

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 11

Avon Meads

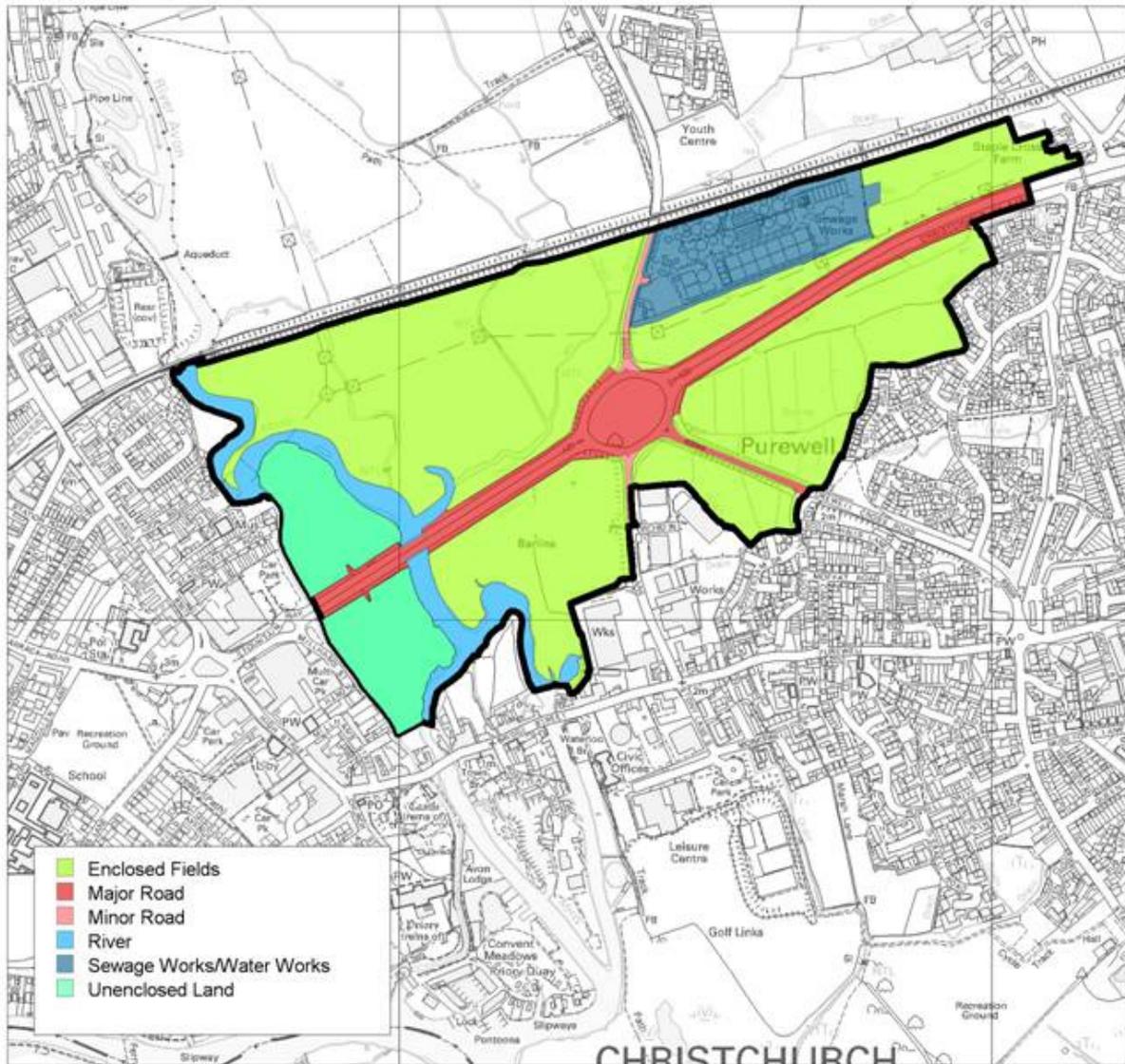


Figure 108: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 11, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 109: Millhams



Figure 110: Barlins

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 11 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area comprises the historic meadows of Millhams and Barlins, as well as some historic enclosures in the north east of the area. Christchurch by-pass cut a swathe through the northern part of the area in 1958 and sewerage works were built between the by-pass and the LSWR line around the same time.

Topography and Geology

The greater part of this character area lies on the floodplain of, and is crossed by, the River Avon. It rises slightly from the river in the west towards the east. The geology of western half of the area is alluvium, and the eastern half is Bracklesham Beds.

Urban Structure

The area has almost no urban character. However, while it has in general changed little since Milhams was common pasture and the remainder of the land were enclosed fields, the construction of the railway and ring road have had a dramatic effect, cutting the countryside into sections.

Present Character

Figure 108 shows the present day historic urban character types. Today the area is still largely characterised by fields and open spaces. It is dominated by Enclosed Fields, with Common and River at the western edge and Sewage Works/Water Works at its northern edge. It is crossed by Major and Minor Roads. The railway marks the northern boundary of the study area and the character area.

Time Depth

Milhams remained common pasture up to the outbreak of WWII. It is possible that the eponymous mill was one that burnt down at Little Milhams in the 16th century (Newman & Tizzard, 2007, 45-6).

Prior to these developments much of the Avon valley in the Christchurch region was divided up into rectilinear field systems with their main alignment perpendicular to the topographical grain. These alignments are still in use as modern field boundaries in the north eastern part of the character area. The date of inception of these regular field boundaries remains unknown. They are visible on the late 18th century Malmesbury estate map (HRO 9M73/139) and so predate parliamentary enclosures. This would suggest a medieval or earlier date for their origin. However, it must

also be noted that similar field alignments have been identified in other parts of the country where a prehistoric or Roman date has been postulated (Davey, 2005; Williamson, 1998). Further to the west, where the land has always been liable to flooding, the land use seems to have remained as common unenclosed pasture, probably since at least the medieval period. Immediately to the north of Purewell the field patterns are more irregular and may possibly be the result of piecemeal enclosure from marsh or common pasture. Because of the low lying nature of the ground all fields are bounded by drainage ditches containing water.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

There is no settlement within this character area. It is crossed east-west by the A35 Christchurch By-pass and roads to the north and south, which converge on a large roundabout in the centre of the area.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 11
Built Character

Building types

There are no historic buildings in the character area. The main structure here which could be regarded as a building is the sewage works, and this is strictly utilitarian in character.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 11
Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

No archaeological investigations or finds have been recorded within the character area

Archaeological Character

The lack of archaeological investigations within the character area constrains consideration of its archaeological character. However, although the date of the various field systems still in evidence remains to be firmly established, they are clearly historic in character. Survival of well-preserved archaeological deposits may be anticipated below alluvium.

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 11
Designations**

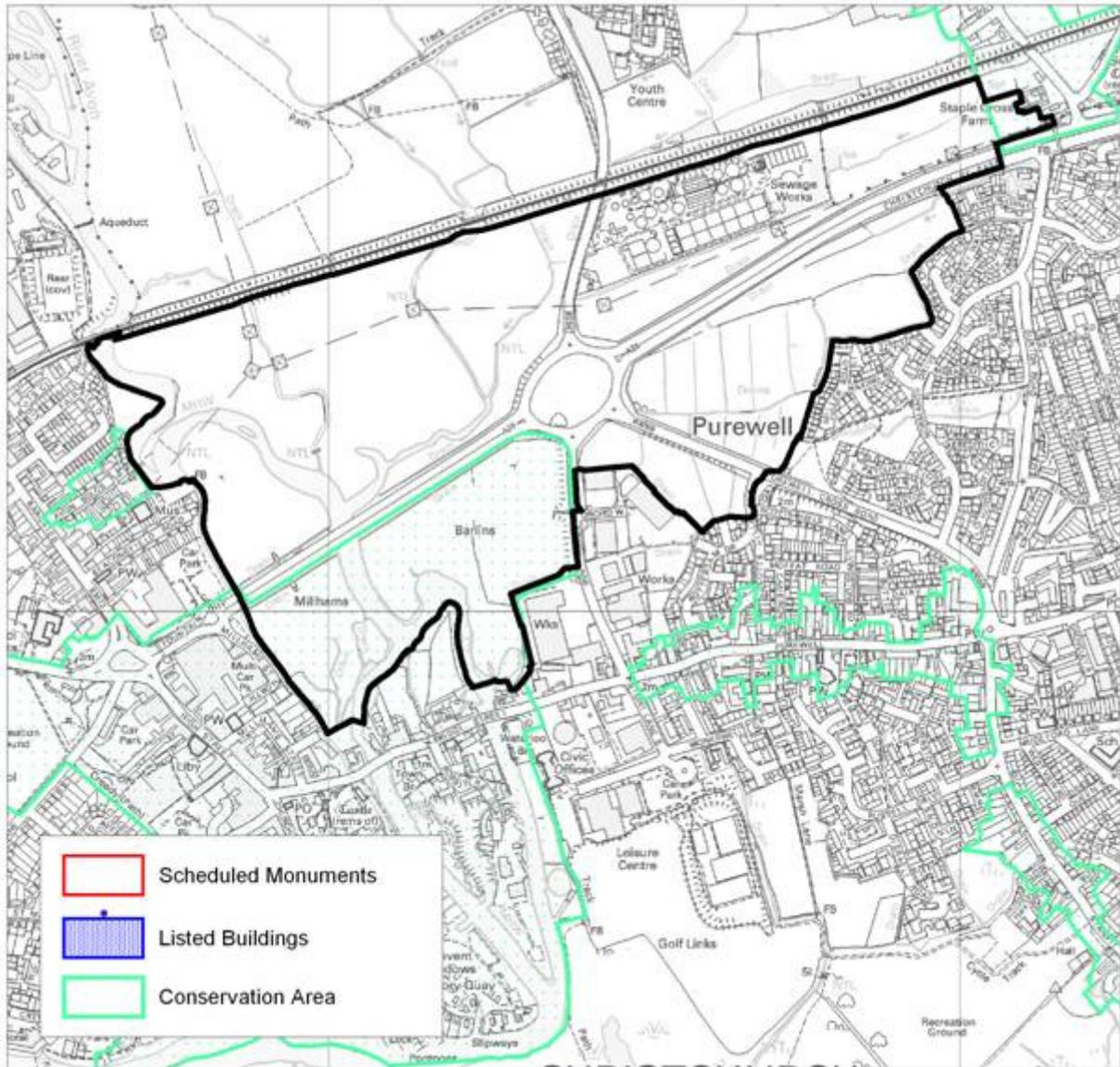


Figure 111: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 11

Listed Buildings

There are no Listed Building designations within the Character Area.

Conservation Areas

The north-eastern corner of the Christchurch Central Conservation Area lies within the Character Area.

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

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

Scheduled Monuments

There are no Scheduled Monument designations within this character area.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 11 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **medium**. Much of it comprises the historic meadows of Millhams and Barlins, and some historic enclosures in the north east of the area.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change. Although 19th and 20th century communications and infrastructure already characterise this area, much of it is essentially historic meadow.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **medium**. Although this area has been dominated by floodable pasture until the late 20th century there is potential for well

preserved prehistoric archaeology below accumulated alluvium. Remains of datable field boundaries almost certainly survive in the area and as such are of great importance in terms of understanding the landscape history of the Christchurch region and the Avon valley.

Key Characteristics

- Milhams common meadow
- Undated field system
- Open green spaces