

# Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 1

## The Town Centre

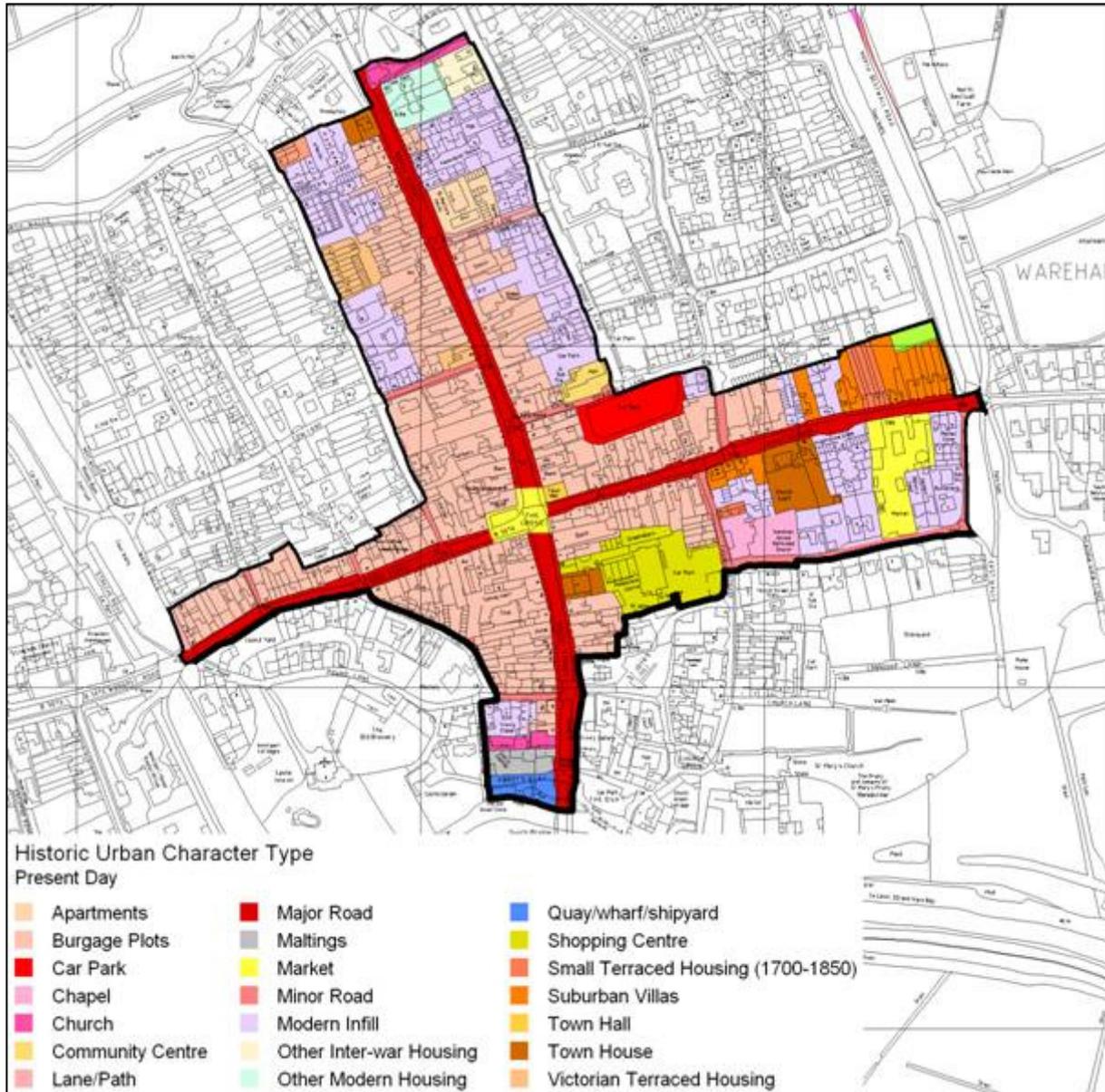


Figure 50: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 51: South Street viewed from South Bridge.



Figure 52: View along West Street.

## Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 1 Structure of Character Area

### Overview

This is the area of the main north-south and east-west streets — the historic and commercial centre of Wareham. It is defined largely by the line of the streets and associated back lanes and also the remnants of the historic properties running back from the street frontages.

### Topography and Geology

This area lies on the gravel ridge running E-W between the rivers Frome and Piddle. The ground rises to the north and west. The north end of North Street rises to 9m above OD and the west end of West Street to 11m. The geology is mapped as Eocene gravels of the Lower Bagshot Beds.

### Urban Structure

The four main streets form a regular cruciform layout with parallel back lanes behind. The width of North and South Streets increases towards The Cross, the former market place. The streets are lined with long narrow former burgage plots, which still form a relatively regular layout. To the rear of the plots, particularly in North Street, the plots have been truncated and the rear plots infilled with modern development, often amalgamating a number of historic plots. To the south of East Street, the properties are much less regular.

### Present Character

Figure 50 shows the present day historic urban character types. The main streets are lined with burgage plots, except for the east end of East Street, where there is a mixture of modern infill, Suburban Villas, Small Terraced Housing and a Market. Modern Infill is dominant around the edges of this character area and there are two large open areas of Car Park and Shopping Centre. There are churches at the northern and southern ends of this area. Other minor character types include Town House, Community Centre, Apartments, Victorian



Figure 53: 14 North Street.

Terraced Housing, Maltings, and Town Hall.

### Time Depth

The main street layout is thought to be part of the original late 9th century Saxon burh. It is possible that North and South Streets have an earlier, Roman, origin. The other minor roads and lanes may also be of a similar date, though Dollins Lane appears to be medieval in origin. The burgage plots may also date from the late 9th century, though evidence for their date is lacking. St Martin's Church is 11th century in date and Holy Trinity Church may also have originated in the same period, but the present building is 14th century in origin. Most of the buildings along the street frontages are late 18th century in date. The Manor House and the United Reformed Church are also 18th century. The houses and villas at the east end of East Street are late 19th century. Cottees Market is inter-war and most of the modern infill and apartments date to the post-war and modern periods. The Rempstone Centre was built in the 1970s.

### Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern comprises high density housing on long narrow plots along both sides of the main streets, resulting in a tight urban grain. There are very few gaps along the frontages and the buildings are generally built directly on the frontage at the rear of the pavements. This pattern breaks down towards the north end of North Street and the east end of East Street, where there is a slightly more open settlement pattern and a number of buildings are set back from the street frontage. North and South Streets widen towards The Cross and the buildings generally increase in height towards this focal point of the area.

There are relatively few open spaces and green spaces are restricted primarily to St Martin's Church and the garden of East End House on East Street.



Figure 54: The Kings Arms, 41 North Street.

## Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 1 Built Character

### **Building types**

The dominant building type in this character area is the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian town house, of two and three storeys, a result of re-building after the 1762 fire. Many of these houses have been converted into shops, but there are a number of contemporary shopfronts surviving. Further away from the centre, the scale of the houses is smaller and includes late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century attached cottages.

There is also a range of earlier historic buildings which survived the fire. These include some 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century vernacular houses along the central part of North Street (Figure 53) and the King's Arms (Figure 54). The Manor House, a large early 18<sup>th</sup> century town house with an elegant front of three storeys with moulded detail, also predates the great fire (Figure 55).

A number of late 19<sup>th</sup> century houses are found in this area, particularly along the east end of East Street, where there are some semi-detached and terraced two storey suburban villas.

Several distinctive commercial buildings are found in the centre, including Lloyd's Bank with its fine balustraded parapet and the Black Bear Hotel, with its prominent porch and bear statue (Figure 56).

There are a number of churches and chapels including the church of St Martin, with its 11<sup>th</sup> century nave and chancel and distinctive 16<sup>th</sup> century south tower, the 14<sup>th</sup> century church of the Holy Trinity and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Unitarian Chapel. Prominent institutional buildings include the late 19<sup>th</sup> century neo-gothic town hall, the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Streche's almshouse and the Oddfellows Hall (now the Rex Cinema).

Modern buildings include some large-scale development, principally the Rempstone commercial centre and the St Martin's House apartments. The majority of modern buildings are small residential houses with no local character.



Figure 55: The Manor House, South Street.

### **Building Materials**

The dominant building materials are red brick for walls and ceramic tile for roofs, sometimes with stone easing courses. Slate is also a common roofing material. Stone rubble is used as walling material on earlier buildings that survived the 1762 fire. Purbeck stone ashlar is used on the Manor House west front. Several houses have been stuccoed. Thatched roofs are rare, having being prohibited in new buildings after 1762. Where they exist along North Street in particular, they marked the limits reached by the fire.

### **Key Buildings**

*Ecclesiastical:* St Martin's Church, Holy Trinity Church, Wareham United Reformed Church, Former Unitarian Chapel (South Street).

*Public & Institutional Buildings:* Town Hall, Streche's Almshouse, Oddfellows Hall (Rex Cinema).

*Commercial and Industrial Buildings:* Kings Arms Public House, Red Lion Hotel, Black Bear Hotel, Lloyds Bank (South Street), 12 West Street, 12 South Street, Former Maltings (nos. 1 and 2 Abbots Quay).

*Vernacular Buildings:* 14 & 14a North Street, Anglebury House (15 & 17 North Street), 16 North Street.

*Town Houses and Villas:* The Manor House, St Michael's House (22 West Street).



Figure 56: The Black Bear Inn, South Street.

### Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 1 Archaeology

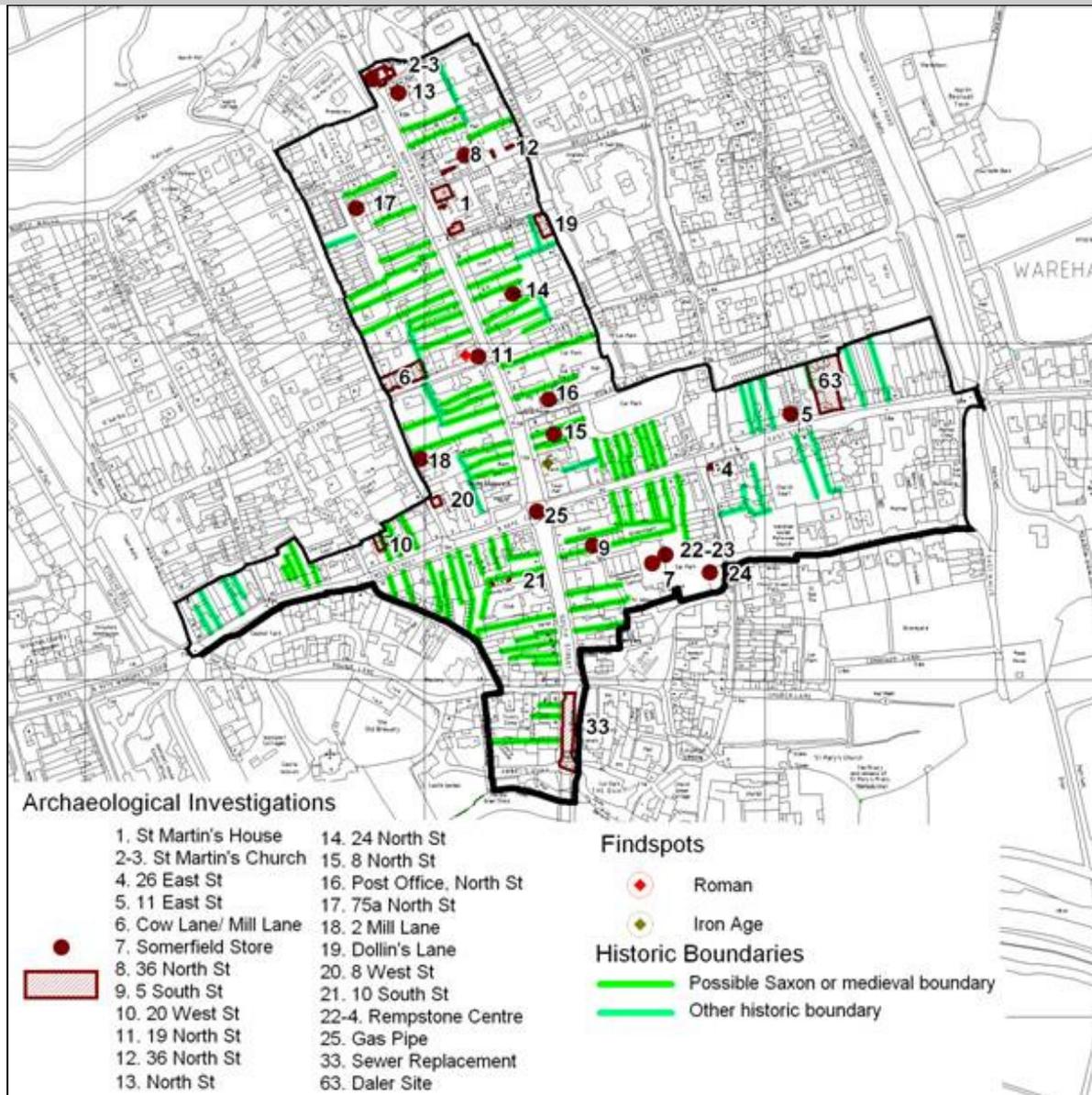


Figure 57: Archaeological Investigations, features and findspots in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

#### Archaeological Investigations

Twenty four archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Appendix 3, Nos. 1-24; Figure 57). The majority have been small-scale evaluations and watching briefs, which produced limited results.

Relatively few investigations that have found any Saxon or early medieval evidence. The St Martin's House excavation (1) revealed evidence for late Saxon occupation and timber structures fronting on to North Street. Otherwise, Saxon evidence is limited to investigations at St Martin's Church (2-3).

Evidence for medieval occupation is more widespread, though the best evidence for

medieval timber buildings and associated settlement and possible industrial activity also comes from the St Martin's House site (1). On East Street, some evidence for 12<sup>th</sup> century occupation has been found (4-5). Some 'backland' medieval activity in the form of pits and ditches has been revealed behind North Street on the corner of Cow Lane and Mill Lane (6) and behind South Street in the area of the Rempstone Centre (7). Similar activity has been identified behind West Street (10). On these sites, and on many of the other sites in this area, a thick layer of dark soil containing medieval pottery has been found, probably the result of intensive gardening activity.

There has been little significant post-medieval

archaeology recorded in this area other than the discovery of a small 18<sup>th</sup> century tobacco pipe kiln near St Martin's Church (13).

### **Archaeological Character**

The archaeological character of the town is typically represented by a deep deposit of dark humic soil containing medieval (and post-medieval) pottery that lies directly on top of the natural deposits and seals some evidence of medieval activity. This soil is probably the result of gardening and cultivation of the area from the medieval period onwards.

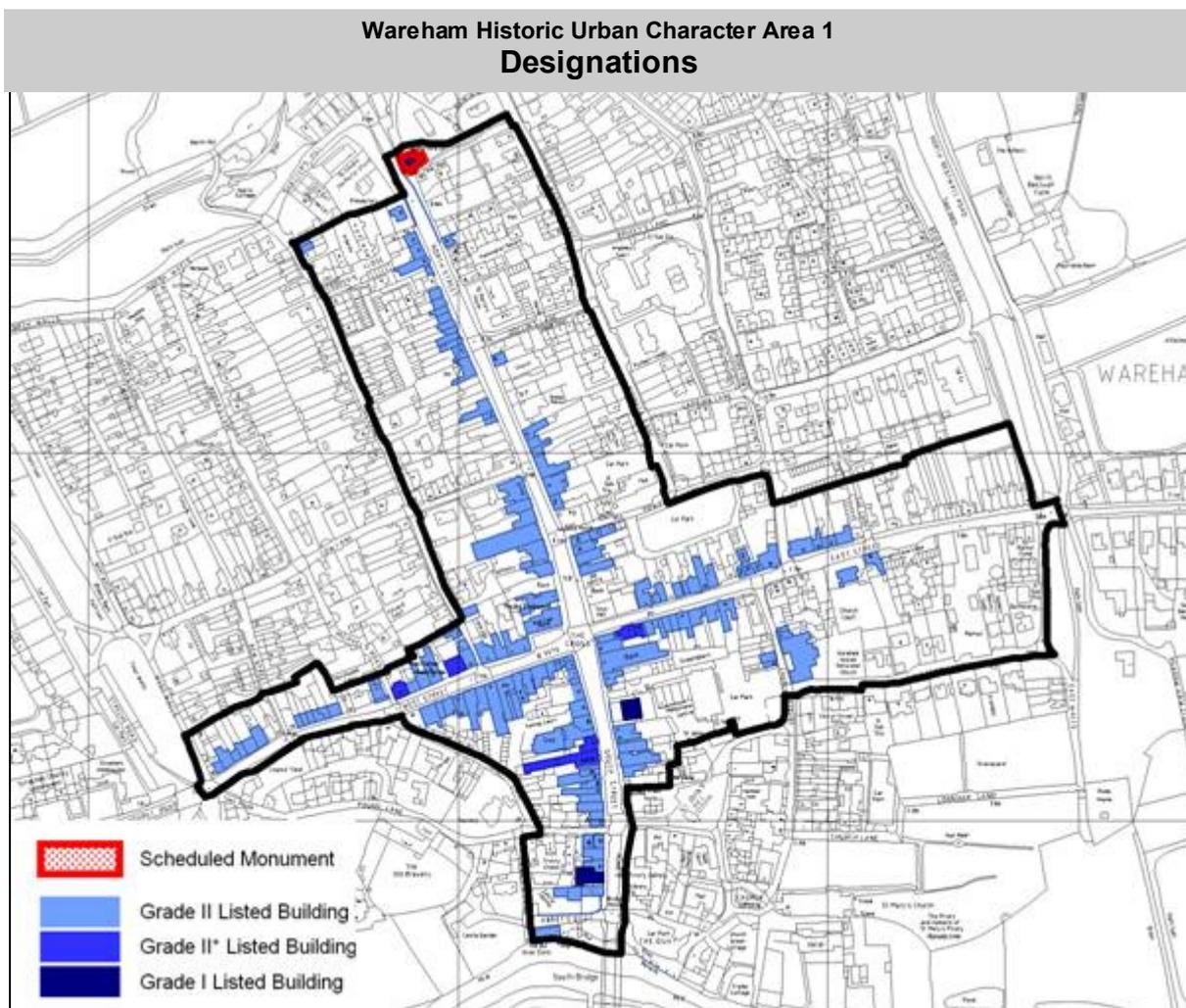
Iron Age and Roman evidence comprises a relatively sparse scatter of residual pottery, which does not suggest significant occupation.

Evidence for Saxon buildings and economic activity in the area is surprisingly scarce. This may be a reflection of the small scale nature of much of the archaeological investigation. The only substantial area excavation within the

character area; St Martin's House, has produced the best evidence for Saxon post-built structures. Significant archaeological evidence for the medieval economy and industry are lacking also, though a small number of pits and ditches have been found in the rear of some properties and similar features can be expected to be found elsewhere in this area.

The post-medieval period is characterised by remains of buildings dating from both before and after the great fire, as well as pits, wells and other structures.

Figure 59 depicts possible burgage plot boundaries visible on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century maps, some of which potentially originally date from the Saxon or medieval period. There are also some plot boundaries around the fringes of the town centre, in existence by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which are probably late medieval or post-medieval in origin.



### **Listed Buildings**

There are 112 Listed Building designations in the Character Area, three of which are Grade I (The Churches of St Martin and Holy Trinity and the Manor House) and five are Grade II\* (Black Bear Inn, St Michael's House, Streche's Almshouse, East Street, 12 West Street and 12 South Street). The remainder are Grade II.

### **Conservation Areas**

The whole of this Character Area lies within the

Wareham Conservation Area (Figure 49).

### **Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**

There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the Character Area.

### **Scheduled Monuments**

St Martin's Church is a Scheduled Monument (Dorset 62).

## **Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 1 Evaluation**

### **Strength of Historic Character**

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. It has good survival of the principal street layout of the Saxon burh and associated historic plots potentially of Saxon or medieval date. There is a strong contribution from the large number of historic buildings, primarily of late 18<sup>th</sup> century date. The widespread use of local brick and tile gives a pleasing coherence to the built character. It also includes a nationally-significant building, the 11<sup>th</sup> century St Martin's Church. .

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

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change, particularly in the area closer to The Cross. The area has a large number of good quality Georgian houses in a relatively unbroken street frontage fitted within a regular network of narrow burgage plots. Large-scale development that disrupted these plots and the streetscape would have a major impact to the coherence and rhythm of the street frontage and reduce the legibility of the historic (Saxon or medieval?) property boundary layout.

### **Archaeological Potential**

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. It forms the historic core and commercial centre of the Saxon and later town and has potential to reveal details of the development and form of the Saxon, medieval and later town centre, the historic of its property divisions, and the economy and diet of the inhabitants.

Many of the late medieval buildings were destroyed in the fire of 1762, but some late medieval buildings and outbuildings survived and have been modified in the post-medieval period, remaining in use today. Therefore, there is some potential for detailed information on the survival of earlier structures hidden within later buildings, which could contribute to the understanding of the development of houses in Wareham.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 4, 8-10, 12-14, 17-20 and 22-26 (Part 7).

### **Key Characteristics**

- Cruciform shape of main streets, part of the grid layout within the Saxon town defences
- Significant remnants of historic burgage plots
- Area of Saxon settlement within the Alfredian burh
- Late Saxon church of St Martin
- Historic market place
- Historic and modern commercial centre
- High proportion of good quality Georgian brick buildings
- Neo-gothic Town Hall