

Milton Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 1

Milton Abbey and Park

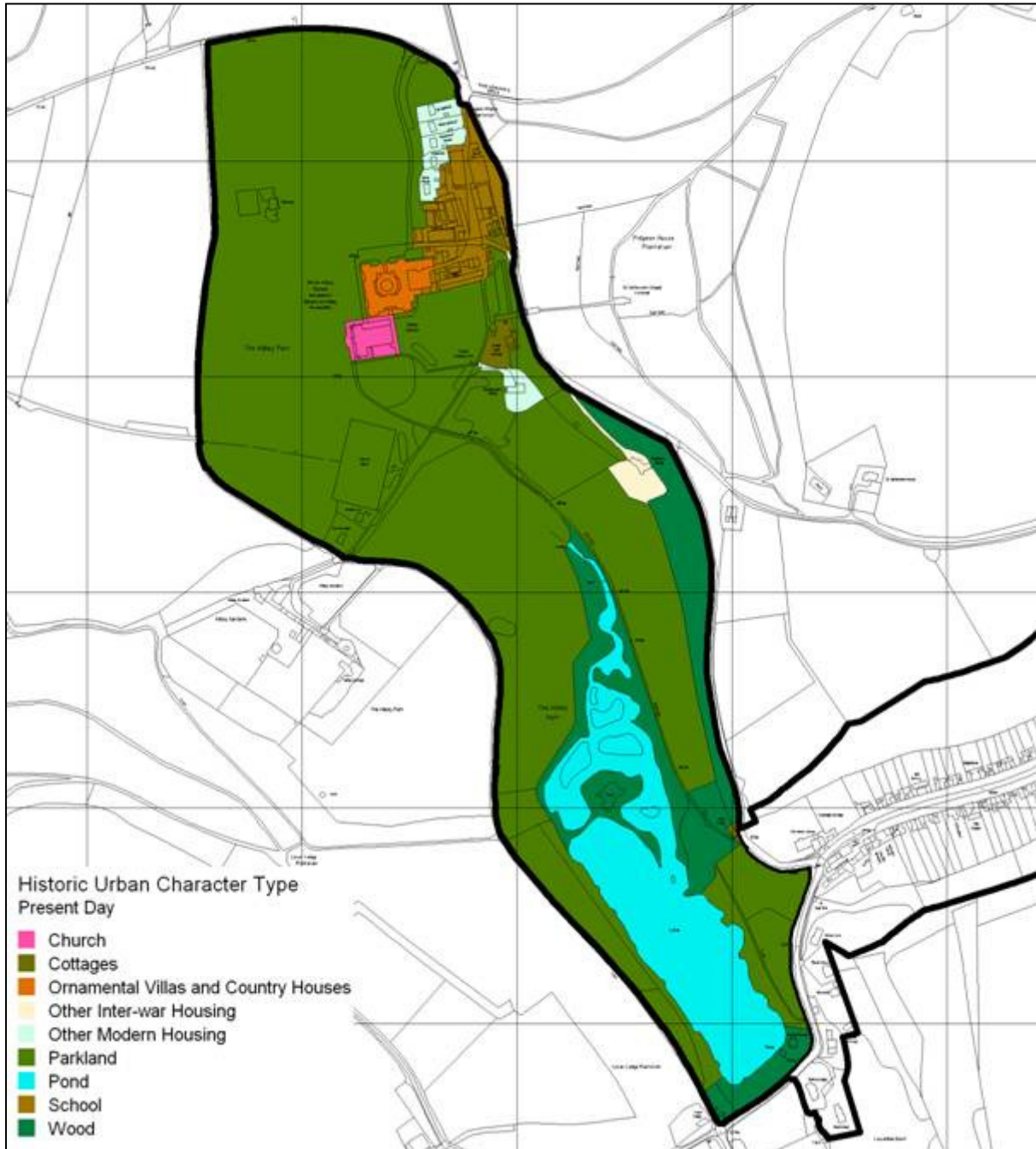


Figure 23: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type.

Milton Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 1 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This is the area of the former abbey and old town of Middleton. It now forms part of the park of Milton Abbey.

Topography and Geology

The area lies in the bottom and on the lower eastern side of the Milborne Brook valley. The valley is relatively wide at this point and has a flat undulating base. The eastern side of the area rises up quite steeply. The abbey and school lie on a low flat knoll above the eastern side of the valley floor, but there have been extensive landscaping works undertaken in this area. The underlying geology is Chalk.

Urban Structure

There is no urban structure to this area. The former Abbey Church, Milton Abbey House and School lie at the north end of the area, surrounded by the landscaped park with a pond to the south. The minor road between Milton Abbas and Hilton runs along the eastern and northern edges of the area and the South Drive of the park along the western side.

Present Character

Figure 23 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area is predominantly parkland and gardens, with the church, country house and school at the north end.

Time Depth

The Abbey Church dates from the 14th to 16th centuries and is a rebuilding of an earlier church destroyed by fire in 1309. Milton Abbey House incorporates the late 15th century abbot's great hall, but is largely of 1771-6 date. The landscaped park was laid out in 1763-82, with subsequent modifications. The school buildings date from the 1950s onwards.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

Milton Abbey church and Milton Abbey House act as a focus within the landscaped park. To the north are the modern school buildings of Milton Abbey School. There are a small number of individual houses set within the park, most constructed as part of the school. The significance of this area is its landscape setting of open grassed areas, wooded plantations and a pond, which form part of the Brownian landscaped park of Milton Abbey.



Figure 24: Earthworks of old town in parkland.



Figure 25: View of the former Market Street area of the old town.



Figure 26: The Abbot's Great Hall, Milton Abbey House.



Figure 27: Milton Abbey House, west front.

Milton Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 1

Built Character

Building types

This area is characterised by a small number of buildings of specialised type, some of which are of very high quality. These include the Abbey Church and Milton Abbey House. In addition, there are a small number of lodges and estate houses, together with some modern buildings associated with Milton Abbey School.

The abbey church is a major medieval building constructed on a very large scale, although unfinished. It was described by Pevsner as “like a huge Oxford college chapel” (Pevsner and Newman 1972, 286) and is mainly Perpendicular in style. The other surviving medieval building, the abbot’s great hall is also an important building and is lavishly decorated internally. Milton Abbey House is dwarfed by the scale of the adjoining church and is built round four sides of a quadrangle and is a mixture of late 15th century monastic, 18th century early gothic revival and a 19th century north range.

A single dwelling survives from the old town. Green Walk is of one storey with attics and is probably early 18th century in date with 19th century extensions.

A number of structural elements of the park exist within this character area. To the north are a set of late 18th century ashlar gate piers and iron gates (moved from their original position) and on the east side are a set of green steps and a late 18th century footbridge leading to St Catherine’s Chapel. Lake Lodge, a detached mid-19th century *cottage orné*, lies to the south-east.

The twentieth century buildings comprise detached two storey houses of inter-war and early post-war date and modern school buildings of one and two storeys.

Building Materials

The Abbey Church and the Abbot’s Great Hall are constructed mainly from Chilmark and Ham Hill stone, with some flint. The roofs are lead-covered. Milton Abbey House is in banded flint and Portland stone with slate and lead roofs.

Green Walk has plastered cob walls and a thatched roof.

The 19th century buildings are of brick and flint with slate or thatched roofs. The 20th century houses are of buff or red brick. Middleton House has pale-coloured painted brick walls. The roofs are tiled. The 20th century school buildings are of brick or reconstituted stone with slate or sheet metal roofs.

Key Buildings

Milton Abbey Church, Milton Abbey House, Green Walk, Lake Lodge, Market Cross.



Figure 28: Green Walk, an 18th century cottage survivor from the old town.



Figure 29: The old stables, now part of Milton Abbey School.



Figure 30: View of school buildings, Milton Abbey School.

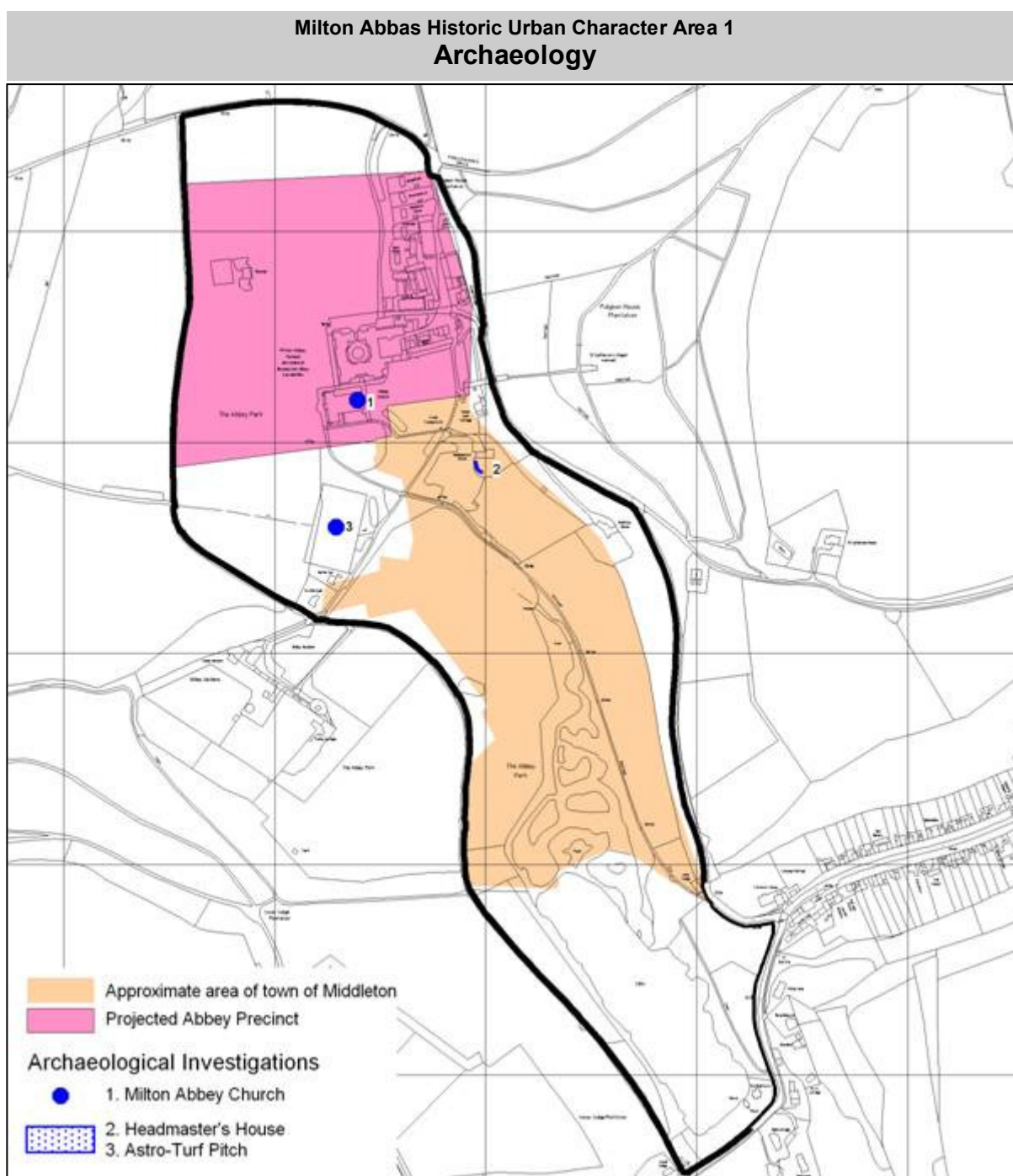


Figure 31: Archaeological Investigations and findspots in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

Archaeological Investigations

There have been three archaeological investigations undertaken in this character area (Figure 31; Appendix 3 Nos 1-3). The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments undertook an excavation at Milton Abbey Church to clarify the plan of the earlier and later churches (Gee 1955, 1956, 1957). They also undertook a survey of the earthworks of the old town (RCHME 1970). An archaeological evaluation in the grounds of the Headmaster's House revealed nothing other than modern ditch. No

trace of the former town was encountered (Wessex Archaeology 2007). A watching brief was undertaken during construction of the Astro-turf pitch for Milton Abbey School, but nothing of archaeological significance was exposed (Oakey 2001).

Archaeological Character

The archaeological character of this area can be divided into three main components; the remains of the abbey, the remains of the town of Middleton, and the landscaped park.

The remains of the abbey consist of both upstanding structures and buried remains. Excavations within and adjacent to the abbey church have revealed significant remains of the earlier church. Two burials, of an abbot and a priest, were also uncovered within the building during renovation works in the 1860s (Pentin 1905). It is likely that further traces of the abbey buildings, outbuildings and other features of the abbey precinct may be present below ground, together with the parish churchyard.

The surviving earthworks of the former town suggest that considerable remains could survive below ground. There has been no investigation within the core area of the old town, so the range and quality of archaeological remains is unknown, but is likely to be considerable since there has been almost no subsequent development of the area. It is likely to include important remains of houses, streets, pits, ditches, etc, ranging in date from the medieval period up to the late 18th century.

The landscaped park comprises mainly landscape features above ground, but elements of earlier plantings and of water management may survive below ground.

Milton Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 1 Designations

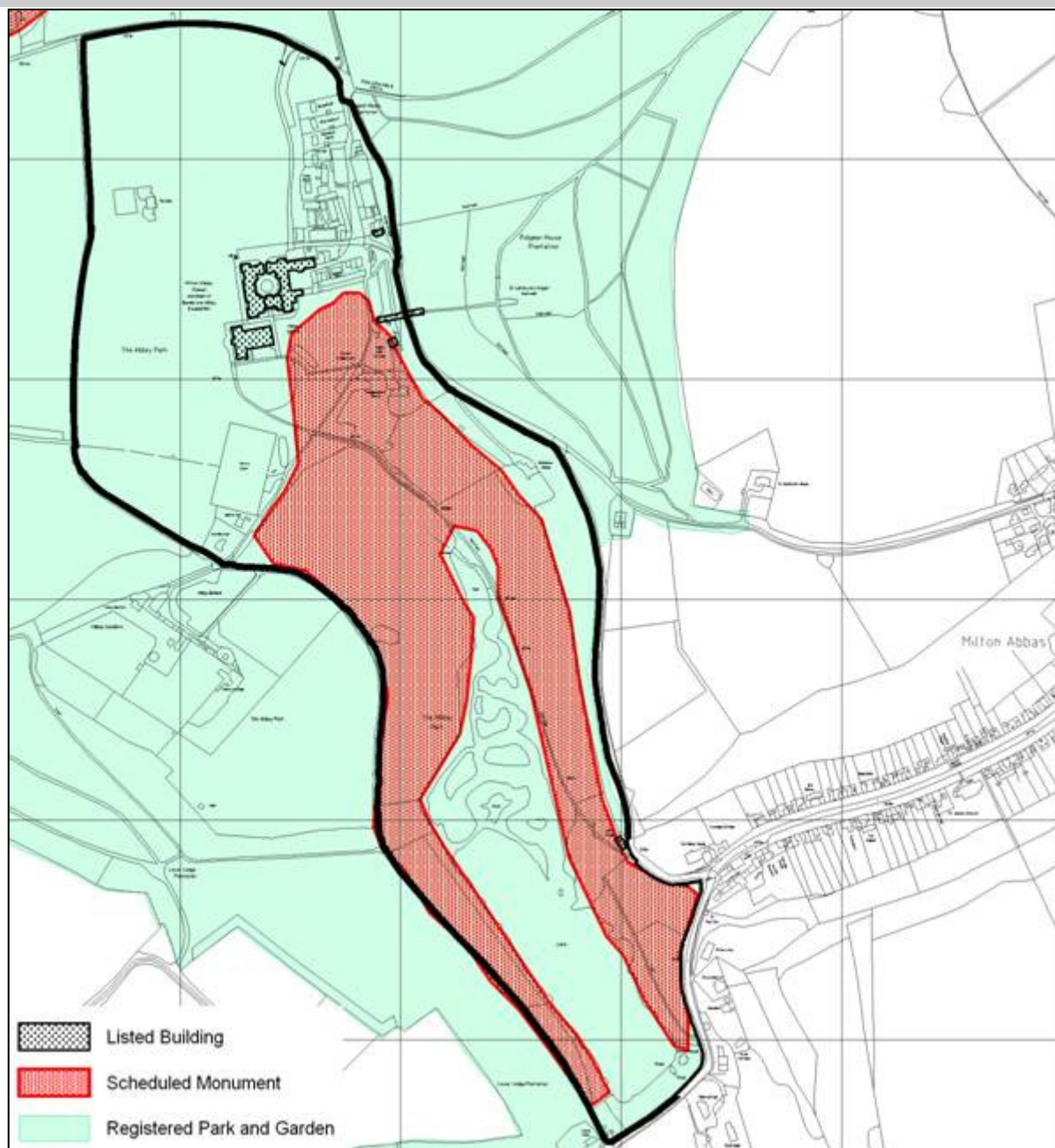


Figure 32: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

Listed Buildings

There are ten Listed Buildings and structures in the Character Area. The Abbey Church, The Abbot's Hall and Kitchen, and Milton Abbey House are Grade I. The remainder are Grade II.

Conservation Areas

The whole of this Character Area lies within the Milton Abbas Conservation Area (Figure 22).

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

The whole of this Character Area lies within the Grade II* Registered Park and Garden at Milton

Abbas (Figure 32).

Scheduled Monuments

Scheduled Monument DO716 'Deserted Town of Milton Abbas' lies within this Character Area (Figure 32).

Milton Abbas Historic Urban Character Area 1 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The historic character of this area is judged to be **strong**. The strength of character derives from its location within an important landscape park designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, which contains significant remains of the medieval Milton Abbey and of Milton Abbey House, rather than for its urban characteristics. The market town of Middleton is visible only as a series of low earthworks.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. The whole area forms the centrepiece of the Brownian landscaped park and as such is a highly designed landscape with all its elements carefully considered and placed. Any new development would have a profound influence on the context of the park. There are also significant below-ground archaeological remains which would be disturbed by development.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is

judged to be **high**. This area includes the remains of the former town of Middleton, which is unique in England in that it is the only example of a complete town forcibly removed, not a failed town or suburb. This is of extremely high archaeological importance as the remains fossilise a complete market town untouched by the destructive influences of recent development. It has the potential to contain not only extensive remains of the post-medieval town, but also of the earlier, medieval, town.

The area also has buried remains of the medieval Benedictine Abbey, as demonstrated by the Royal Commission excavations around the abbey church (RCHME 1970). It is likely that the development of the school buildings may have disturbed some of the ancillary buildings and abbey farm, but there still remains a high probability that elements of the former abbey precinct still survive.

This area has the potential to provide information which could contribute to Research Questions 1-15 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Milton Abbey Church and the Abbot's Great Hall – important medieval buildings
- Site of former market town, marked by low earthworks
- Site of former Benedictine Abbey
- Part of a major landscape park designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown
- Milton Abbey House