

## Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 5 Swanage Seafront



Figure 86: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 5, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 87: View of seafront from pier.



Figure 88: View along beach towards the Mowlem, with Recreation Ground on the right.

## Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 5 Structure of Character Area

### **Overview**

This is the area of the main beach and seafront of Swanage along the length of Shore Road. It comprises the beach and the recreation grounds behind.

### **Topography and Geology**

The sweeping curve of the wide sandy beach forms the eastern part of the area, with the ground rising up steeply to form a low ridge behind the beach. The underlying geology is sands and clays of the Lower Cretaceous Wealden Group.

### **Urban Structure**

The area has a simple structure comprising Shore Road running along the rear of the beach, in front of green recreation areas. The western edge of the area is formed by De Moulham Road and there are several roads running at right angles to Shore Road, which link it with the main urban and suburban areas behind.

### **Present Character**

Figure 86 shows the present day historic urban character types. The beach sweeps around along the eastern side of the area, with the seafront and Major and Minor Roads behind. The western part consists of Public Park and Public Open Space, with a car park in the southwest corner.

### **Time Depth**

Shore Road dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the seafront and sea wall from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and widened in the 1920s. The Recreation Ground dates from the period after World War I. Sandpit Field incorporates the remains of a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century sandpit. The car park was created in the 1990s.

### **Settlement Pattern and Streetscape**

This character area is largely recreational in function with no settlement. The main route is Shore Road which runs parallel, just behind the beach. The recreation grounds are rectangular and fitted into the pattern of streets in the adjacent character area.

The area is characterised by its open space, with good views of the sweeping sandy beach and bay, with the municipal planting along the recreation ground and Sandpit Field forming a backdrop behind the beach, screening parts of the suburban development behind.



Figure 89: Seafront with Edwardian shelter and Alfred Monument.



Figure 90: Sandpit Gardens with WW2 gun emplacement reused as public shelter.

## Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 5 Built Character

### **Building types**

There are very few built structures in this area and most are related to its recreational seafront function. The most frequent structures are wooden beach huts of relatively recent date along the back of Shore Road. The seafront itself has Edwardian shelters and a cast iron bandstand built by W Macfarlane & Co of Glasgow added after World War I. There is a small group of buildings at the back of the seafront, including the White House (an early 19th century house accommodating the Tourist Information Office) and a modern toilet block. The most well-known structure is probably the Alfred Monument, a granite Tuscan column surmounted by cannon balls, erected by John Mowlem in 1862 to commemorate 'a great naval battle fought with the Danes -in Swanage Bay by Alfred the Great. AD 877'.

A World War II gun emplacement, now converted to a public shelter, survives in Sandpit Field. The short stone pier opposite the end of Victoria Avenue was built in 1993 as part of a flood defence scheme.

### **Building Materials**

Houses are rendered with slate roofs and the toilet block is brick with stone dressings. The seafront shelters are timber cast iron and timber and the bandstand is a cast iron structure. The former gun emplacement is of concrete.

### **Key Buildings**

Alfred Monument; seaside shelters, The White House, Bandstand, gun emplacement in Sandpit Field.



Figure 91: The White House and other buildings along Shore Road, viewed from the Recreation Ground.



Figure 92: Recreation Ground bandstand.



Figure 93: Beach huts along Shore Road.



### Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 5 Archaeology

#### **Archaeological Investigations**

There have been no archaeological interventions in this character area.

A 4<sup>th</sup> century Roman bronze coin of Constantine has been recorded from the beach (Farrar 1962, 116).

#### **Archaeological Character**

The very limited below-ground investigation constrains any consideration of the archaeological resource. However, the location beyond the edge of the historic core of Swanage on the coast suggests there will be very little archaeology related to the urban history of the town. It is likely to have been a marginal area, used for fishing and also for sand and gravel extraction, judging by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century sand quarry in Sandpit Field.

There is a surviving World War 2 gun emplacement in Sandpit Gardens.



Figure 94: Archaeological features and findspots in Historic Urban Character Area 5.

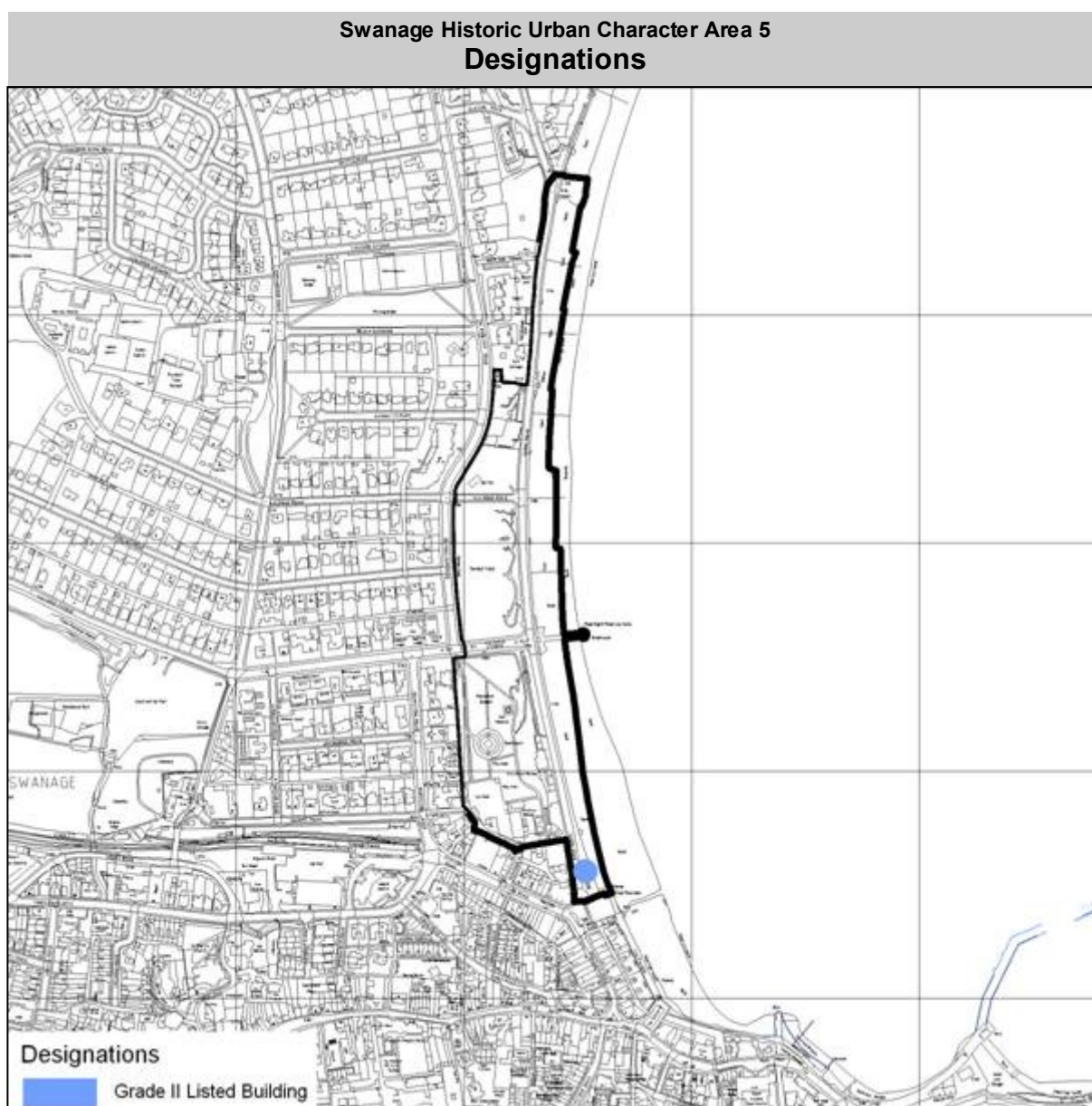


Figure 95: Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 5.

### **Listed Buildings**

There is one Listed Building in the Character Area, the Grade II Alfred Monument.

### **Conservation Areas**

The southern part of this area, south of Victoria Avenue, lies within Swanage Conservation Area (Figure 42).

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

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

### **Scheduled Monuments**

No Scheduled Monuments lie within this character area.

## Swanage Historic Urban Character Area 5 Evaluation

### ***Strength of Historic Character***

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. Much of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century seafront survives relatively intact and the area retains much of the traditional old-fashioned feel of the seafront.

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

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. This is primarily because of its very open character with good views of the surrounding landscape and any major development within or immediately outside this area is likely to be very visible.

### ***Archaeological Potential***

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **low**. It lies beyond the historic core of Swanage in an area of historically marginal

land and is unlikely to have been the focus of significant activity in the past and partly used for sand and gravel extraction. The recreation ground may contain evidence of the former Eastbrook Farm and stone 'bankers' which were formerly on the site. There is some potential for the recovery of stray finds as indicated by the discovery of a Roman coin on the beach.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 3, 5, 8, 13, 14, 15, 22, 24, 25 (Part 7).

### **Key Characteristics**

- Seafront and beach
- Edwardian shelters
- Alfred Monument
- Recreation grounds
- Good views across the bay