

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 2 Quomps and Stour Flood Plain

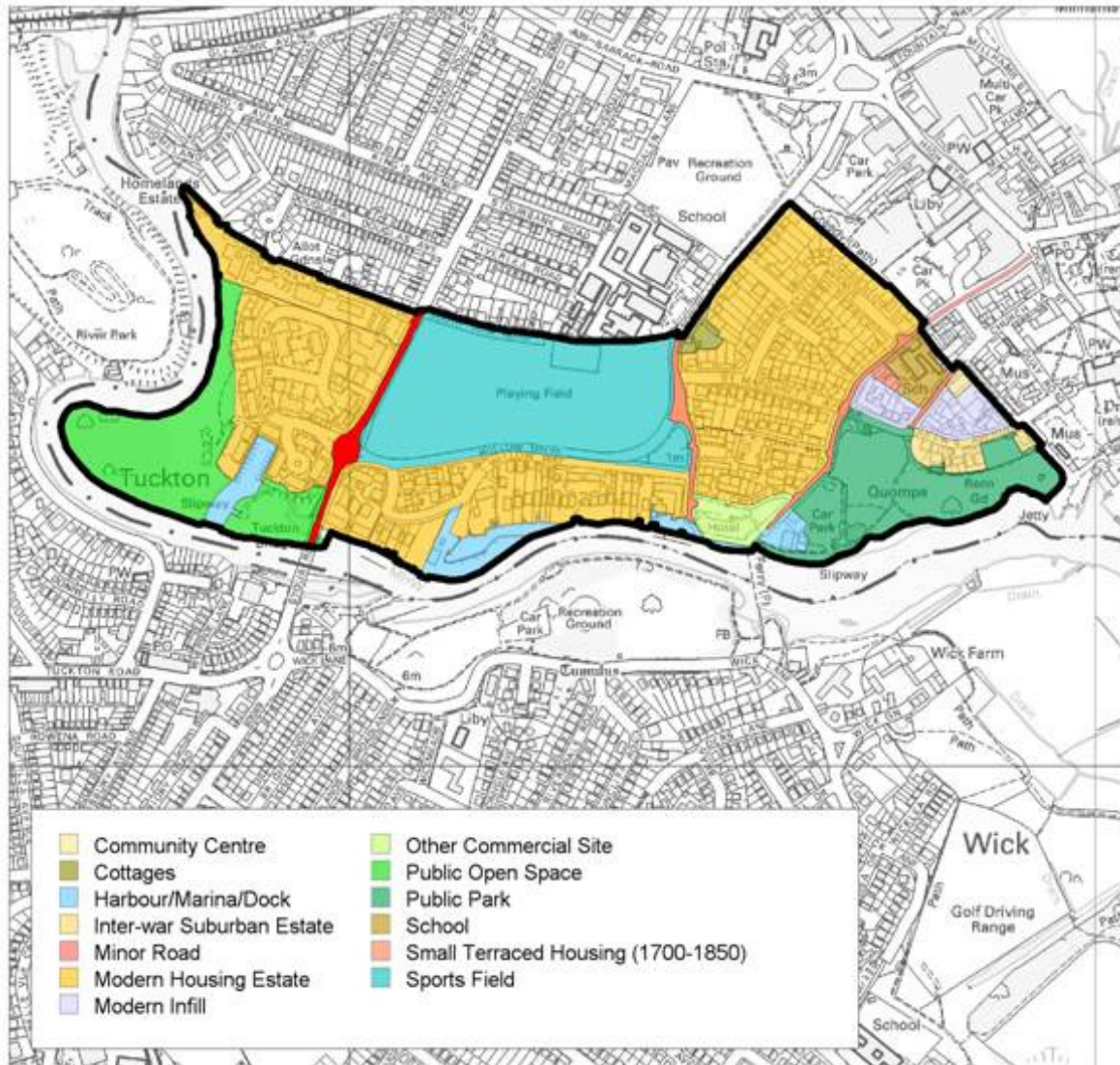


Figure 65: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 66: Quomps



Figure 67: Wick Ferry and Captain's Club Hotel

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 2
Structure of Character Area

Overview

This character area lies immediately to the west of the accepted boundary of the late Saxon burh. Key components of this character area include the low-lying Quomps, the post-war Wickfield housing development and a small part of the historic town centre at Whitehall.

Topography and Geology

This area lies on an almost imperceptible west facing slope leading from the gravel ridge down to the flood plain of the River Stour. Most of the area is low lying and situated close to the River Stour. Historically it has been known as *Marshfield* and *Quomps*, both referring to the wet nature of the land.

Urban Structure

The northern boundary of the study area follows lanes or boundaries in existence by the 18th century. Sopers Lane and the northern part of Wick Lane are also 18th century or earlier in origin. Sopers Lane, Whitehall and Wick Lane comprise the historic routes between the town centre and the river Stour. Wick Lane leads to the Wick Ferry. Quomps was unenclosed common until 1923 when common rights ceased, the ground level was raised and it was landscaped to form a pleasure park (Newman & Tizzard, 2007, 53).

Present Character

Figure 65 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area bounded by Whitehall and Queen's Avenue has formed part of the town centre since the 19th century. A small amount of tourist industry exists in this area in the form of hotels and other accommodation. Elsewhere the character of the area is divided between recreation and relatively modern housing development, such as the 1940's-50's Wickfield housing estate.

Time Depth

No buildings were recorded in the area until the turn of the 20th century when a toll house was constructed on the new Stour Road. However, an alternative circuit for the burh defences has been identified running south of and parallel to Sopers Lane. Further research is necessary, but if this were part of the burh then the previously-accepted circuit to the east would represent Saxo-Norman modification to the town defences.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

A late 18th century map shows the area nearest the town occupied by enclosed paddocks, with one or two houses on Wick Lane. This was followed by the development of Whitehall, with some terraced houses at the western end of Wick Lane. The area between Wick Lane and Whitehall gradually filled with terraced houses in the 19th and early 20th centuries and many of these buildings survive today. Stour Road, with its toll house close to Tuckton Bridge, was constructed in the late 19th century. The construction of Queens Avenue at the northern end of *Quomps* in the early 20th century also heralded the construction of a sewage pumping station and the enclosure of a small part of the common for the construction of houses on the south side of Queens Avenue.

The Pontins holiday camp at Wick ferry was closed in 1995 to be redeveloped as a housing estate and large hotel. The houses in this area are short terraces of brick with slate roofs. The area of Marshfield to the west of Tuckton Bridge became a miniature golf course by 1949 and a few houses were built on the waterfront to the south east of Tuckton Bridge. A mixture of large apartment blocks and short terraces occupy the area to the NE of Tuckton Bridge, constructed from a range of modern materials.

Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 2
Built Character

Building types

There are relatively few historic buildings in this character area. A handful of 18th or early 19th century buildings survive—two adjacent cottages at Sopers Lane and one in Whitehall.

Building Materials

The dominant building materials are red brick for walls and ceramic tile for roofs, sometimes with stone easing courses. Slate is also used as

a roofing material. Rendered or painted brick is relatively common.

Key Buildings

Recreational buildings: Bandstand, drinking fountain and cattle trough, Quomps Recreation Ground.

Cottages: 56-60 Sopers Lane, 3 Whitehall.

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 2
Archaeology**

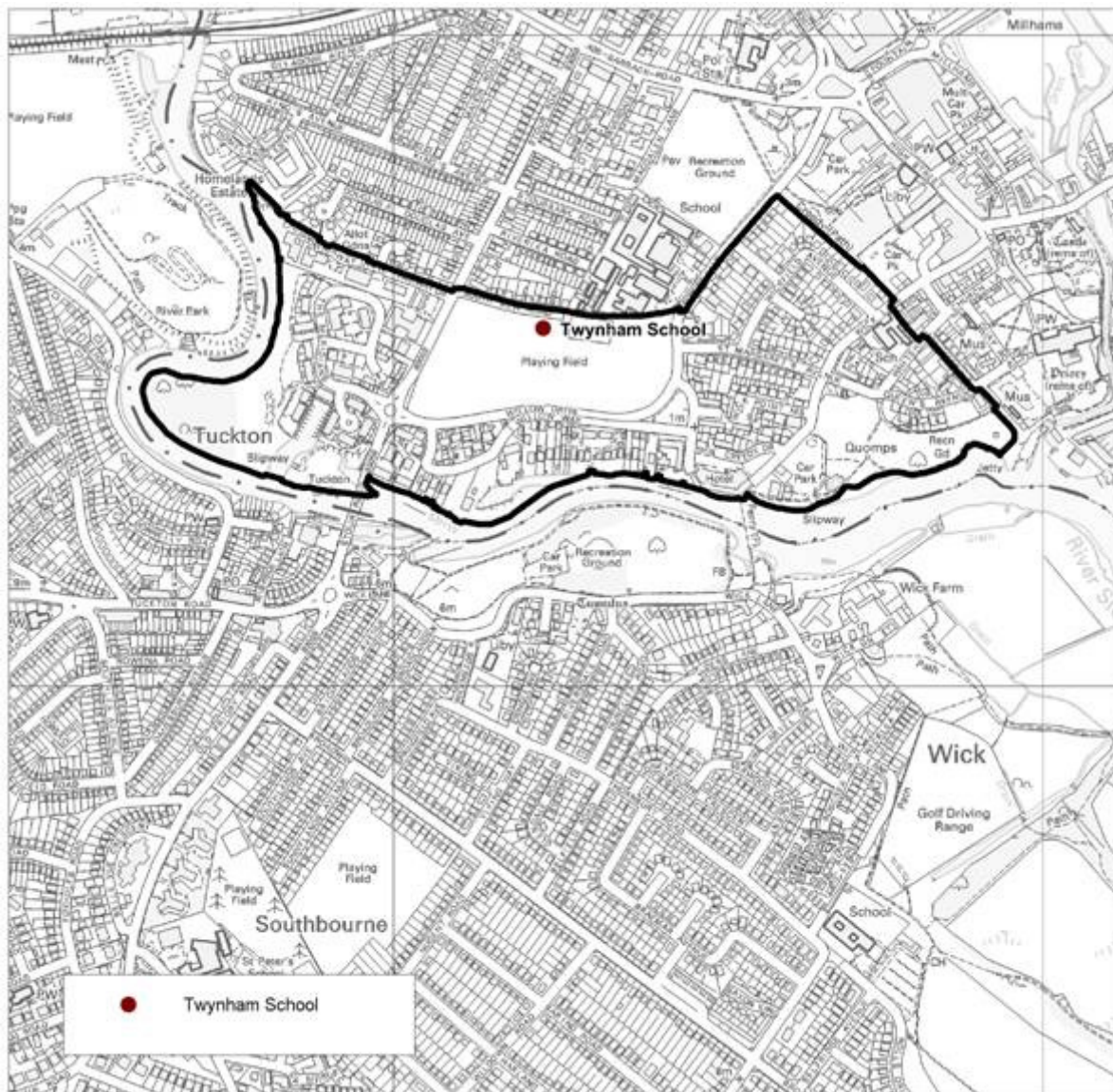


Figure 68: Archaeological features in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Archaeological Investigations

One archaeological investigation has been undertaken in this character area (Figure 68; Appendix 3). A small evaluation at Twynham School playing fields revealed no archaeological features or deposits (Watkins, 1991). Some palaeolithic implements have been discovered in terrace 2 gravels (Wymer, 1992, 140; Calkin & Green, 1949, 36). A large number of Mesolithic flakes and blades were also found in a similar area (Wymer, 1977, 109). Calkin recorded that sherds of Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age urns were found during road building (probably Stour Road) in 1908 (Calkin, Catalogue of the Druiitt Collection, 142).

Archaeological Character

The very limited number of archaeological in-

vestigations in this area constrains the consideration of the archaeological resource.

The alternative circuit postulated for the burh defences extends into the eastern part of this character area; this is a clear subject for further research. Until very recently, the greater part of this character area was outside the town, indicating that there is unlikely to be any significant urban archaeological evidence. Modern housing estate development may have removed historic boundaries. The river valley location may provide a favourable location for prehistoric activity, and a limited number of chance finds from this area throw some light on the nature of this activity.

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 2
Designations**

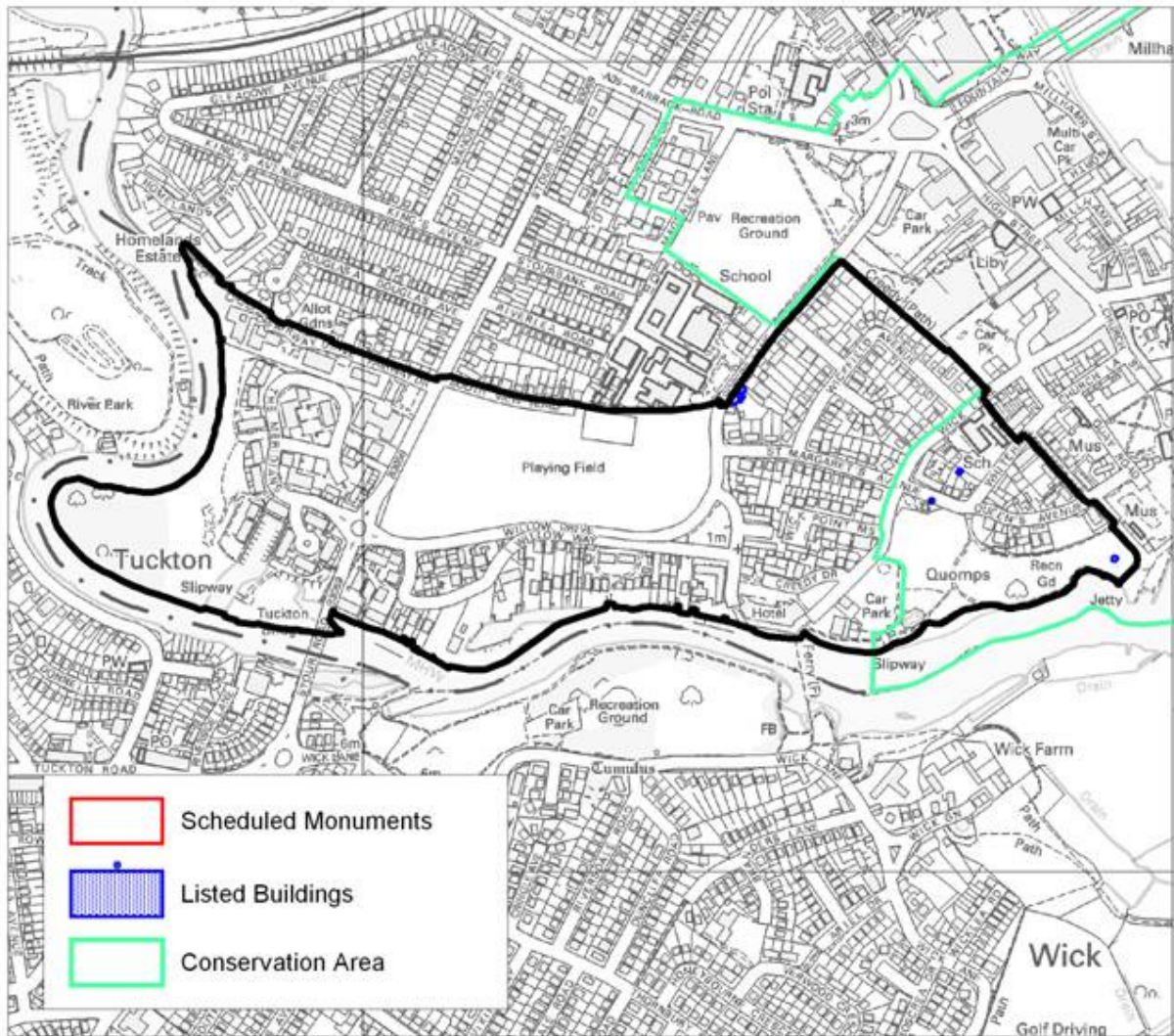


Figure 69: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Listed Buildings

There are 5 Listed Building designations in the Character Area, all Grade II.

Conservation Areas

Part of this Character Area lies within the Christchurch Central Conservation Area (Figure 69).

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 2 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **medium**. A sense of the original character of the area is only really maintained in the *Quomps* area where the connection with the River is obvious. Street names such as Marsh Ditch and Stour Road provide a sense of place but otherwise, at street level, the area feels like one of many housing estates in the region. Access to the river is available to the west of Tuckton Bridge where some limited meadowland remains behind the housing estates.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change. The particularly open character of most of this area could be compromised by large scale or piecemeal development. The area to the east of Whitehall has a higher sensitivity.

Archaeological Potential

Overall, the archaeological potential of this character area is **medium**. In terms of the modern town this area remained unoccupied until the 18th century, but this does not preclude the possibility of some Saxon and medieval

activity associated with the town in this area. In particular the suggested line of the putative Saxon burh defences could potentially reveal significant archaeology. Reported finds of urns hint at the presence of a Late Bronze Age urnfield, and there is a potential for further prehistoric remains preserved beneath a substantial accumulation of alluvium. The presence of an undated rectilinear field system in the *Marshfield* area is also significant. The Wick Ferry area might represent an early river crossing and as such has archaeological potential.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 4, 5-8, 10-14, 16-20, 22-26 (Part 7)

Key Characteristics

- Sub-surface archaeological deposits
- Listed buildings Sopers Lane/ Whitehall
- Wickfield post-war housing estate
- Quomps early 20th century recreation area
- Historic ferry crossing