

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 18 Somerset Housing Estates & Former Airfield

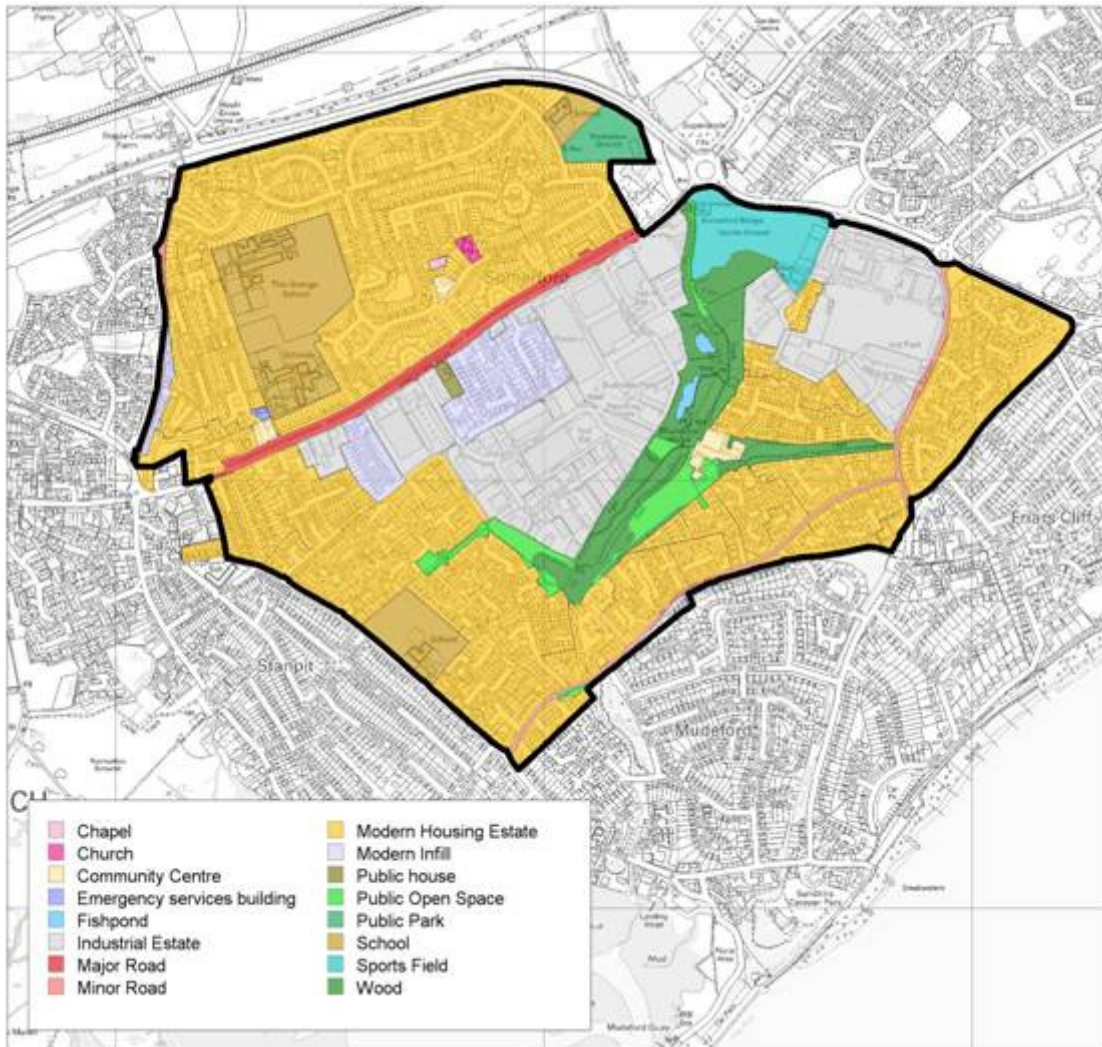


Figure 138: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 18, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 139 Former de Havilland factory



Figure 140: Edward Road

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 18 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area represents suburban expansion around the formerly rural settlement of Somerford. It includes an area formerly occupied by an airfield and now given over to modern housing and industrial use.

Topography and Geology

The valley of the River Mude runs across the area. Its geology is predominantly Bracklesham Beds.

Urban Structure

This character area comprises modern housing and extensive industrial areas to north and south of Somerford Road, and served by roads leading off it. It is bounded in the north by the Christchurch By-pass, by Mudeford Lane on the west and De Havilland Way on the south.

Present Character

Figure 138 shows the present day historic urban character types. Part of the former airfield is now a housing estate and part is industrial estate.

Time Depth

The manor of Somerford historically extended from the east side of Christchurch Harbour in the West to Chewton in the east. It is first mentioned in a document dated AD1140 which confirmed the grant of the estate to Christchurch Priory. The manor included the hamlets of Bure, Chewton, Street, Stanpit, Hoburne and Clive (Highcliffe). The manor formed the grange of the Priory and was also the residence of the Abbot. The medieval settlement of Somerford was probably situated close to the Grange which was itself probably located approximately 250m south of Somerford Roundabout (the site of the eponymous ford) on the east bank of the river Mude. The 1st edition OS map shows a fishpond here, which may represent a medieval monastic feature.

Somerford Grange and Somerford Farm were held separate from each other following the dissolution of Christchurch Priory and survived until 1935 when they were demolished to make way for Bure Airfield. This housed the Air Ministry Research Establishment from 1940. After the war it was used as an aircraft manufacturing site until it was finally closed in 1962 and developed for housing.

The housing estate to the north of the airfield was constructed during the 1950s on land previously used as pasture and allotments. Much of the area of the former airfield had

comprised the medieval open fields of Somerford and Bure. The ford itself accommodated the main road from London to Poole and all of the 19th century developments took place along this road; a ribbon development of villas and other properties. Significant open space remains along the Mude valley

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is primarily one of low to medium density housing, arranged in typical suburban estate layouts. The houses are generally set slightly back from the frontages behind front gardens. Estates of smaller, predominantly terraced, houses are concentrated in areas to the north of Somerford Road. To the south of Somerford Road, and particularly to the south of Mudeford Wood, are areas of larger, predominantly detached, villa-type houses set in relatively large gardens.

Open green areas are provided by a sports ground, school playing fields and a central belt of woodland (Mudeford Wood) and public open space along the River Mude, which runs through the centre of the area.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 18

Built Character

Building types

Surviving pre-war buildings date from the late 19th century and comprise a group of four houses on Somerford and Newlands Road. *New Lodge* and *The Croft* are villa style buildings fronting on the south side of Somerford Road. A number of other villas had previously lain alongside them but have since been lost to industrial development. Numbers 33 and 37 Newlands Road lie at the back of the plot occupied by *New Lodge*, and seem to have been built at a similar time.

The remainder of the surviving historic fabric lies within the area of the former airfield and dates from the Second World War. This includes a polygonal concrete pillbox in Mudeford Wood, although a further square pillbox in the same area appears to have been lost. These formed part of the defences for the airfield (Hodges, 1982, 38). Buildings associated with

barracks at the north end of the airfield, and close to the site of Somerford Manor, have also survived, although they are now used by the Christchurch Business Centre and ancillary buildings. Part of the original hangar buildings are used as factories on Somerford Road.

Building Materials

The north Somerford housing estate comprises red brick semi-detached houses with hipped tile roofs.

Key Buildings

Military: airfield buildings and defensive structures

Suburban Villas: *New Lodge*, *The Croft*

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 18
Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

There have been no formal archaeological investigations in the character area.

One chance find is recorded, in the form of Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British pottery including early amphora, found in shallow pits in Burton Road in 1947 during road making excavations (OS record card SZ 19 SE 10).

Archaeological Character

The lack of archaeological investigations constrains consideration of the archaeological character of this area. Evidence associated with medieval settlement and the grange is to be anticipated. The find of Iron Age/Romano-British pottery provides some, albeit slight, evidence for settlement in the vicinity.

The area of the former Somerford Airfield also has a low incidence of archaeological discoveries. These are restricted to the fish pond and documented remains of the medieval grange at Somerford as well as physical and documented remains of WWII structures associated with the running and defence of the airfield.

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 18
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 this character area.

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 18
Evaluation**

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **low**. It is dominated by modern housing estates and industrial activity.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change. Although 20th century suburban housing developments already characterise this area, there are some open areas and there is known to have been historic settlement in this area.

Archaeological Potential

The overall archaeological potential of the character area is judged to be **medium**. However, the potential is high for further

important discoveries relating to the medieval village of Somerford, as well as the later, which is likely to have been a relatively high status medieval building. Elsewhere there is background potential for Palaeolithic and Bronze Age material, and elements land division, and some potential for Iron Age/ Romano-British deposits in the Burton Road area. The potential for surviving sub-surface deposits relating to the airfield is also high.

Key Characteristics

- Medieval manor and monastic grange
- WWII airfield
- Industrial and housing estates