

## Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 4 Portfield Housing Estate

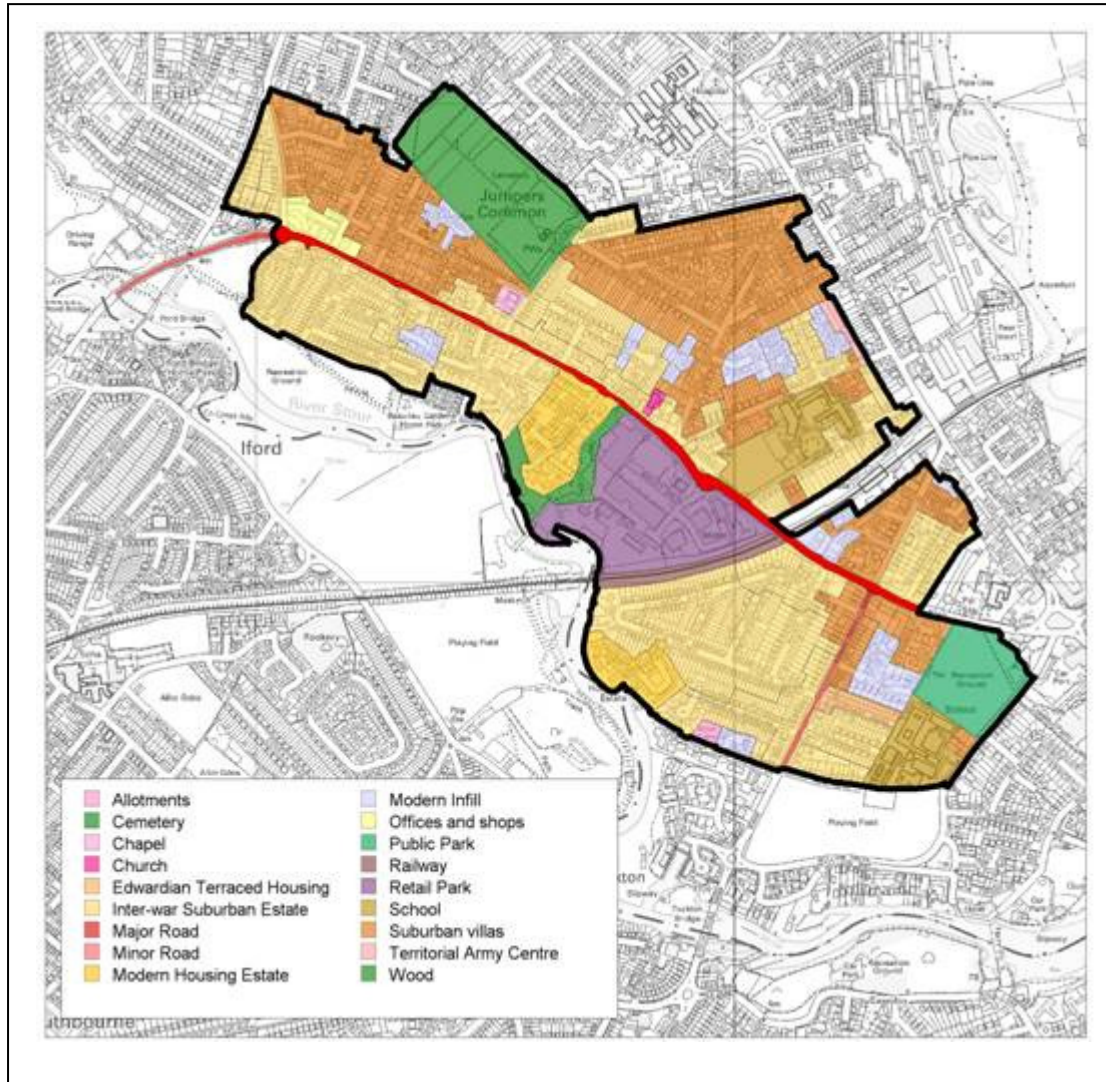


Figure 75: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 4, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 76: Jumpers cemetery lodge



Figure 77: Avenue Road and Avon Road West

## Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 4 Structure of Character Area

### **Overview**

The greater part of this area developed from the Portfield: the main medieval open arable field for the town until 1878 when the Christchurch inclosure award was passed. An area next to the River Stour was the site of historic military activity, the fullest extent of which was reached during WWII.

### **Topography and Geology**

The character area runs from the ridge of gravel running N-S between the rivers Stour and Avon. The ground slopes down towards the river Stour in the west. The geology of the area consists almost entirely of the Bracklesham Beds.

### **Urban Structure**

This character area lies either side of Barrack Road (the modern A35); the major route into the town from the west. The late 19<sup>th</sup>-century estate was effectively divided into two portions by the railway from the outset. A small part of the common field was retained for the use of the townspeople at Jumpers Common. Approximately half of this area was turned over to use as a cemetery, the remainder became part of the northern housing estate.

### **Present Character**

Figure 75 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area retains much of the character of the early days of development because strict guidelines were laid down as to the quality, size and style of the buildings on the estate. The barracks has now been turned over to business units, a motel and a modern housing estate.

### **Time Depth**

The barracks were established in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in response to a perceived invasion threat during the Napoleonic wars. They also served to discourage smuggling. The re-named Barrack Road represents an older route from Bargates to the river crossing at Iford. The development of the *Portfield* housing estate progressed in a piecemeal fashion within plots first surveyed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first houses were built in 1889 (Donachie, 2005, 15). At the height of WWII the entire barracks area was occupied by barracks and military research establishments. The Bailey Bridge was developed and tested here at that time.

### **Settlement Pattern and Streetscape**

The new planned estate of 'Avon Park' consisted of 68 plots measuring approximately

100ft x 200ft and several new roads were laid out (Avenue Road, Avon Road West, Avon Road East, Grove Road West and Grove Road East). Trees were planted on the plots, and mature trees are a feature of this area. Recently however, there has been a tendency for the long rectangular back gardens associated with these plots to become infilled with modern housing.

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**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 4**  
**Built Character*****Building types***

The earliest houses in the Avon Park estate were generally large villas. These include St Albans; an imposing Gothic building on Avenue Road (now a nursing home); and Avon Cottage at no. 1 Avon Road West, built by 1895. By 1901 there were 25 houses in the Avon Park estate. There was a period of rapid growth between 1901 and 1909, with another burst of development in the early 1920s following the new Housing Act of 1922. This boom was only partly curtailed by the depression in the late 1920s, with construction continuing into the late 1930s. Electricity did not arrive until 1939 and a third burst in construction during the 1960s saw the plots finally fully developed (Donachie, 2005, 14-33).

The southern part of the housing estate tended to comprise smaller terraced housing, notably around the new Christchurch railway station and Stourbank Road. The homelands housing estate has been built on the site of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Portfield House, also known as Homelands.

***Building Materials***

The historic buildings in this character area are generally brick with slate roofs.

***Key Buildings***

Cemetery: walls, lodge and chapels.

Suburban villas: St Albans; Avon Cottage, Avon Road West

Military: Barracks

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 4**  
**Archaeology**

***Archaeological Investigations***

There have been no formal archaeological investigations in this character area but some chance finds and observations have been recorded (Appendix 3).

These include: Palaeolithic hand axes from terrace 4 gravels in the Portfield area (Roe, 1968, 93-4; Wymer, 1992, 138-9; Calkin & Green, 1949, 36); a Palaeolithic implement from Jumpers Common (Council for British Archaeology, 1969, 21); a Neolithic axe from The Grove (Dai Watkins, Poole Museum Service, Pers. comm. Feb 91); Roman pottery from Avenue Road (Calkin Collection, British Museum); two possible bowl barrows on Barrack Road, (Grinsell, 1940, 363); two Bronze Age cremation urns

from Homelands House (Calkin, Catalogue of the Druit Collection, 156), and more Bronze Age pottery from this area (Calkin Collection, British Museum).

***Archaeological Character***

The lack of any formal investigation constrains the consideration of the archaeological resource. There is evidence of some prehistoric activity in this area, but its character is unclear. The dominant feature is the former barrack site and research establishment

**Christchurch Historic Urban Character Area 4  
Designations**

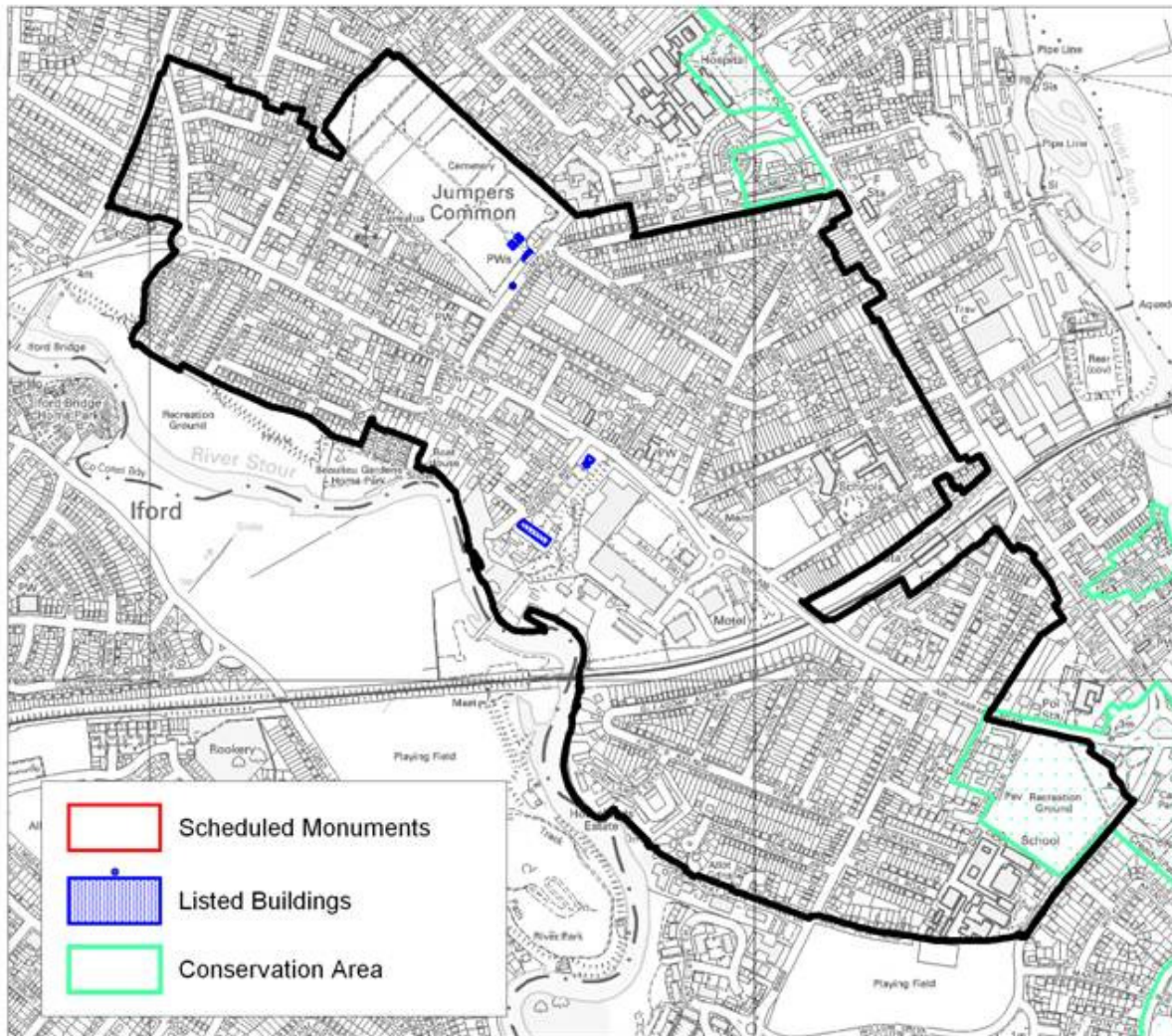


Figure 78: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 4

**Listed Buildings**

There are two Listed Building designations in the Character Area: the grade II listed Jumpers cemetery mortuary chapels, cemetery lodge (designed by Benjamin Ferrey) and cemetery boundary wall, all built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Conservation Areas**

A small part of the Character Area lies within the Christchurch Central Conservation Area

(figure 78).

**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 4  
Evaluation**

***Strength of Historic Character***

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. The distinctiveness of the historic character of *Portfield* lies in its coherence as a housing estate surveyed as a whole and with a single vision from a pre-existing open field. There are perhaps few outstanding individual buildings, but this does not detract from the importance and character of the estate.

***Sensitivity to Large Scale Development***

The area has a **high** sensitivity to large scale development. The distinct character of the Portfield Estate is particularly susceptible to loss through piecemeal division and development of gardens.

***Archaeological Potential***

The general background archaeological potential for Palaeolithic implements recovered from gravels has been demonstrated in the Portfield area. It has also been demonstrated that the southern estate has potential for a possible Late Bronze Age urnfield. The former barracks site is of some military archaeological interest. The overall archaeological potential for the area is considered to be **medium**.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1-4, 8-9, 13 (Part 7).

**Key Characteristics**

- Avon Park 19<sup>th</sup> century planned suburb
- Sub-surface archaeological deposits
- Jumpers cemetery and listed buildings
- Site of 18<sup>th</sup> century barracks
- WWII defences and research establishment
- Site of Bronze Age barrow