

Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 1

Swanage High Street

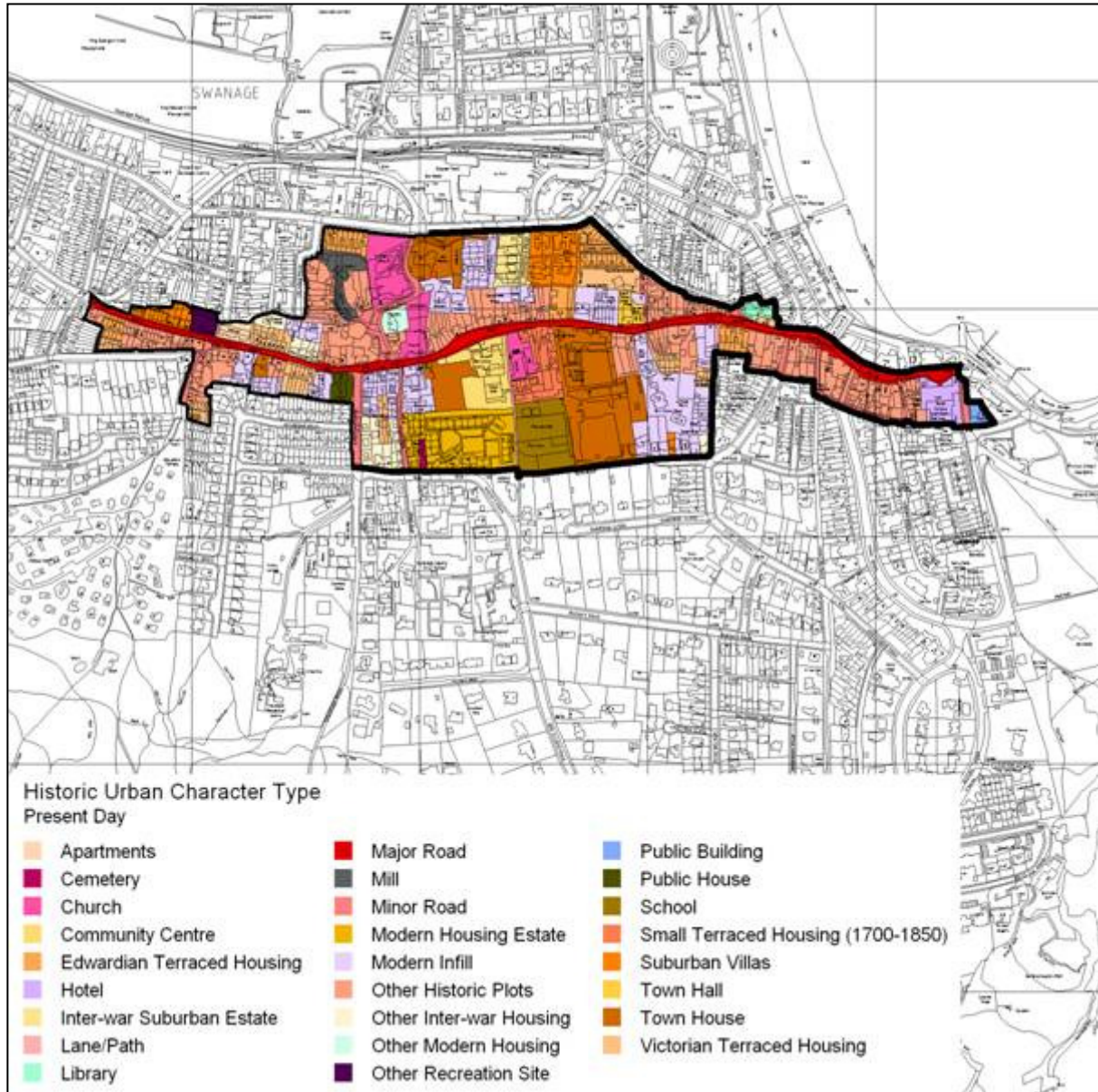


Figure 43: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 44: View along High Street with Town Hall.



Figure 45: View of former 'Narrows' on High Street.

Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 1 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This is the historic core of Swanage and includes the area of the medieval and early post-medieval settlement. It covers the area fronting on to the High Street as far north as Kings Road West. It is defined partly by its historic dimension and concentration of historic buildings.

Topography and Geology

The area lies along the base of the southern slopes of the valley down to the edge of the floodplain of the brook. The area slopes quite steeply down to the north. Most of the area lies on Upper Purbeck Limestone and the southern edge is on Middle Purbeck limestones.

Urban Structure

The area comprises a single spinal street (High Street) and the properties along both frontages, except at the eastern end, where only the properties on the south side of the road are included. There are a number of minor roads and alleys running north from the High Street and to the south are several roughly parallel roads and paths that run southwards to access the area uphill from the town centre.

The plots are generally rectilinear in shape with relatively narrow frontages, but are irregular in their proportions, with a large variation in the size and shape of the individual properties, suggesting an organic development.

Present Character

Figure 43 shows the present day historic urban character types. A large number of different character types are present reflecting a diverse range of use and history of individual properties. Much of the area along the High Street comprises historic plots, interspersed with larger town houses, hotels, other commercial sites and modern infill. A cluster of churches is sited at the west end. Victorian and Edwardian Terraced



Figure 46: High Street looking west.

Housing (many of which are now shops) are found along Institute Road and the east end of the High Street. There are also small areas of suburban villas and some apartments.

Time Depth

The area includes the historic core of the town and a number of primary elements of the settlement, namely the High Street, St Mary's Church and the mill, which are probably medieval in origin. A number of plots along the High Street are 18th century and earlier. Some boundaries to the south probably have their origins in a medieval strip field system. There are a number of late 20th century developments, some prompted by WW2 bomb damage.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern consists of high density ribbon development along the High Street, with the majority of buildings set along the street frontage, other than a few notable exceptions set back from the street – primarily modern developments. Where historic buildings are set back, the frontage is marked by stone boundary walls. High boundary walls are a feature of some of the larger historic properties. The settlement pattern is more mixed in the northern part, with its mixed commercial and domestic developments. The streetscapes in this area are varied. High Street has an irregular winding alignment with varying width of carriageway and differing heights and scale of buildings. The east end of the High Street has primarily commercial development, which gives way to residential use further west.

There are few open green spaces in this area, the most significant is the churchyard. There are few trees and green spaces visible, most belong to the gardens of the larger houses, particularly the Old Vicarage, Magnolia House and Purbeck House. Views of the surrounding countryside to the north can be glimpsed from a number of places along the High Street.



Figure 47: Victoria Terrace.

Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 1 Built Character

Building types

There is an eclectic mix of building types in this character area, ranging from 17th to early 19th century vernacular cottages and houses, some large town houses of 18th and 19th century date, a small number of institutional buildings of 19th and 20th century date, some Victorian and Edwardian buildings – many with shopfronts, and some 20th century residential buildings. There are a number of prominent landmark buildings, most notably, Purbeck House, the Town Hall, Royal Victoria Hotel, the Public Library, the Methodist Church and the Congregational Church. The area around the mill and St Mary's Church is a particularly fine ensemble of historic stone buildings. The Victorian and Edwardian buildings are concentrated in the lower commercial part of the High Street.

The historic stone houses are generally 2-3 storeys in height and include mainly informal vernacular styles, together with some more formal symmetrically-fronted houses. There is a mix of attached, semi-detached and terraced houses. There is a small number of polite Georgian/Regency style buildings, notably the Royal Victoria Hotel, The Rookery, and Victoria Terrace.

The Late Victorian and Edwardian buildings are mainly three storey terraced or attached buildings, some with Arts and Crafts detailing and generally with shops, including some attractive historic shopfronts.

Modern buildings include public buildings and housing. Most distinctive is the dodecagonal library building of 1965. Another landmark building is the day centre. The modern housing is generally typical of its era and with little distinctiveness.

Purbeck House is the most prominent building in this area and is a wildly exuberant 'baronial' style building incorporating many features and elements taken from buildings in London. The

Town Hall opposite has the most complete architectural salvage element in the form of the 17th century front of the former Mercer's Hall, Cheapside.

In addition, there are a number of stone boundary and retaining walls prominent in the area. Those along Chapel Lane and Sunshine Walk are particularly impressive.

Building Materials

Purbeck stone is the predominant building material. It is used for most 19th century and earlier buildings, both for institutional buildings such as the Town Hall and the churches, and for vernacular houses and cottages. Local Wealden clay red bricks are used increasingly in late Victorian and Edwardian buildings, often with Purbeck stone or yellow brick dressings. A small number of buildings are stuccoed or rendered. Roofs are primarily of Purbeck stone or slate. A small number of tiled roofs also occur.

Key Buildings

Public Buildings: St Mary's Church, Congregational Church, Methodist Church, Library.

Town Houses: Purbeck House, The Old Vicarage, Magnolia House.

17th-19th Century Stone Cottages, Houses and Terraces: 4 Cliff Place, Olive Cottage, 44 High Street, 88-92 High Street, 99-105 High Street, 221-227 High Street, 233-239 High Street, Eldon Terrace, Somerleigh House 191 High Street, 205 High Street, Virginia House 120 High Street, 2-10 Church Hill, Victoria Terrace.

Victorian and Edwardian Houses and shops: 43 High Street, 45 High Street, 67-73 High Street, 56-62 High Street.

Commercial Premises: Royal Victoria Hotel, The Anchor Inn, Red Lion Inn, Black Swan Inn, Craigside Hotel.

Industrial Buildings: mill and mill pond.



Figure 48: Cliff Cottage.



Figure 49: 43-45 High Street.

Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 1 Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

Three archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area — observations at The Rectory and watching briefs at St Mary's Church and at 99-101 High Street (Figure 50; Appendix 3, 1-3). Ten or twelve burials were found at the Old Rectory, reputedly arranged in a 'clock' formation with their heads to the centre (Farrar 1965). No archaeological remains were found during the two other watching briefs.

Archaeological Character

There has been only very limited investigation in this area, which constrains the consideration of the archaeological resource. It lies within the historic core, which suggests there may be remains of medieval and post-medieval activity, perhaps pits and boundary ditches in the properties along the High Street. It is likely that the majority of the archaeology would date to the 18th century and later, other than in selected

areas along the High Street and around St Mary's Church. To the south of the High Street are a number of parallel boundaries, which appear to have their origin as medieval strip field boundaries (Figure 50). The discovery of burials at the old Rectory hint at the possibility of some earlier remains in the area. The burials are not dated but are assumed to be Roman.

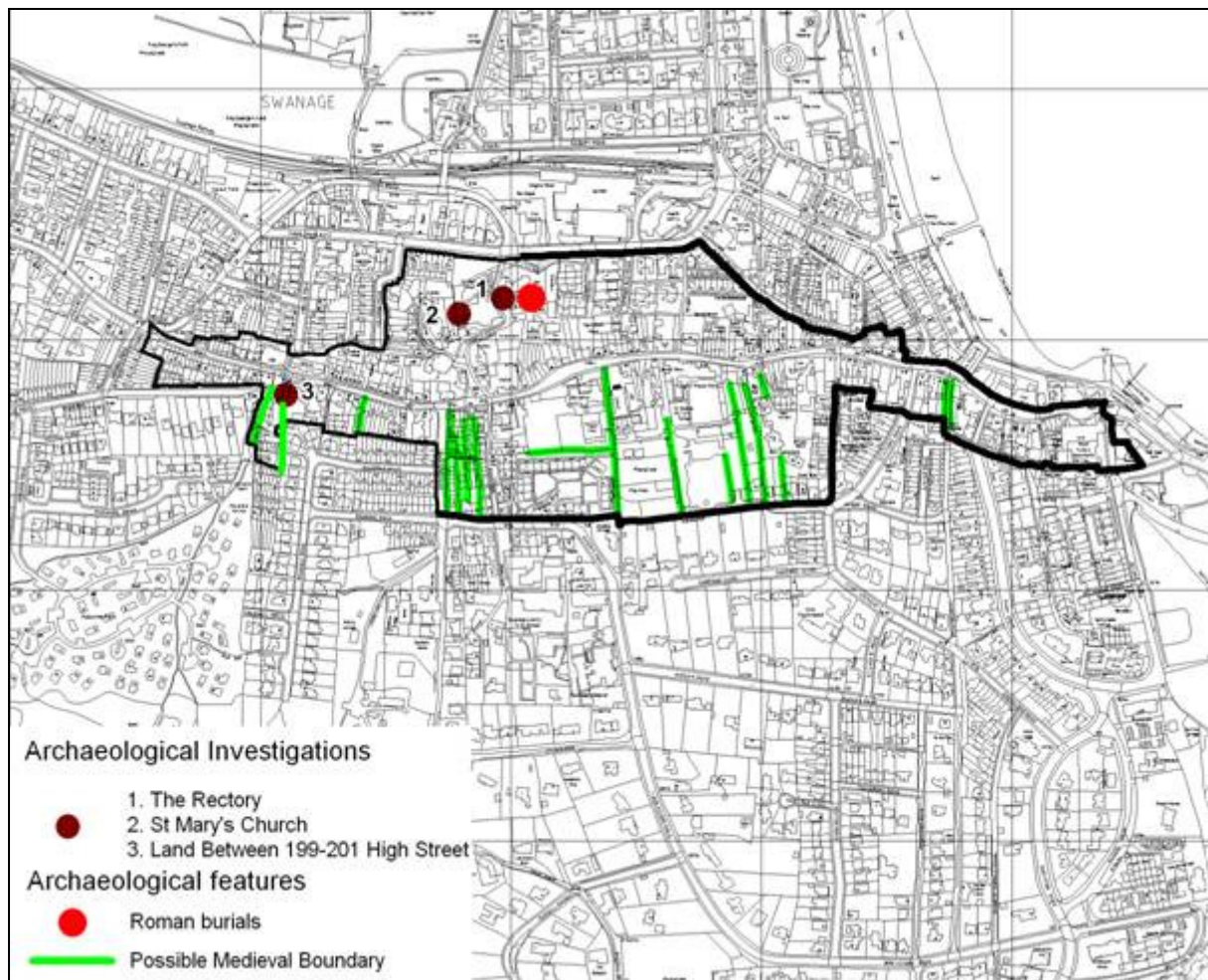


Figure 50: Archaeological Investigations and features in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

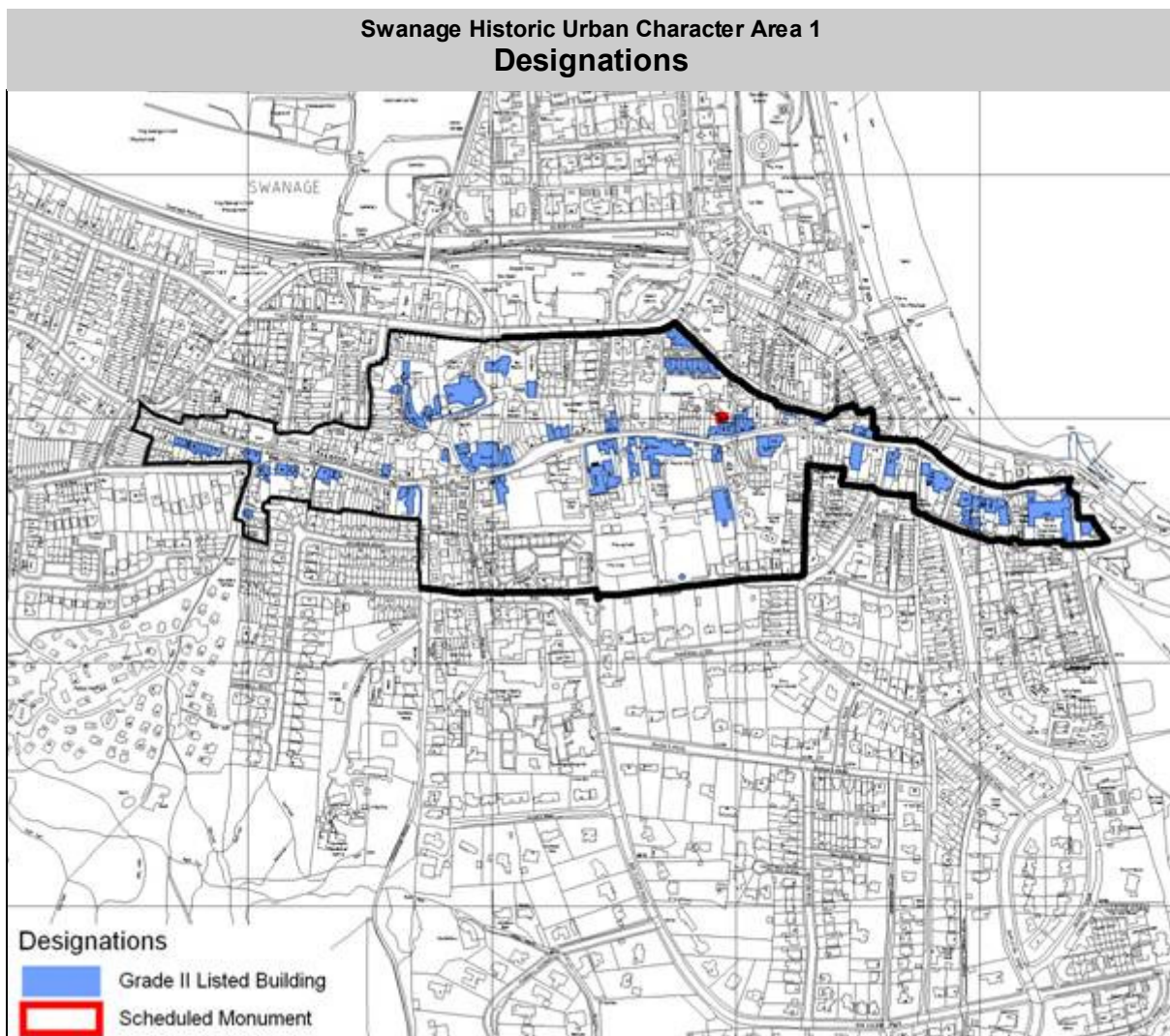


Figure 51: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 1.

Listed Buildings

There are 72 Listed Buildings in the Character Area (Figure 51). All are Grade II.

Conservation Areas

Almost all of this Character Area lies within the Swanage Conservation Area, except for a few small areas in the southwest part (Figure 42).

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

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

Scheduled Monuments

There is one Scheduled Monument within this character area; The Old Prison and Pump (Dorset 153).



Figure 52: Swanage Congregational Church.



Figure 53: Eldon Terrace.

Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 1 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. The character is varied but reflects the two main elements of the development of Swanage, its origins as a quarrying village and later development as a seaside resort. The High Street is the primary principal route and probably reflects a medieval or earlier track. The pattern of property boundaries is probably mainly 19th century, but there is some survival of possible medieval boundaries and tracks south of the High Street and some post-medieval boundaries to the north. The area around St Mary's Church and the millpond with its grouping of historic buildings provides a strong visual element reflecting the historic character of the original village of Swanage. The east end of the area reflects the early 19th century beginnings of the resort and the central part has the greatest imprint of George Burt and the heyday of Swanage's town development. The very large number of historic buildings, including a number incorporating architectural salvage from London probably provide the greatest contribution to the historic character.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change, but the area has a rather heterogeneous character and some parts are more sensitive to change than others. The character is largely a reflection of the size and scale of the historic buildings within their historic plots. There are a number of modern

developments along and behind the High Street frontages. However, further erosion of the historic settlement pattern and townscape would be detrimental to its historic character.

Archaeological Potential

The overall archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **medium**, but the archaeological character changes through different parts of the area. The historic core of the medieval settlement around Church Hill and later historical settlement along the High Street has potential to reveal details on the development of the town, the history of its property divisions, small-scale craft and other industries and the economy and diet of the inhabitants. However, many of the earlier properties have now been infilled with later houses, which will have had a detrimental effect on the survival of any archaeology.

There is also potential for recovering archaeological information on the pre-urban activity (as suggested by the possible Roman burials at the Old Vicarage).

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 3, 4, 5, 8, 9,10,11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Historic core of medieval village around church and mill
- Historic route of the High Street, with its sinuous undulating course
- Vernacular stone cottages and terraces
- Some fine Georgian/Regency buildings (Royal Victoria Hotel, The Rookery, Victoria Terrace)
- The exuberant design and prominence of Purbeck House
- Architectural salvage pieces from various former London buildings
- Late Victorian and Edwardian shops, including some surviving historic shopfronts
- Historic inns and hotels