

## Corfe Castle Historic Urban Character Area 2 West Street

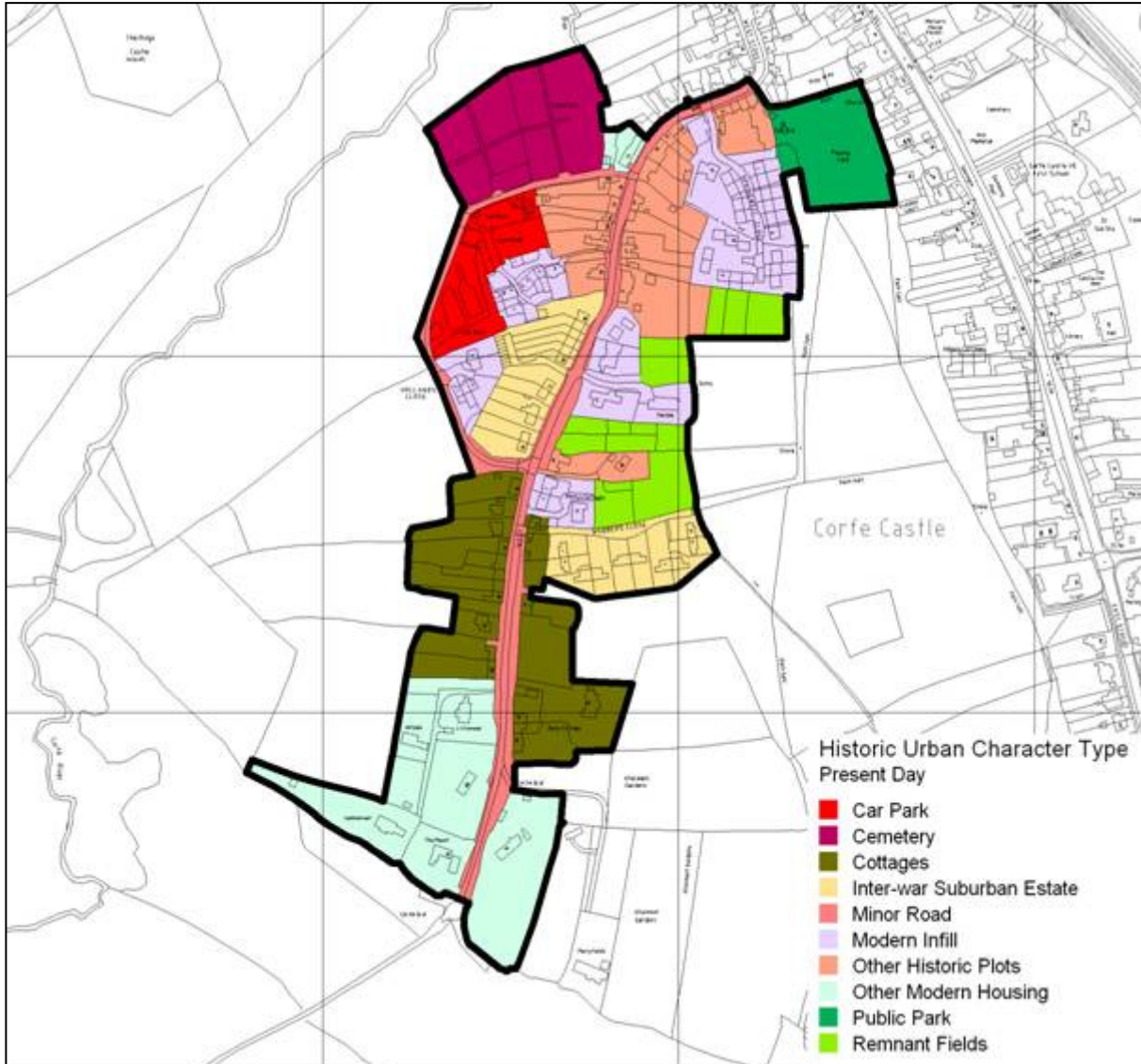


Figure 47: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 48: View of West Street looking east .



Figure 49: View of West Street looking south .

## Corfe Castle Historic Urban Character Area 2 Structure of Character Area

### Overview

This area represents an area of medieval and later expansion. The settlement is linear in form, stretching along the length of southern part of West Street beyond the medieval core.

### Topography and Geology

This area is on the Wealden Clay which forms the gently undulating floor of the Purbeck vale. The topography of the area generally slopes gently up towards the south and Corfe Common, with a slightly steeper rise at the southern end of West Street.

### Urban Structure

The urban structure of the area is characterised by linear development along the spinal road of West Street. Modern development tends to be behind the street frontage, accessed by short culs-de-sac leading off West Street.

### Present Character

Figure 47 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area essentially comprises the minor road of West Street fronted by historic plots at the northern end and a variety of cottages, inter-war suburban housing and other modern housing at the southern end. Small blocks of modern infill are fitted in on or behind the street frontage. There is a new cemetery extension and car park (Figure 50) in the north west part of the area. A public park and remnant fields lie on the edge of the developed area to the east, adjacent to Middle Hawes.

### Time Depth

West Street was the main medieval thoroughfare through Corfe Castle. Potentially medieval buildings survive at 35-7 West Street and at Furzeman's Cottage on West Street. The majority of West Street follows the approximate N-S alignments that characterize rural areas of south east Purbeck, and takes the form of a

slightly sunken hollow way at the southern end (Figure 51). A high proportion of the surviving historic buildings date from the 17th and 18th centuries and these are interspersed with inter-war suburban housing. The cemetery is early 20<sup>th</sup> century in origin and the car park dates to the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Most of the modern infill is of late 20<sup>th</sup> century date. The detached houses at the southern end of the area are post-war in date.

### Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

This settlement is compact and urban in nature at the northern end of the street, closest to the town centre, with the houses set directly on the street frontage. This soon gives way to a more open semi-rural settlement pattern comprising detached cottages and unenclosed verges interspersed with mid 20<sup>th</sup> century semi-detached and short terraced housing. These tend to be set back from the road frontage, behind stone garden walls. The southern end of West Street has high unenclosed grass verges. Modern development is of a different settlement form, located around short culs-de-sac behind the West Street frontage, at odds to the predominant character of this area.

The semi-rural aspect of the southern part of this area is strengthened by the adjacent agricultural landscape to the west and east of the area, both part of the former medieval open fields of the town.



Figure 50: View of Tom's Mead car park looking north-east.



Figure 51: View south along the southern end of West Street showing hollow way.



## Corfe Castle Historic Urban Character Area 2

### Built Character

#### **Building types**

At the northern end of West Street individual vernacular stone houses abut and form a relatively uninterrupted development along the street front. The vast majority of buildings at this end of the street are stone cottages dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, a significant minority originated as late medieval or late 16<sup>th</sup>-early 17<sup>th</sup> century hall houses, including 21-3 West Street, 35-37 West Street and Furzeman's, 51 West Street (Figure 53).

The southern end of West Street is characterised by a more open settlement plan with detached and attached cottages dating from the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, generally 1.5-2 storeys high set back from the road edge.

The inter-war buildings include both terraced and semi-detached houses typical of the period (Figure 54). The modern houses include some in a new-vernacular style (Figure 55).

#### **Building Materials**

The majority of vernacular buildings have been built of local Purbeck Limestone rubble, with stone slate roofs. A large number of houses have Wealden brick chimney stacks, although a few retain stone stacks. A small number have thatched roofs (35-7 and 47-9 West Street for example) and a small number have imported slate roofs (48 and 48A West Street). At the southern end of West Street, the short terrace of cottages at numbers 92-8 has imported slate roofs and number 67 is detached cottage of cross passage plan with a thatched roof. The central part of West Street has a group of mid 20<sup>th</sup> century terraced and semi-detached houses with rendered walls and hipped slate or tiled roofs. Modern buildings behind the West street frontage have often been built with local stone facades in order to blend in with their surroundings (Figure 55).

#### **Key Buildings**

*15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century long or cross passage houses:* Furzeman's and numbers 21-3, 35-7 and 67 West Street.

*17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century vernacular cottages:* numbers 47-9, 73, 87-9, 90 and 106 West Street.

*Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century suburban houses:* numbers 58-68 and 70-80 (even) West Street.



Figure 52: Early 18th century cottages, 50 West Street.



Figure 53: Furzeman's, 51 West Street, a former late medieval open hall house.



Figure 54: 58-68 West Street, an inter-war council house terrace.



Figure 55: View of Hollands Close looking east.

## Corfe Castle Historic Urban Character Area 2 Archaeology

### **Archaeological Investigations**

Four archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Appendix 3, Nos. 17-20; Figure 56). The archaeological evaluation and subsequent excavation of land behind 58 West Street at Tom's Mead, revealed evidence for medieval activity in the form of ditches, pits and post holes. The evaluation of an extension to Corfe Castle cemetery and a watching brief during the extension of 52 West Street did not reveal any archaeology.

### **Archaeological Character**

The discovery of Mesolithic flint scatters with in a number of hollows during the excavations at Tom's Mead indicate there was activity in the Corfe Castle area at least as far back as 8000 years ago. The extent of this activity can only be guessed at but it is possible that further flint scatters may be present in the area.

It is likely that evidence for activity from the medieval period onwards is most common in this area. The presence of medieval field boundary ditches, post holes and pits give some indication of the likely to be found not only close to West Street but further behind the frontage. The plots fronting West Street may contain evidence for outbuildings, rubbish pits and other evidence for craft and other activity associated with the periphery of the medieval and post-medieval town, which could help inform on the economy and industry of the town during these periods. In this context, the discovery of significant quantities of Purbeck Marble chippings, fragments of mouldings, and other marble debris near the southern end of West Street reported in Hutchins (1861, 472) and also encountered during the laying of a water main along West Street in 1924 (Drury 1948). This has been taken as evidence for the presence of

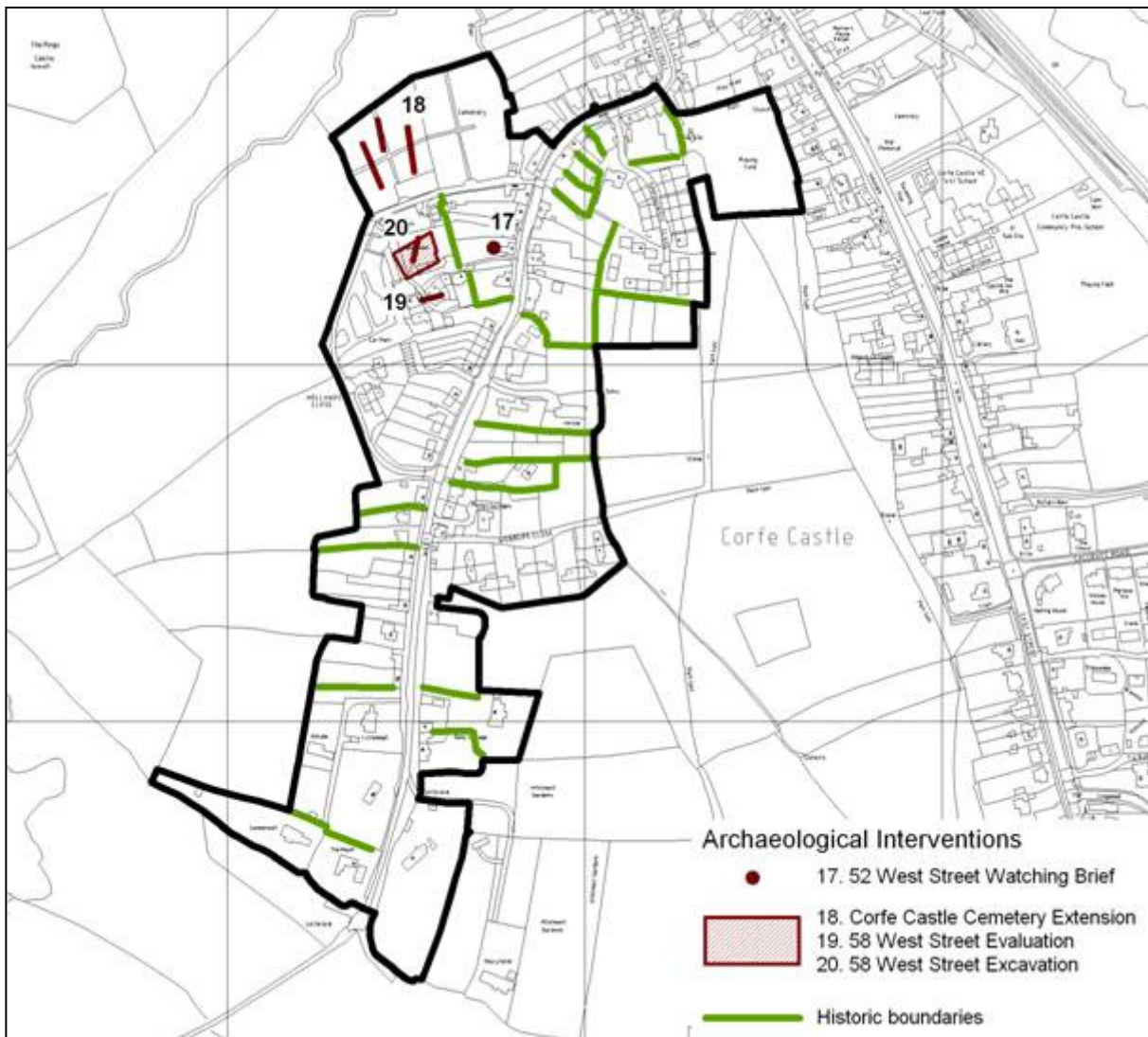


Figure 56: Archaeological investigations and features in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

marblers 'bankers' or workshops along West Street (Drury 1948, 75), but the evidence is far from unequivocal, particularly as more recent evidence has suggested that the marble was worked and finished at the quarry sites. The presence of marblers' 'bankers' in Corfe Castle remains unproven. It has been suggested that the marble chippings may have been brought

from the quarries and used as road metalling (Blair 1991, 43).

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century plot boundaries surviving in the modern townscape have been marked on Figure 52. Given the nature of medieval activity on West Street it is possible that at least some of these boundaries originated during the medieval period.

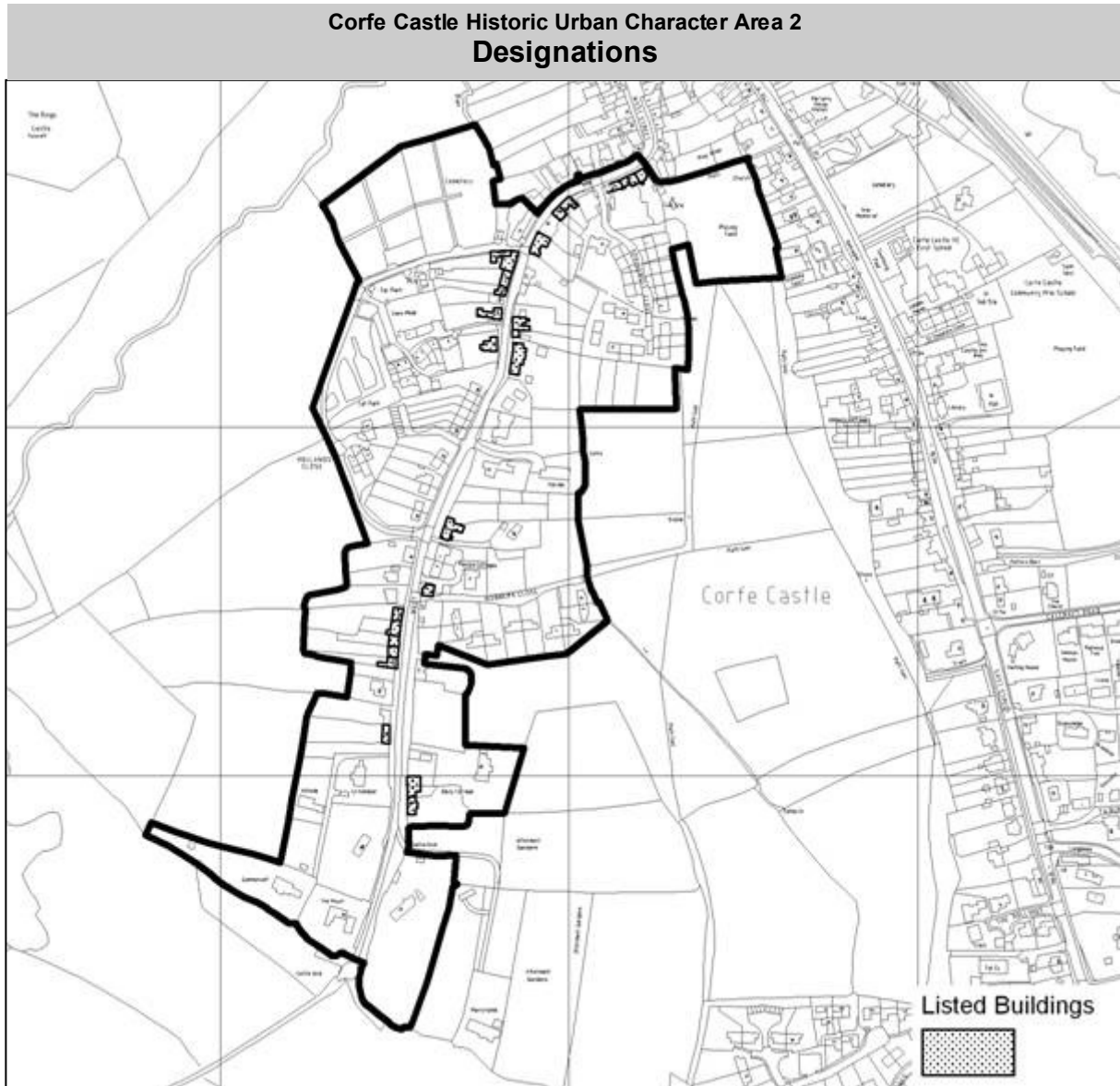


Figure 57: Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

**Listed Buildings**

There are 19 Listed Building designations in the Character Area, all Grade II (Figure 57), apart from the Grade II\* Furzeman's Cottage on West Street.

**Conservation Areas**

Almost the entire Character Area lies within the Corfe Castle Conservation Area. The only part to lie outside is the western half of the garden of

Commonwell at the south end of West Street (Figure 36).

**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.

## Corfe Castle Historic Urban Character Area 2 Evaluation

### **Strength of Historic Character**

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. There is a significant contribution from the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century historic buildings fronting on to West Street. West Street itself is the original thoroughfare through the town. Furthermore, the alignment of the street suggests that it may represent the route of a pre-urban track running north from Kingston. Some of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century additions to the street frontage are of a scale and within plots that are in keeping with the general character of the street. The modern housing developments, although set behind the street frontage and with culs-de-sac access arrangements contrary to the simple ribbon form of the historic development, are on a small scale and some with sympathetic use of local materials, which helps maintain the overall character of the area.

### **Sensitivity to Large Scale Development**

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. Consistency of scale is a feature of this character area and any large scale development would detract from the character of the area. The historic character is derived from a street frontage of cottages dating from various periods but united in scale, use of vernacular style and local building materials.

### **Archaeological Potential**

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. There has been demonstrable remains of Mesolithic and medieval archaeology found here. The early records of large quantities of marble-working waste being found in West Street suggest that this area has considerable potential to progress our knowledge of the medieval economy of the town, in particular, to inform us about the Purbeck marble trade in the town. There is also the potential for further evidence in the form of artefacts relating to specific industries or commercial activities contained within pits, gullies, structures and boundaries within the back plots of properties fronting on to West Street.

Furthermore, this report has suggested that the planned town of Corfe Castle was imposed upon an earlier arrangement of rectilinear fields and roads. One of these earlier roads is suggested to be fossilised in the line of the southern and central section of West Street.

There is also potential for recovering further archaeological information concerning prehistoric, particularly Mesolithic, activity from within the character area.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 4, 9 and 12-20 (Part 7).

### **Key Characteristics**

- Historic ribbon development along West Street with transition from urban to semi-rural character southwards along the street.
- Open verges raised above a slightly sunken hollow way at south end of West Street.
- A large number of 16th-18th century vernacular buildings.
- Potential pre-urban route.
- Intact archaeological deposits from the Mesolithic to the medieval period.
- Potential medieval and post-medieval Purbeck marble industry remains.