

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 12 Stanpit Marsh

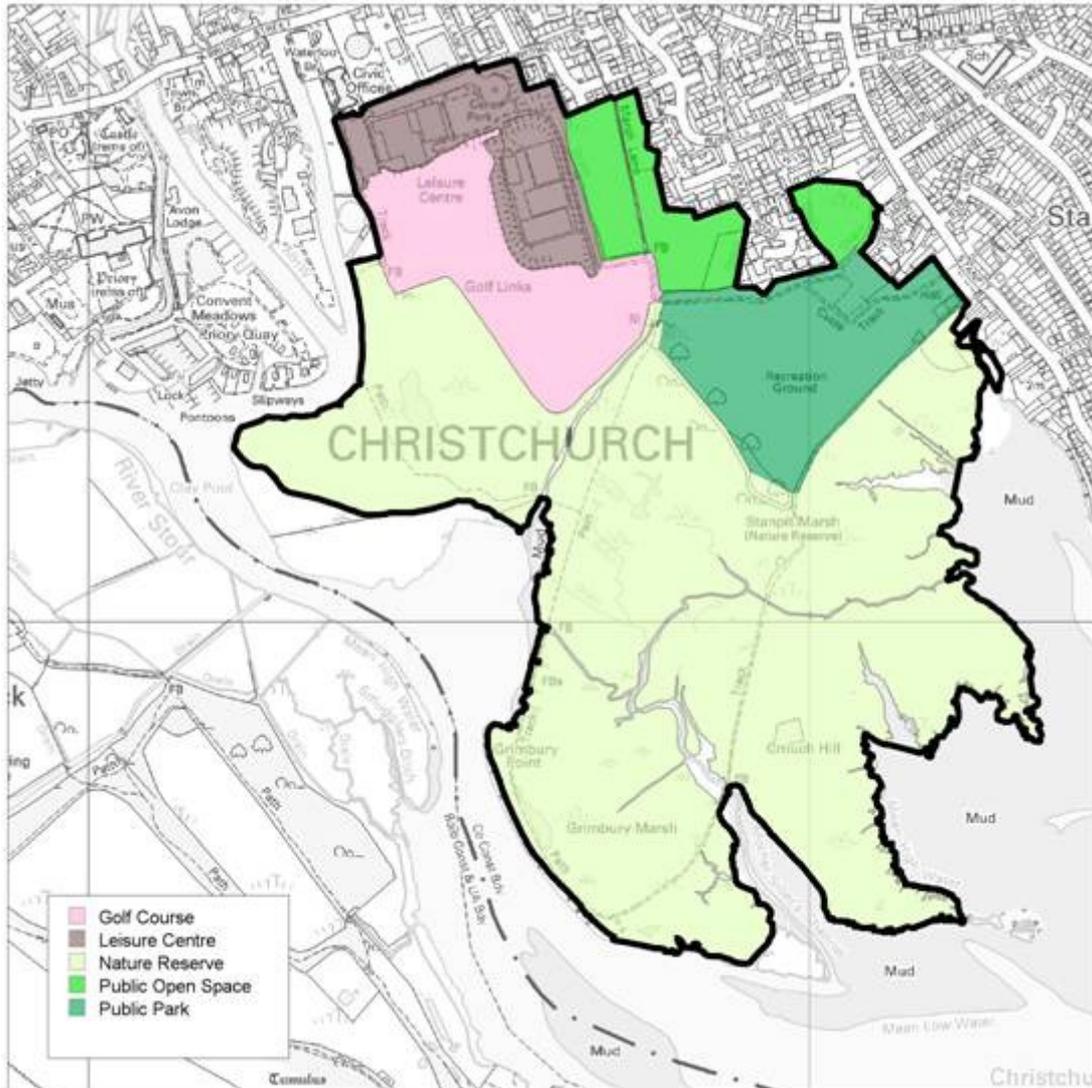


Figure 112: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 12, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 113: Stanpit Marsh from Hengistbury Head



Figure 114: New Forest Ponies on Stanpit Marsh

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 12
Structure of Character Area

Overview

This character area represents an area of marsh, little changed in historic times, but with evidence of prehistoric activity. It is now a nature reserve, with some areas given over to leisure activities.

Topography and Geology

Stanpit Marsh is a mid-estuary marsh covering an area of 52 hectares. It was declared a nature reserve in 1964, providing a variety of habitats including saltings, floodable meadow, mudflats, reedbeds and ditches. The geology of the area consists entirely of alluvium.

Urban Structure

This character area has no urban structure.

Present Character

Figure 112 shows the present day historic urban character types. This area is dominated by the Nature Reserve, with leisure uses of Golf Course, Leisure Centre and Public Open Space at its northern end.

Time Depth

Historically the area has remained unchanged for millennia. However, there is archaeological evidence that the site was slightly less marginal in the Mesolithic, when sea level was lower. Evidence for Mesolithic occupation has been excavated from close to Crouch Hill (Palmer, 1970). Crouch Hill was also important in the late prehistoric period when a burial mound was erected there. During the medieval period the area became part of Marsh Common. More recently, in the 18th century the marshes have provided cover for smugglers transporting their cargoes from the harbour to Stanpit and Purewell.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

There is no settlement within this character area.

Today there are walkways constructed for public access to the SSSI. The northern parts of the marsh have also been drained and are used for recreational purposes.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 12
Built Character

Building types

The only standing structures within the character area are: a World War II Bailey Bridge erected across Mother Siller's Channel and still there today; a new visitor centre; and the Two Rivers Meet Leisure Centre at the north end of the area.

Building Materials

The visitor centre has been built from natural materials and with a glass front facing south across Christchurch Harbour.

Key Buildings

Military structure: Bailey Bridge

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 12
Archaeology**

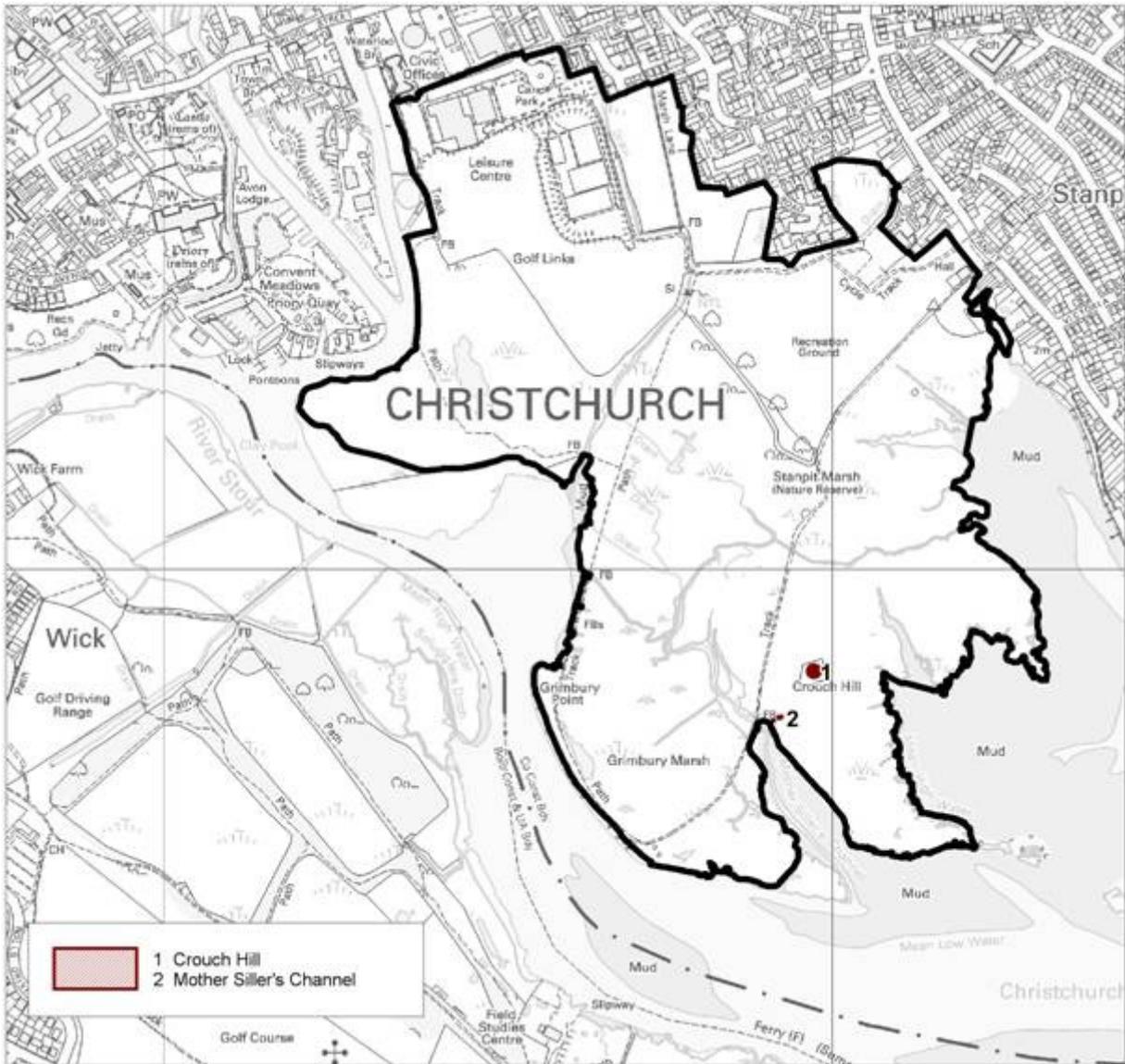


Figure 115: Archaeological features in Historic Urban Character Area 12.

Archaeological Investigations

Probably the most significant archaeological sites on Stanpit Marsh are Crouch Hill round barrow and Mother Siller’s Channel Mesolithic site, both of which have undergone archaeological excavation. St George Gray directed the first excavations on the low turf mound of Crouch Hill during October 1921 (Cunliffe et al, 1987, 40-47). The site appeared to be a Bronze Age barrow, although the inclusion of large amounts of fragmentary grooved ware in an apparently deliberate deposit is unusual. No obvious cremations in urns were discovered. M. Ridley conducted a further small excavation on Crouch Hill during 1969. Very little pottery was recovered but the

assemblage included six pieces of grooved ware and an almost complete collared urn containing a cremation. Subsequent field walking by J. Gardiner and others in 1984-5 revealed the entire mound to be covered with burnt flint, struck flakes and scrapers which had been brought to the surface by animals. The site seems to have been the focus for some kind of late Neolithic activity prior to a mound being constructed and a Bronze Age urned cremation inserted (ibid).

Susann Palmer excavated a Mesolithic site AT Mothers Siller’s Channel during 1970 (Palmer, 1970).

A mound was also excavated in a pasture field

adjoining the north side of Stanpit Marsh and within the grounds of nearby Hengistbury House during 1922. St George Gray excavated the site because of its proximity to Crouch Hill but he concluded that the mound was likely to be relatively modern in origin, despite the fact that a number of flints were found within it (St George Gray, 1925). Late 19th and early 20th century OS maps suggest that the mound is actually an ornamental tree mound associated with Hengistbury House. Other potential archaeological sites have been identified on Stanpit Marsh by the Christchurch Local History Society. Drainage channels are also visible on aerial photographs in the northern part of Stanpit Marsh. These channels probably relate to field boundaries of uncertain date visible on the Malmesbury estate map dated 1796 (HRO 9M73/139).

Archaeological Character

The lack of systematic survey and investigation constrains consideration of the archaeological character of this area. However, the archaeology of this area is unlikely to be urban in character. There is evidence of activity here in several prehistoric periods. The predominant archaeological character is associated with drainage channels and boundaries.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 12 Designations

Listed Buildings

There are no Listed Building designations within the Character Area.

Conservation Areas

There are no Conservation Area designations 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 the Character Area.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 12 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **medium**. There is no urban development, but it retains its essential character adjacent to the town and harbour, and has retained prehistoric and historic features.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change.

Archaeological Potential

The character area is considered to have **high** archaeological potential particularly, based on current evidence, in the vicinity of Crouch Hill. Much is still not understood about the nature of this site, although its location on the opposite side of the harbour to Hengistbury Head may be

significant in this respect. There is the potential for archaeological remains dating from the Mesolithic, Bronze Age, relict field boundaries and WWII sites.

Key Characteristics

- Stanpit Marsh SSSI and nature reserve
- Crouch Hill Bronze Age site
- Open green spaces