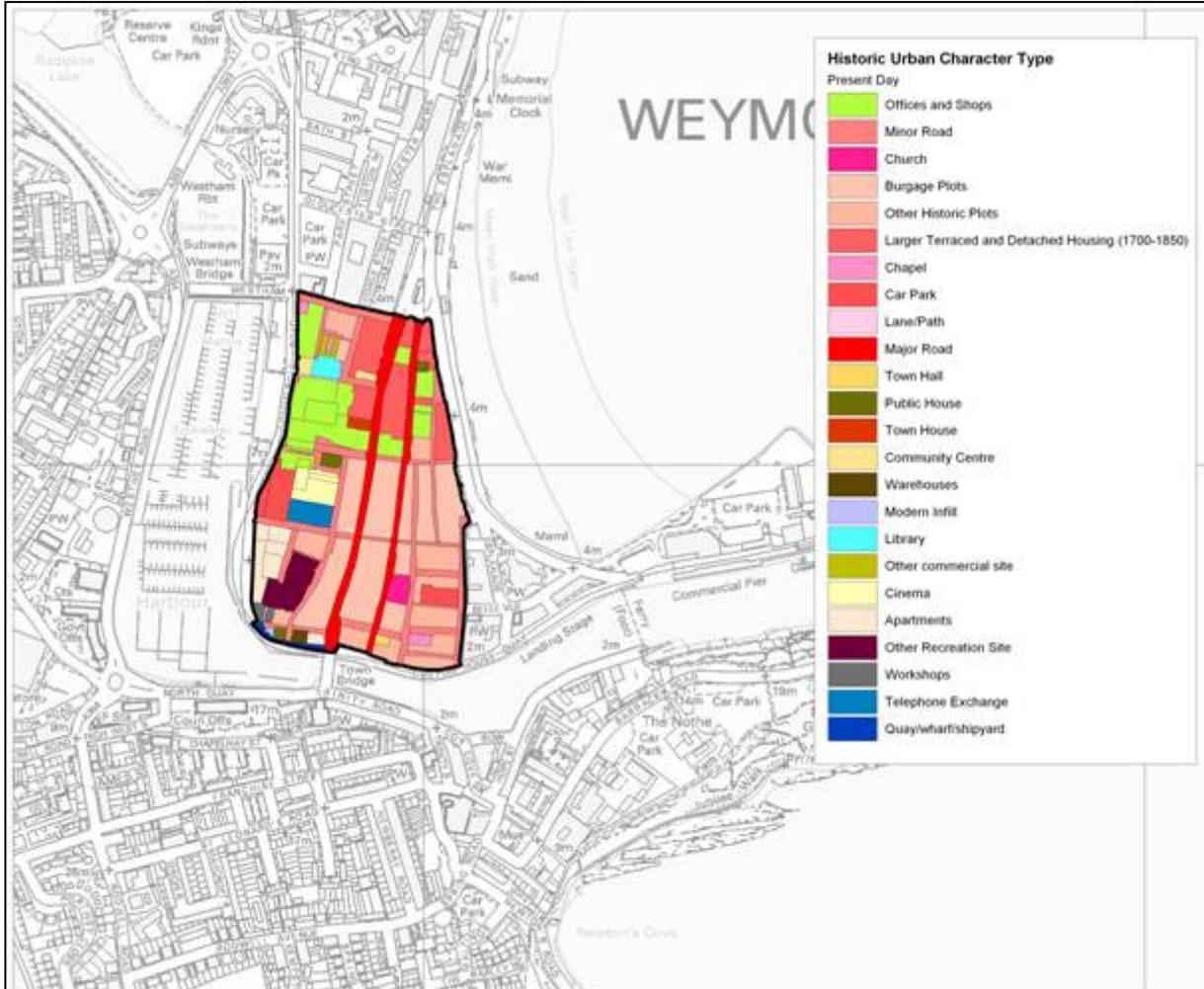


Figure 52: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type



Figure 53: St Thomas's Street



Figure 54: St Thomas's Street former chapel

Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 2 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This is the historic and commercial core of Melcombe Regis. It comprises the area of the planned medieval and early post-medieval town, with areas of reclaimed land on the western side. It is defined primarily by its historic dimension and the concentration of historic buildings. The regular grid layout of the streets is particularly distinct.

Topography and Geology

The area is generally flat, rising little more than 3 metres above Ordnance Datum. Most of the area lies on Oxford Clays, apart from the areas of reclaimed land.

Urban Structure

The area is laid out on a regular grid with straight main north-south streets, crossed by lesser east-west ones, also generally straight. Plots are rectangular running back from these streets. This originates from the street layout of the planned medieval town.

Present Character

Figure 52 shows the present day historic urban character types. The south east quadrant of the area consists of historic plots, a mixture of residential and commercial (mostly shops) including a few pre-eighteenth century buildings. To the north there are larger terraces, mostly shops and offices. The west of the area is almost completely commercial, with modern development of shops and offices.

Time Depth

This area represents the historic core of the town, with a grid pattern of roads that was probably laid out in the 13th century, about the time of the original charter. Even in areas of extensive modern development this grid pattern has generally been respected.

The number of 18th century terraces reflect its development as a holiday resort, whilst there are also several prominent 19th century shops and commercial buildings which emphasises the prosperity of the town during these periods.

The late 20th century development on the western side of the area, with shopping centre, car parks, leisure facilities and apartment blocks, looking out towards the new marina, is illustrative of the change of the harbour from a purely commercial enterprise to one where leisure facilities play and increasingly important part.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern consists of high density housing and commercial properties. Housing is only found on the eastern side, closer to Weymouth bay. The central sections of the area, and those parts running alongside the harbour are predominantly commercial. There are virtually no open spaces, the largest being the pedestrian precinct in Bond Street, or green spaces, the only one being the remnants of the cemetery beside St Mary's church.



Figure 55: Frederick Place, St Thomas's Street

Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 2 Built Character

Building types

The area is characterised by a large number of 18th and early 19th century buildings with a smaller number dating to the later 19th and earlier 20th century. There are relatively few modern buildings within the historic core.

They include attached houses, and terraces together with purpose built shops. Some industrial buildings also survive, mainly on the harbour side, mostly converted to domestic or commercial uses. On the western side of the area is a large block of late twentieth century development including apartments, shops and multi story car park.

The buildings are mostly of three storeys, with frequent terraces of similar buildings, mostly of the late 18th and early 19th century, in addition historic 18th and 19th century shopfronts survive, adding to the distinctive character of the town.

Building Materials

The buildings are generally brick, with stone, mostly Portland stone, occasionally used for dressings. The few surviving pre-eighteenth century buildings are mostly stone. Roofs are predominantly slate.

Key Buildings

St Mary's Church
Milton Arms
White Hart
Black Dog
Custom House
Guildhall
Frederick Place



Figure 56: School Street, Masonic hall



Figure 57: Ruins of Maiden Street Methodist Church

**Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 2
Archaeology**

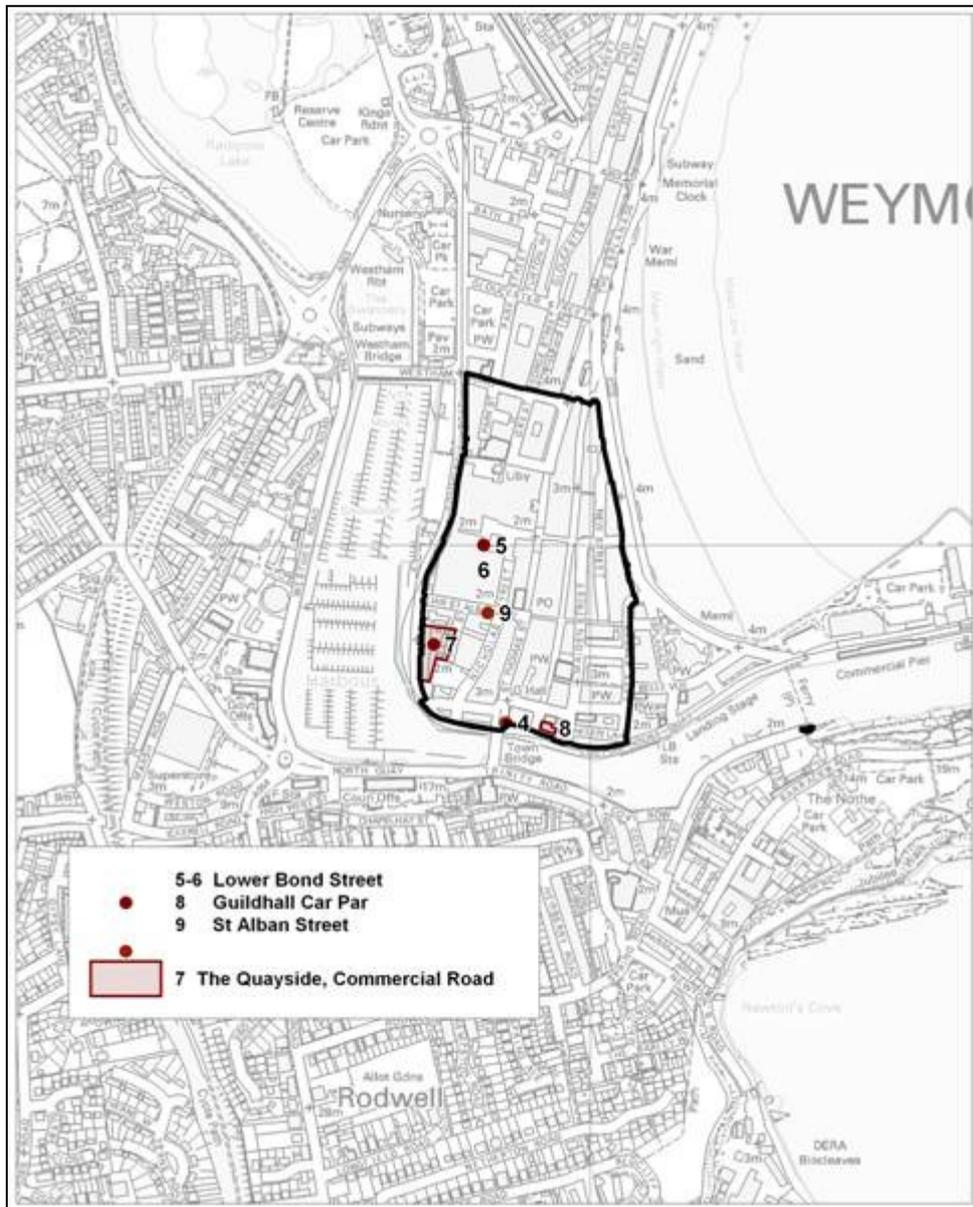


Figure 58: Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 2

Archaeological Investigations

Thirteen archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Figure 58).

At Lower Bond Street an evaluation and watching brief revealed cobbled surfaces and culverts thought to be of nineteenth century date. No earlier features were recorded, though medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered from the site, indicating some disturbance of earlier deposits.

Evaluation trenches and test pitting in Commercial Road revealed no positive

evidence for any medieval structures or finds. The deposits encountered were interpreted as being largely the result of 19th-century reclamation. The authors suggested that the possibility of pre-modern channel or foreshore deposits existing below the depths examined cannot be discounted.

Evaluation of the Guildhall Car Park recorded structural remains interpreted as belonging to a great maritime warehouse known to have been built on the site in 1805. No evidence for earlier medieval buildings was revealed; these presumably having been removed by later construction.

Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 2
Archaeology

Archaeological Character

Below-ground investigations in this character area have been relatively small scale and have focused on a limited number of sites proposed for development. This constrains any consideration of the archaeological resource. Results of work to date suggest considerable, albeit possibly localised and shallow, disturbance of medieval archaeology by later development. Nevertheless, the greater part of this area comprises the historic core of the medieval planned town of Melcombe Regis, and adjacent areas of land reclaimed at a relatively early date. The roads in this area still follow the pattern of the planned town layout. This suggests that medieval and post-medieval pits may exist in the rear of the historic plots, together with evidence for earlier property boundaries and structures. There may be evidence of earlier harbour and bridge structures, and commercial and maritime structures.

A small number of Bronze Age cremations and casual finds indicate the presence of prehistoric activity in this area, but its precise form is unclear on present evidence.

**Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 2
Designations**

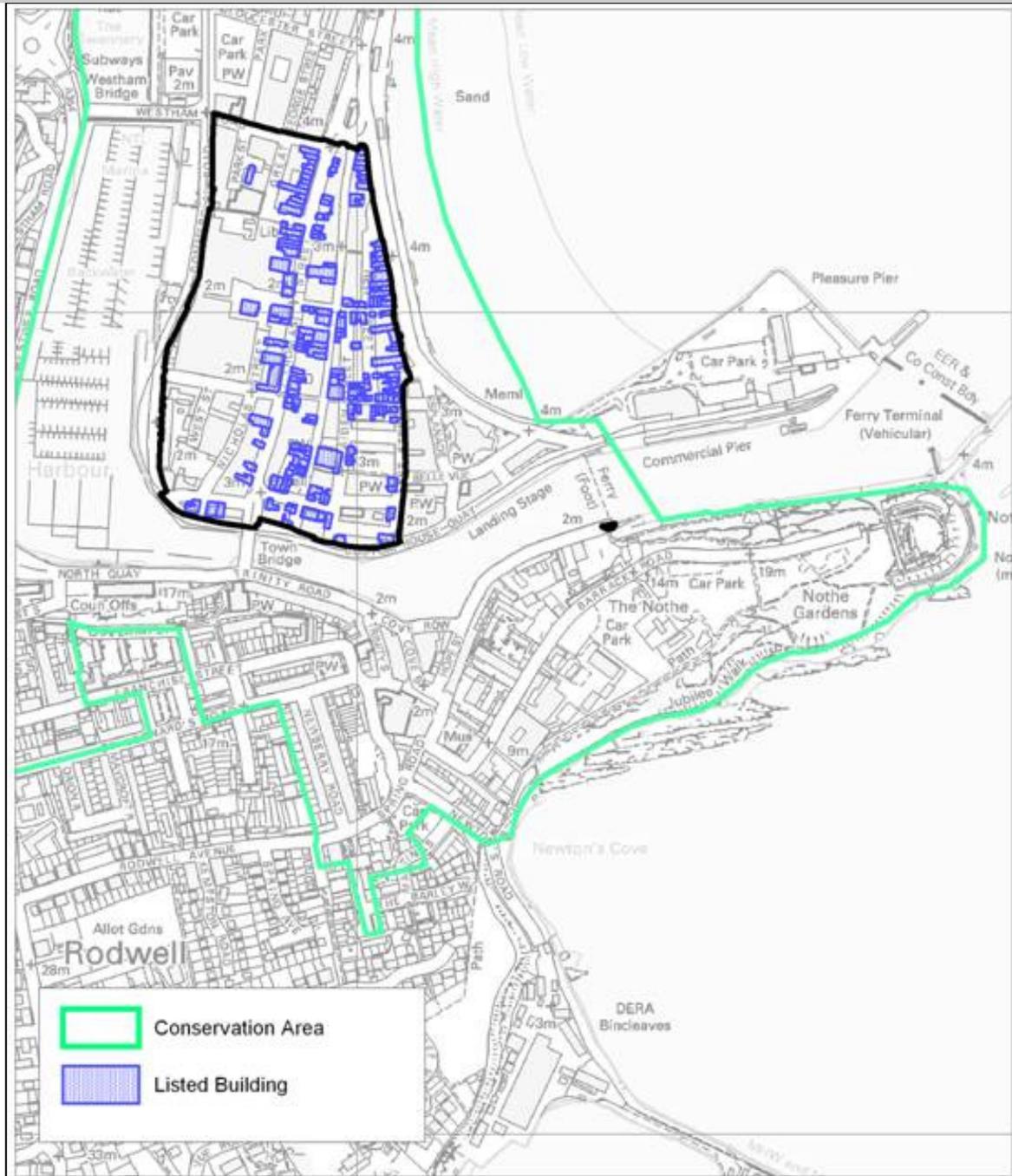


Figure 59: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 2

Listed Buildings

There are 146 Listed Building designations in the character area. Five buildings are Grade II* (The White Hart public house, The Black Dog public house, the Guildhall, Maiden Street Methodist Church, and Statue House) and the remaining buildings and structures are Grade II.

Conservation Areas

The whole of this character area lies within the

Weymouth Conservation Area.

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.

Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 2 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. It has good survival of the planned medieval town layout with streets in a distinct grid pattern which has been respected by subsequent development. Much of the area's historic character is manifested in the commercial and civic buildings which are predominant. There is a wide range of different building types from terraces of large gentry houses, many now hotels and guest houses, to a multitude of commercial, civic and industrial premises, and occasional single or short terraces of small domestic houses.

In addition, the area has a strong character associated with the 18th and 19th century seaside resort and spa part of the town's history. This is particularly apparent in the historic buildings facing Weymouth Bay along The Esplanade. The consistent detailing, with many period features such as bay windows, and use of painted render in particular make this aspect a particularly coherent and elegant one. Some gaps have been created by modern development, presenting the rear of commercial premises on this frontage.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

This area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. The scale and shape of the historic streets and plots reflects 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 further opening up of the frontages would have a major impact upon the character.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. It lies in the historic core of the planned medieval town of Melcombe Regis and the post-medieval town and has the potential to reveal details on the development of the town, the history of its layout and property divisions, civic life, commercial and maritime activity, small-scale craft and other industries and the economy and diet of the inhabitants.

The large number of historic buildings and outbuildings 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 houses and commercial premises, civic buildings, and the development of the post-medieval and later resort of Weymouth.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Historic core of medieval and post-medieval town
- Retention of grid street pattern of the planned medieval town
- Historic plots and boundaries
- Early commercial and civic buildings
- Wide range of residential buildings
- Historic shopfronts
- Range of harbour buildings commercial, administrative and social
- Terraces and other buildings related to the early history of Weymouth as a resort town