

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 8

Beaminster School/Memorial Playing Fields

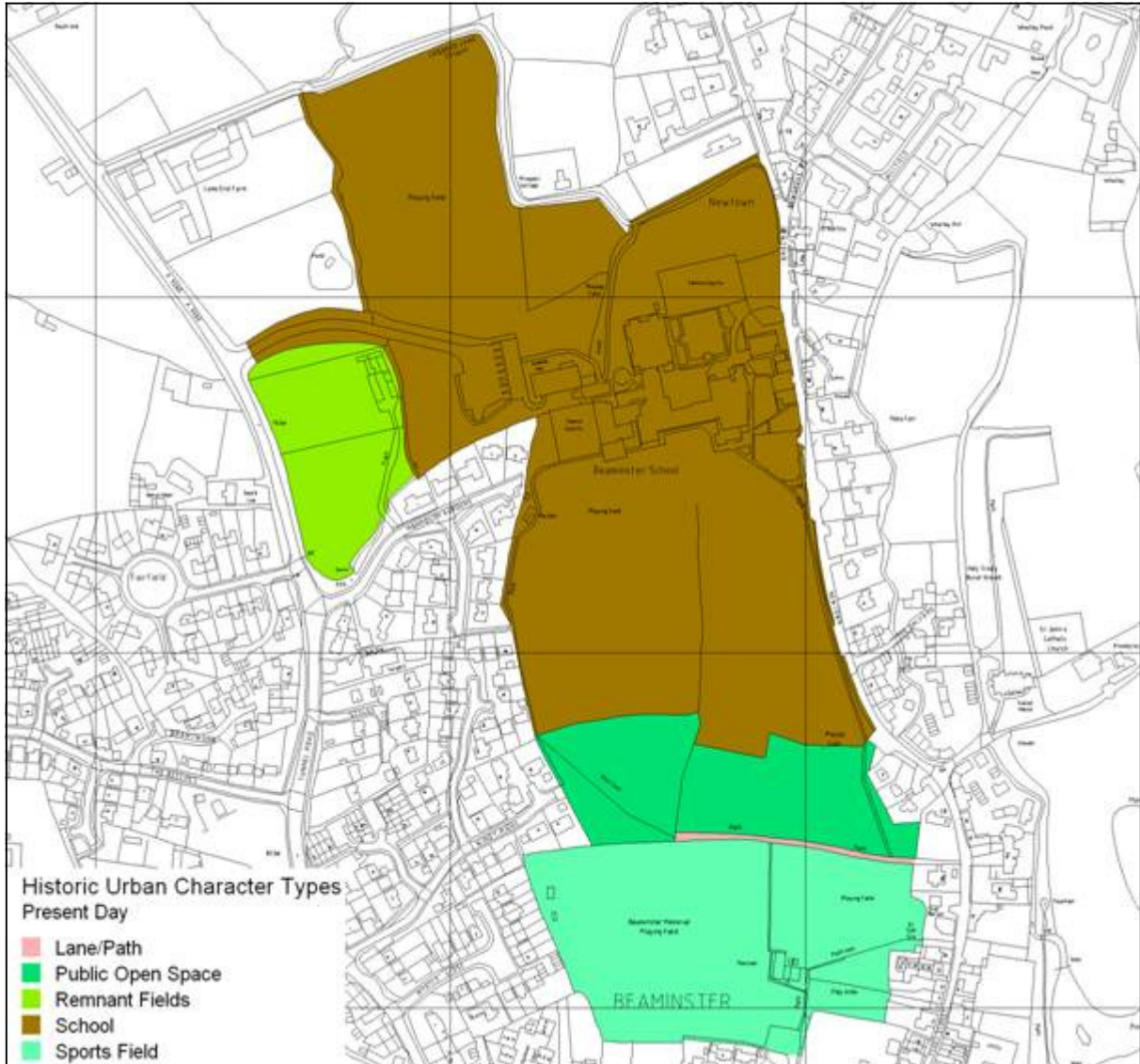


Figure 116: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 8, showing current historic urban character type



Figure 117: View of Memorial Playing field from north-west.



Figure 118: View of Beaminster School and playing fields from south.

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 8 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This character area comprises largely green open space to the rear of the properties along Fleet Street, Hogshill Street and Tunnel Road. The larger part of the area is taken up by Beaminster School.

Topography and Geology

The ground slopes down gently to the south and to the east, with a pronounced low E-W ridge of higher ground running across the lower part of the area. The Beaminster Memorial Playing Fields at the southern end of the area have been landscaped and terraced into the slope. The underlying geology is Fuller's Earth Clay with an E-W band of Bridport and Yeovil Sands forming the ridge.

Urban Structure

This area has almost no urban characteristics. Beaminster School is surrounded by extensive grounds and sports fields. To the south is the Beaminster Memorial Playing Field with its sports pitches and children's playground. Separating the two is an area of public open space, with scrubby woodland in the eastern part and the remains of a former green lane with surviving hedgebanks running along the southern edge.

Present Character

Figure 116 shows the historic urban character types for this area. The northern part comprises the Beaminster School. To the south is the sports field of the Memorial Playing Field. Separating the two is an area of public open space, with a path or lane running along the southern side. On the northwest side of the area adjacent to the school grounds are some paddocks formed from the remnants of formerly larger fields.

Time Depth

Prior to the construction of the school and the playing fields in the second half of the 20th century, this area consisted of small fields and orchards of probable 17th or 18th century date. A number of former field boundaries are fossilised in the current layout, particularly in the southern part of the area. The green lane could be medieval in its origin. The Memorial Playing Field was constructed in 1947 and Beaminster School in 1963.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

There is no settlement within this character area. There is one former dwelling in the northern part, adjacent to the school, but this now forms part of the school buildings. The Newtown road forms the eastern edge of the school grounds.



Figure 119: Beaminster School playing fields viewed from Newtown, looking southwest.



Figure 120: Relict green lane north of the Memorial Playing Fields, looking east.

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 8 Built Character

Building types

This character area is defined more by its open green character than by its buildings and other structures. The only significant buildings are those of Beaminster School – an ensemble of early 1960s and later school buildings. The original buildings are of some merit and comprise a series of one to three storey buildings with low pitched or elliptically curved roofs (Newman and Pevsner 1972). Incorporated within the school is the former 'Sandhurst House' a late 18th or early 19th century two storey stone house, with sash windows and slate roof.

The other buildings in this character area are the rather nondescript single storey wooden clad pavilion in the Memorial Playing Fields and the modern wooden outbuildings in the paddock off Tunnel Road, adjacent to Beaminster School.

Building Materials

Inferior Oolite stone and Welsh slate is used in Sandhurst House. The school buildings are a mixture of four shades of buff-brown brick, stone and rubble facings.

Key Buildings

Beaminster School Buildings, Sandhurst House.



Figure 121: Beaminster School, viewed from south.



Figure 122: Sandhurst House.



Figure 123: Scrubby woodland on ridge south of school.



Figure 124: View of public open space along ridge to south of school, looking east.

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 8 Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

There have been no formal archaeological investigations in this character area. However, a site visit was made during works behind 'Sandhurst House' in 2000, when a probable 19th century rubbish pit was identified (Wallis 2000). Also, a Neolithic polished flint axe was found on the site of Beaminster School during its construction in 1963 (Farrar 1962).

Neolithic flint axe highlights the possibility of the discovery of evidence of prehistoric activity.

Archaeological Character

The previous archaeological activity in this area is not sufficient to be able to fully determine its archaeological character. However, as this area is essentially rural with no evidence for previous settlement activity, it is likely that most evidence will be in the form of former field boundary ditches, finds scatters, etc. The findspot of a

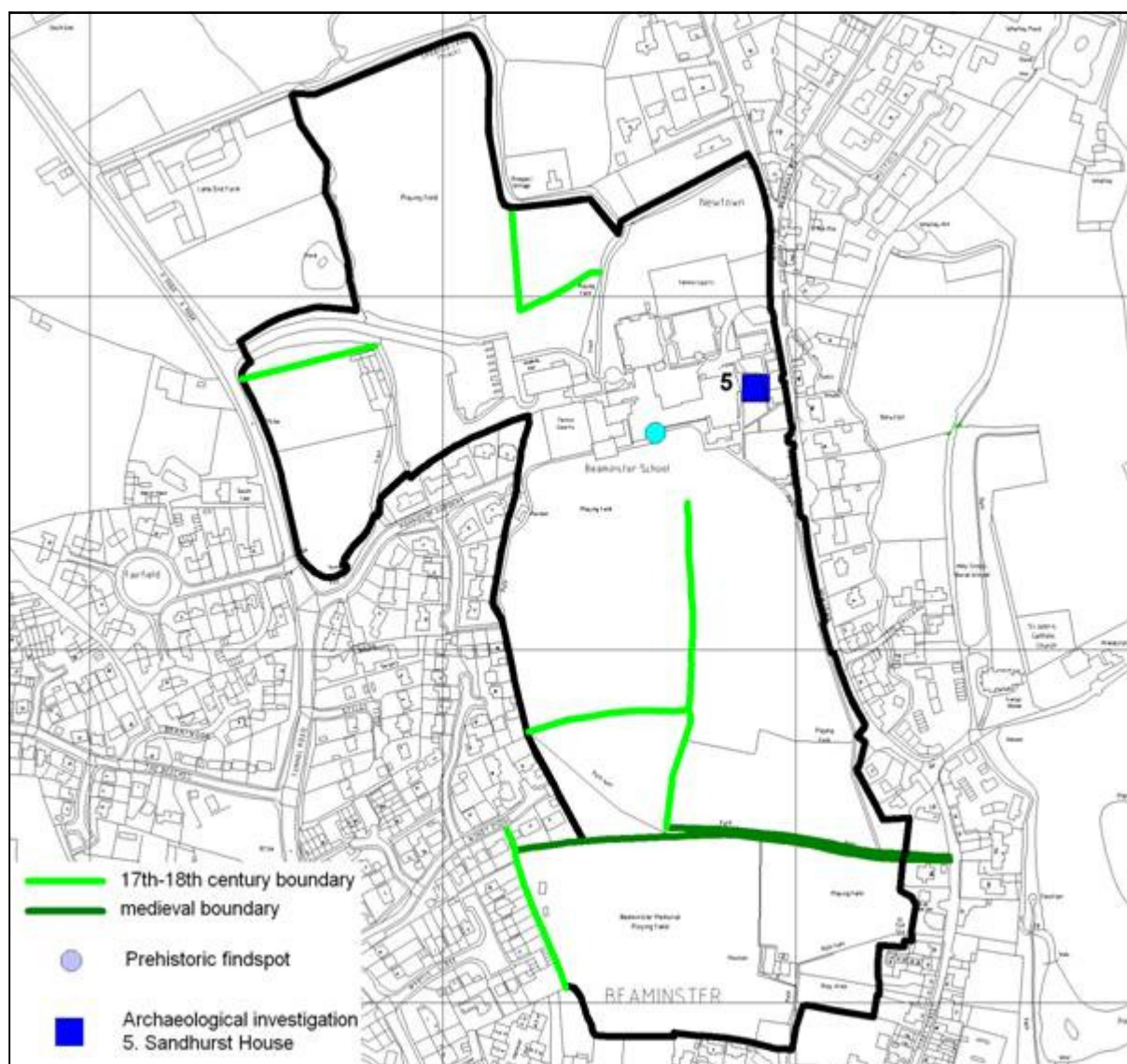


Figure 125: Archaeological Investigations, findspots and features in Historic Character Area 8.

**Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 8
Designations**

Listed Buildings

There are no Listed Buildings in the Character Area.

Conservation Areas

The Memorial Playing fields and the public open space to the north lie within the Beaminster Conservation Area (Figure 33).

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.



Figure 126: Beaminster School buildings, viewed from east.

Beaminster Historic Urban Character Area 8 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of historic urban character of this area is judged to be **weak**.

However, the contribution of this area to the character of Beaminster lies in its provision of 'green' space penetrating almost into the centre of the town, thus highlighting the importance the surrounding countryside plays in the character of Beaminster. Although, the area is not very visible from the town centre, it provides a strong contrast to the suburban development of Newtown to the east and Tunnel Road to the west. The area of public open space between the school and the playing fields provides a good vantage point to view the town and the surrounding countryside.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. Any development, except within or adjacent to the ensemble of school buildings, will fundamentally change the current open green character of the area.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **low**. It lies beyond the historic core of the medieval and post-medieval town, consequently is unlikely to provide much data

on the development of the town. Also the landscaping of the Memorial Playing Fields is likely to have removed all archaeological traces.

The flint axe findspot highlights the possibility of prehistoric remains in the area, so there is some potential for recovering archaeological information on pre-urban activity, but it is difficult to determine the probability of discovering evidence of earlier activity at the present level of knowledge.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Question 1 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Open green spaces including school grounds and Memorial Playing Fields
- Good views over Beaminster town
- Surviving historic field boundaries
- Relict green lane with hedge banks running to north of Memorial Playing Fields
- Beaminster School buildings