

Part 6: Historic Urban Character Appraisal



6.1 The historic urban character of Cranborne

The urban character of Cranborne, like any town, is a product of many factors including the topographic position, history of estate ownership and management, geographical relationship with other towns and resources, and other historical events. Topographically Cranborne sits within the upper valley of a chalk stream close to the junction of the chalk downs of Cranborne Chase and the forested clays and gravels of the Hampshire Basin. The town's location within these geographic components means that Cranborne has always functioned as a central place for a region of diverse and plentiful resources. Its proximity to the ecclesiastical centre of Salisbury, coupled with its association with large areas of open down and woodland suitable for game, led to the town being patronised by medieval royalty. This in turn led to prosperity and urban growth. The topography has possibly had an even more

direct influence on the town plan, laid out along banks of the River Crane. A series of parallel streets run along either bank, forming the High Street and back lanes of the town. The geology of the region has also directly influenced the built character of the place. Medieval buildings are in flint and heathstone rubble with rare and only partial survival of timber framed buildings. Brick has been important since the 16th century with thatch and, later, plain clay tiles for roofing. In some respects Cranborne conforms to the rural character of many villages in the region, which have single linear streets and detached brick houses along chalk stream valleys.

The settlement developed at a point where the pre-existing route from Poole Harbour to Old Sarum crossed the River Crane. The exact course of this early route may have been altered over the years but still lies close to the core plan elements of medieval manor, church and market. The fact that the church may occupy the site of a late Saxon Benedictine Ab-

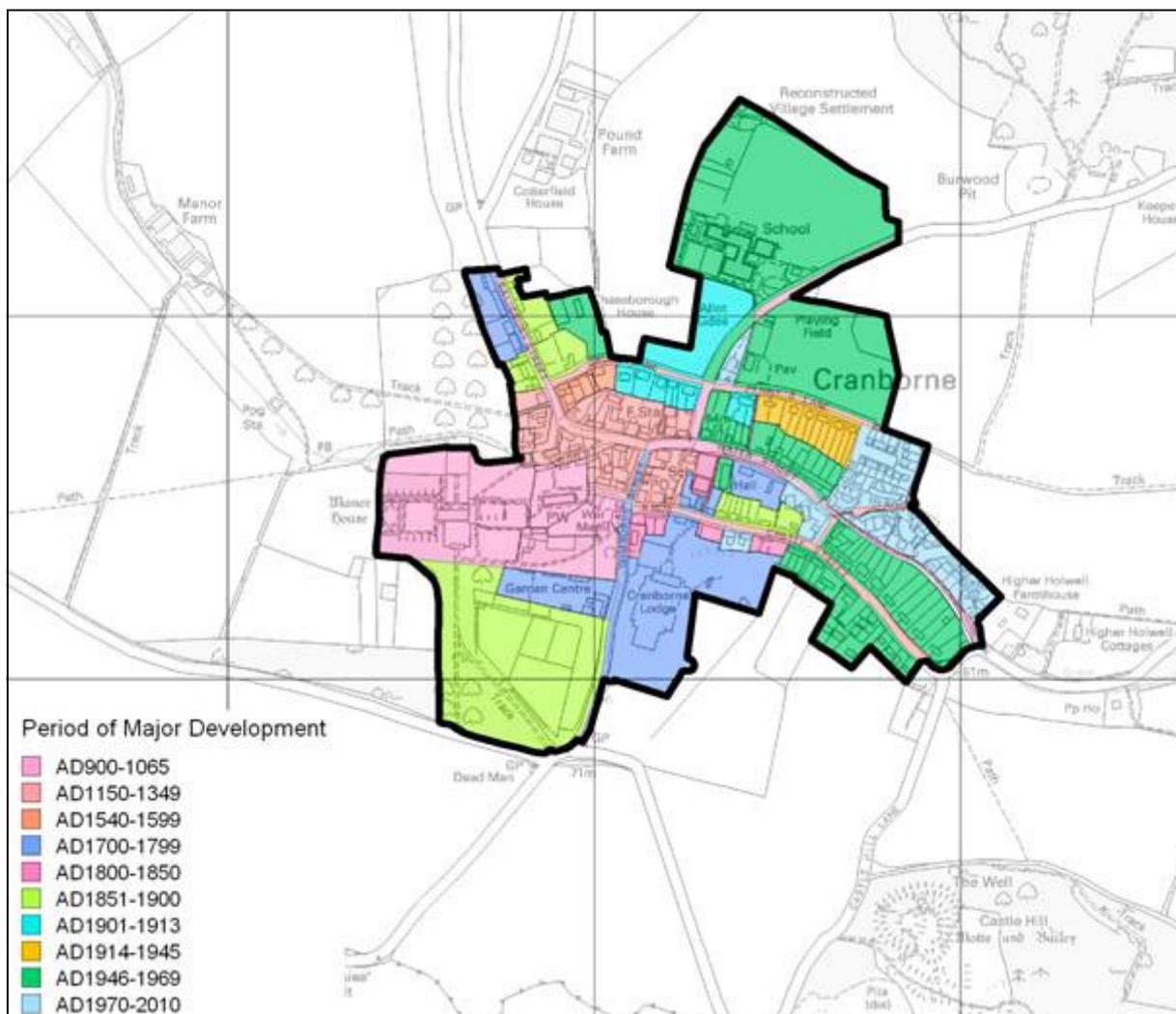


Figure 28: Map showing the major periods of development of Cranborne.

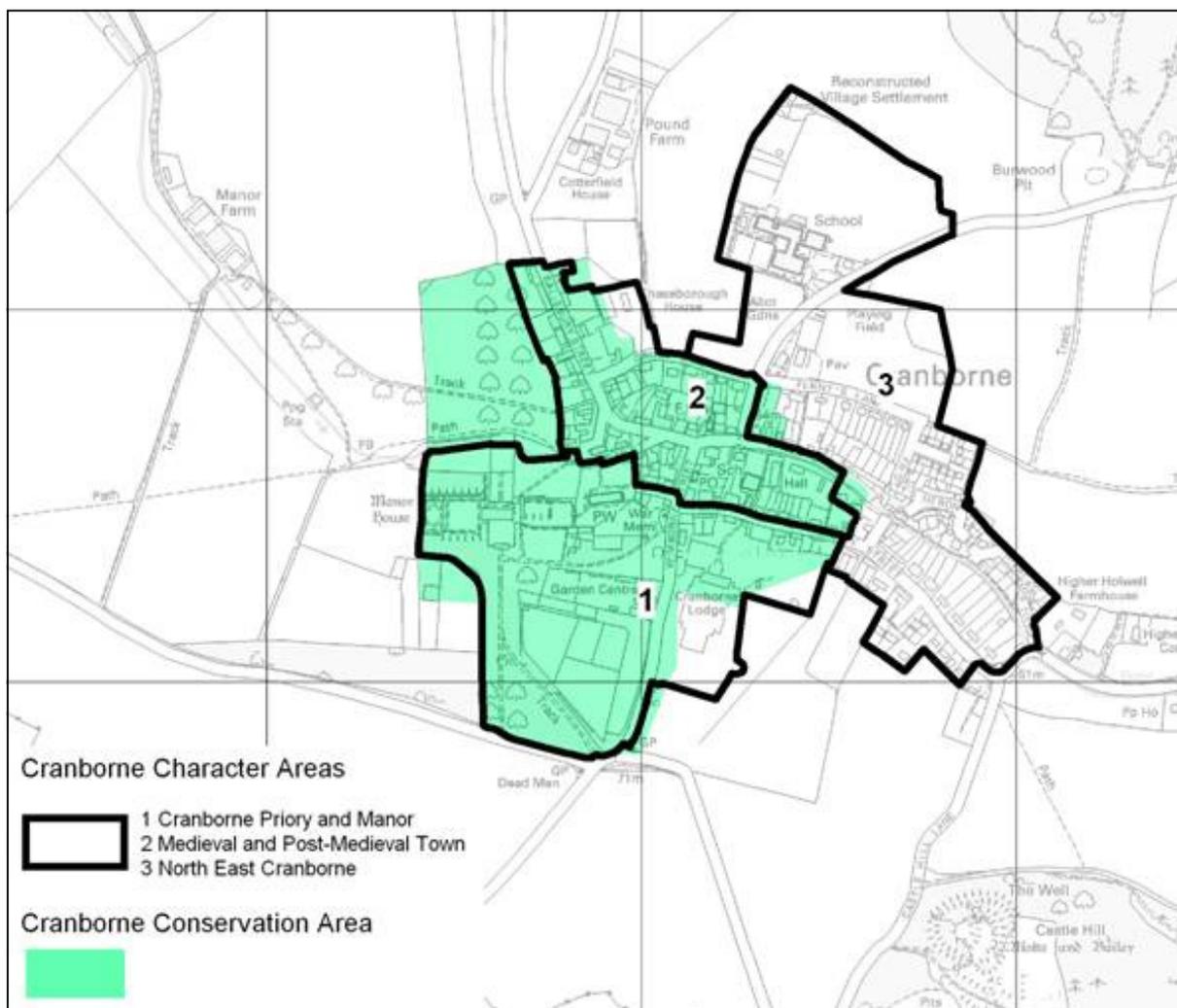


Figure 29: Cranborne Historic Urban Character Areas.

by illustrates the importance of the settlement as a regional centre from at least the 10th century. There is a suggestion that the earliest settlement may have lain to the west of the market place and north of the manor, but the current arrangement of Church, manor and market dates from at least the early 13th century.

From the post-medieval period onwards expansion has progressively extended the limits of the town to the east along the course of the Crane and from the late 18th century to the north along Salisbury Street. Many of the houses in the historic core of Cranborne also date from the 18th century, possibly as a result of the destruction of the town centre by fires. The earliest surviving domestic structures date from the 15th and 16th centuries but lie on the edge of the town centre.

Modern development was heralded by the construction of semi-detached houses in brick in the middle of the 20th century and has continued with small late 20th century housing estates arranged in culs-de-sac at the western extremity of the town. The northern part of the town

has been given over to public amenity sites such as a recreation area, allotments and a school. Industrial buildings are rare. Old Farmhouses remain at Penny's Farm and Sinodun (Grugs Lane).

The modern character is still very much dominated by the medieval manor and its 17th century landscape gardens which, together with Cranborne Lodge, form a large tract of green space to the south of the town.

6.2 Historic Urban Character Areas of Cranborne

A total of three Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined for Cranborne as shown on Figure 29 and listed below. They comprise the Priory Church and manor (Character Area 1), the medieval and post-medieval town (Area 2), and the more recent areas of development to the north and east (Area 3).

- 1 Priory Church and Manor
- 2 Medieval and Post-medieval Town
- 3 North East Cranborne