

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 22 Highcliffe Castle & Beach

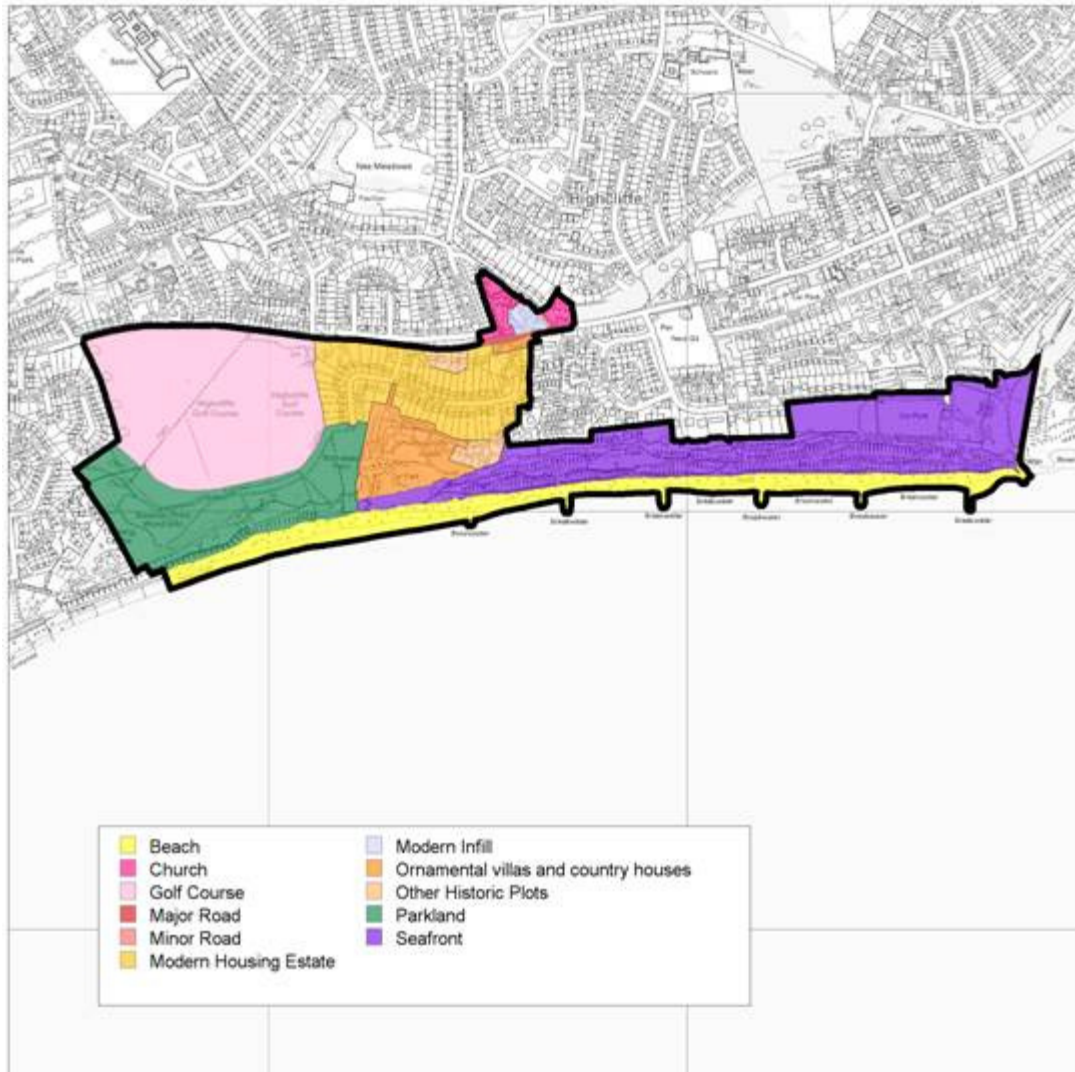


Figure 154: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 22, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 155: Highcliffe Castle



Figure 156: Highcliffe Castle Lodges

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 22
Structure of Character Area

Overview

This character area is centred around the remains of the gardens and landscaped park, now much reduced, around Highcliffe Castle.

Topography and Geology

The cliff and beach forms the southern boundary of this character area, which is otherwise relatively flat. The geology of the area is sand and gravely overlying Barton Clay.

Urban Structure

This character area has a quite limited urban structure, being largely open ground with a variety of leisure uses. Lymington Road runs across the top of the character area and short roads feeding small areas of 20th century housing.

Present Character

Figure 154 shows the present day historic urban character types. This character area comprises Highcliffe Castle, grounds and beach and is characterised by leisure activity rather than housing.

Time Depth

Clive is first mentioned in Domesday when it consisted of only 8 acres of meadow, though in the reign of the Confessor, it had been assessed at 3 hides. This estate was probably the modern Highcliff and formed part of the manor of Somerford (Page, 1912, 81-2). The ecclesiastical parish of Highcliff was not established until 1843, and the civil parish in 1897 when it was separated from Christchurch East (ibid. 83-101). However, the parish was absorbed back into Christchurch Borough in 1932. St Mark's church was built in 1842 on land donated by Lord Stuart de Rothesay of Highcliffe Castle for the newly formed ecclesiastical parish. The original Highcliffe Castle was built in 1773 by the 3rd earl of Bute and the present grounds of Highcliffe Castle were laid out at about that time with the aid of Capability Brown. The original castle was set much nearer to the cliff and had to be demolished in 1794 when threatened by coastal erosion. However, two lodges survive from the original complex and are now the Lord Bute Restaurant. The house now known as Highcliffe Castle was completed by 1835 using materials purchased in France. The castle was sold in 1950 and it became a children's convalescent home and Catholic Seminary before being destroyed by fire. The site was purchased by Christchurch Borough council in 1976 and has

now been partly restored.

Other sites recorded on late 19th century maps include an old gravel pit at Steamer Point woodland and the site of the former Beacon Lodge atop the cliff to the east of Highcliffe Castle.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The designed landscape of Highcliffe Castle was originally fitted into a pre-existing landscape of regular rectilinear enclosures. Part of the grounds was converted in to a golf course in the early 20th century. Lymington Road existed in 1796 and may be on the line of Ogibly's London to Poole Road.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 22
Built Character***Building types***

Though Highcliffe Castle could be said to dominate this character area, the dominant building type is 20th century suburban estate detached houses, generally of two storeys, which are typical of their time and with no reference to local character.

Building Materials

Highcliffe Castle is stone, and was built in Gothic style between 1830- 1835 using medieval masonry imported and re-used from France. This includes the oriel window on the south front salvaged from the Grand Manoir des Andelys, Normandy. Also, some portions of the 12th century arcading from Jumieges Abbey are built into the flanks of the entrance porch. Two lodges (179 and 181 Lymington Road) are of a similar architectural style to the castle.

The church of St Mark dates from 1845, is cruciform in plan and built of stone in an early 14th-century style. The War Memorial has a tall, pedimented sandstone shaft with a wreath and a stepped base. The 19th century wooden lychgate is of massive construction, with a tiled roof.

The majority of modern buildings are built in non-local materials, generally in brick with tiled or slate roofs.

Key Buildings

Country House: Highcliffe Castle and lodges

Religious: St Mark's church, lych gate

Civic and Institutional: War Memorial; milestone, Lymington Road

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 22
Archaeology**

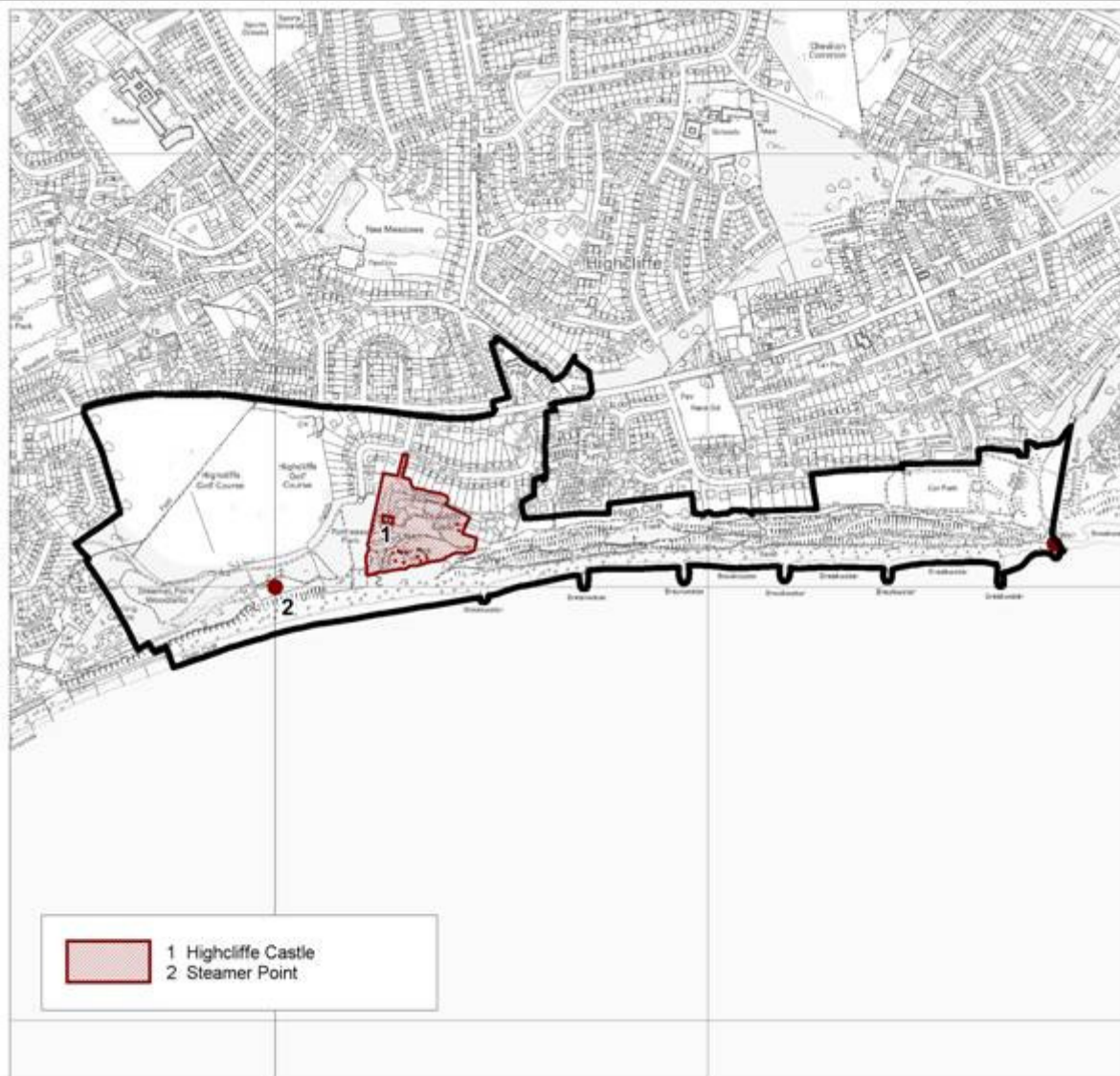


Figure 157: Archaeological features in Historic Urban Character Area 22

Archaeological Investigations

A number of archaeological excavations and surveys were conducted at Highcliffe Castle in 1996-7 during restoration works, revealing elements of the garden such as a parterre and gravel paths which were later restored, and a possible building platform that may have been associated with a summer house (Batt, 1997; Oakey, 1997; Watson & Oakey, 1997).

There have been casual finds of Roman objects along the coastal strip. Eight Lower Palaeolithic handaxes were found in an area of Terrace 9 Gravel geology (Wymer, 1992, 147; Roe, 1968, 89), and a Mesolithic tranchet axe at Hardwell Cliff (Wymer, 1977, 109). Palaeolithic artefacts were recovered from cliffs near Chewton Bunny, exposed as a result of erosion, and reported to

Wessex Archaeology by the finder, Mr D Orman of Avon Valley Archaeological Society.

Archaeological Character

The Highcliffe Castle and coast area has a **high** archaeological potential. As well as the series of prehistoric and roman finds there is a high potential for deposits relating to the house and garden at Highcliffe Castle. The cliffs at Highcliffe also have a high potential for remains relating to WWII defences. The intertidal zone may also retain some archaeological deposits. A fishpond constructed of large stones and located below Steamer Point for example may have some recordable remains.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 22 Designations

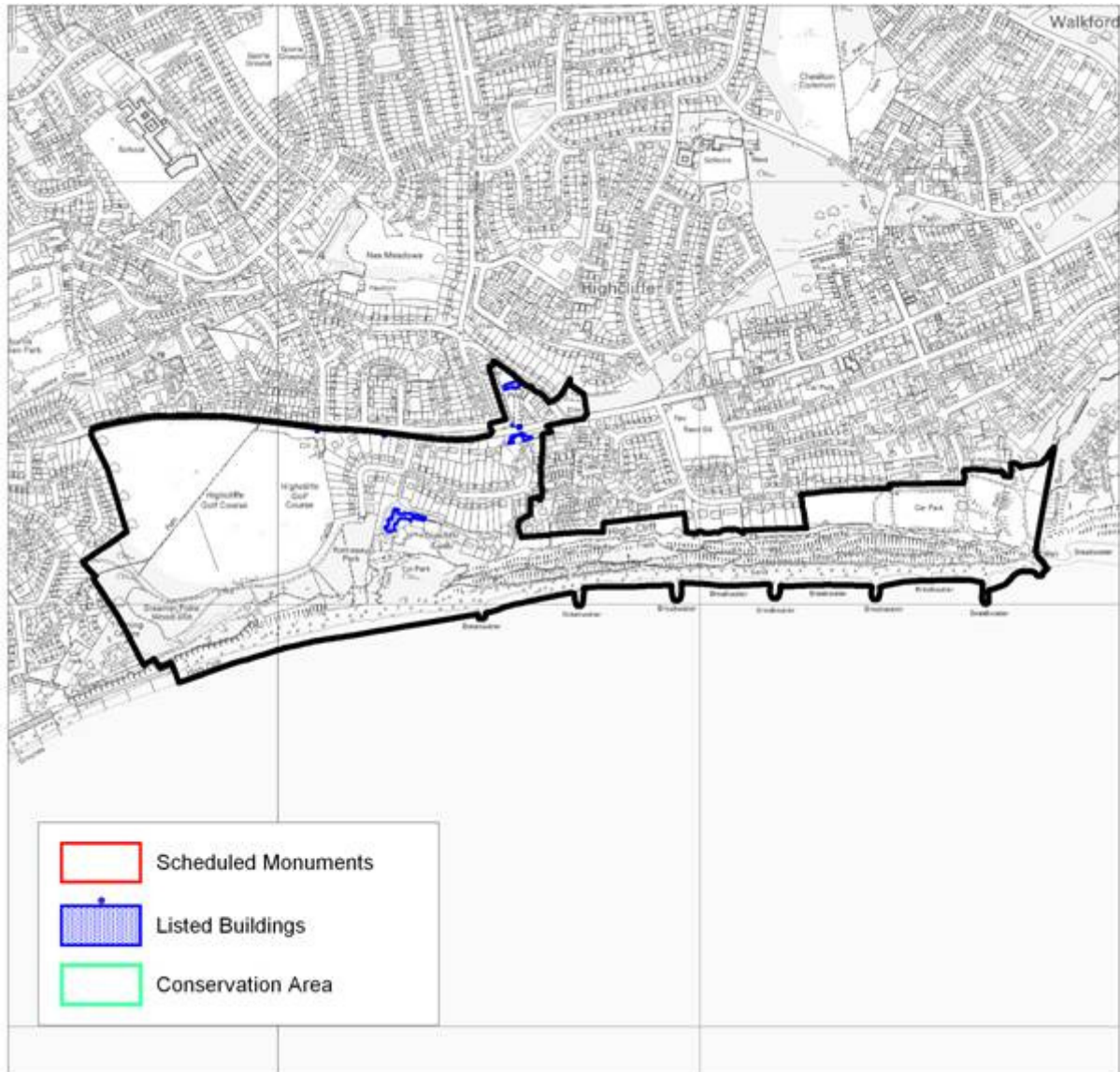


Figure 158: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 22

Listed Buildings

There are eight Listed Building designation in the Character Area. Highcliffe Castle is Grade I, the rest Grade II.

Conservation Areas

There are no Conservation Areas 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 Monuments within the Character Area.

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 22
Evaluation**

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **high**. The character of the house and landscaped gardens, though now without an extensive park, is strongly evident.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. Future development should respect the historic character of the house and gardens, and any surviving elements of the formerly extensive landscaped park and the field systems it replaced.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of the character area is judged to be **high**. There is a potential for deposits relating to the house and garden at

Highcliffe Castle. The cliffs at Christchurch also have a high potential for remains relating to WWII defences. The intertidal zone may also retain some archaeological deposits. A fishpond constructed of large stones and located below Steamer Point for example may have some recordable remains.

Key Characteristics

- 19th century Highcliffe Castle and gardens
- 19th century church
- Recreational space and seafront