

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 4 Ham

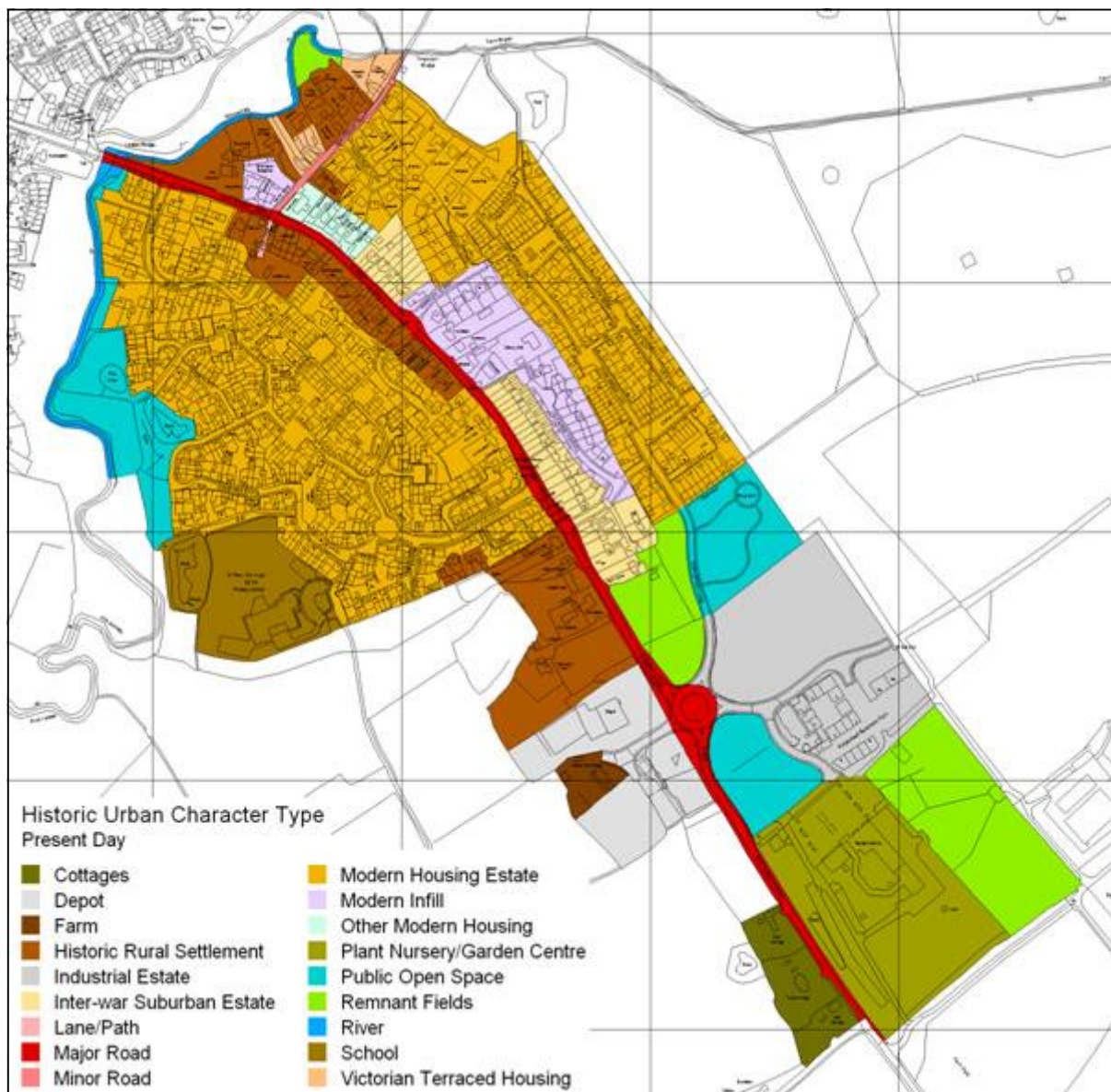


Figure 62: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 4, showing current historic urban character type.



Figure 63: View along Shaftesbury Road looking towards the town centre.



Figure 64: Higher Ham Farm House, Shaftesbury Road.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 4 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area comprises the southeastern extremity of the urban area of Gillingham and is centred on the historic rural manor of Ham, on the main road to Shaftesbury close to the medieval royal hunting lodge at Kings Court and the former Gillingham Park. It largely comprises modern suburban development, moving into semi-rural urban fringe environment.

Topography and Geology

Ham lies to the east of the River Lodden at the northwestern end of a slight ridge which rises gently to the southeast, away from the Lodden. This ridge is formed between two small tributaries of the Lodden, the Fern Brook and the Meadow Brook. The geology of the area is composed entirely of Kimmeridge Clay.

Urban Structure

There is a single major road running along the ridge forming the spinal element of this area. Along the northern end of this road there are a series of short plots. These are not continuous along both sides and comprise a series of different groups of plots of differing width and depth. Further south, there are a series of much larger open plots along the road, typical of urban fringe development, interspersed with a small number of small short roadside plots. There is one minor road in the northern part of the area, again with a number of discontinuous short plots along its length. A large part of the area comprises a series of housing estates which are largely focussed away from the major road, with either rectilinear grid or cul-de-sac layouts or with a more curvilinear dendritic pattern of local access roads and paths.

Present Character

Figure 62 shows the present day historic urban character types. The northern part of the area is dominated by large areas of Modern Housing Estate, with a mixture of Cottages, Historic Rural Settlement, Inter-war Suburban Housing and Modern Infill along the line of the Major Road. The southern part of the area is dominated by Industrial Estates, a Garden Centre and Remnant Fields which are earmarked for development. A School and a small area of Public Open Space lie alongside the River Lodden.

Time Depth

The earliest element in the area is the main road, which could be Saxon or earlier in date. The position of Lower and Higher Ham Farms

(Figure 64) probably indicate the sites of medieval farms. The cottages and Historic Rural Settlement along the Shaftesbury road and the junction with Kingscourt Lane probably originated in the 17th and 18th centuries, though the majority of the historic buildings here date from the 19th century. There are small areas of inter-war housing, but the vast majority of development in the area belongs to the period after 1970.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The earliest settlement was set back from the road at the edge of the common and the Haywain still retains a small piece of the common in front of it (Figure 65). A number of the historic rural houses are aligned gable end to the road. The current settlement pattern essentially comprises detached, semi-detached houses and short terraced houses set back from the street frontage along Shaftesbury Road and Kingscourt Lane. Some inter-war semi-detached houses are set back a long way with long narrow front gardens. The modern housing estates behind the historic plots comprise mixed detached, semi-detached and short terraced housing set back within curvilinear and linear culs-de-sac.

There are a number of green spaces in the area, though most are remnant fields earmarked for development. There are a number of garden hedges and mature ornamental garden trees along parts of Shaftesbury Road (Figure 63).



Figure 65: The Haywain (formerly Grosvenor House), Shaftesbury Road.

**Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 4
Built Character**

Building types

This character area primarily comprises suburban housing types of late 19th and 20th century date, together with smaller numbers of 18th-19th century rural vernacular buildings and some modern industrial and community structures.

The Haywain (formerly Grosvenor House) has a symmetrical front and central door, typical of 18th century vernacular farmhouses in the Gillingham area. Other 18th and 19th century vernacular farmhouses and cottages include Kings Cottage, Kingscourt Road; Rose Cottage, Ham Lane; Shaftesbury View, a row of cottages aligned gable end to the road. The mixture of hipped and gable ended farmhouses and vernacular cottages has been repeated as pastiche in some of the modern estate housing.

The late 19th century suburban housing is of a form widespread in Gillingham and consists of semi-detached houses on Shaftesbury Road, opposite Rookery Close (Figure 69) and Kingscourt Road. The inter-war council housing is also semi-detached and is typical of the period. The modern houses are a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced houses, in typical late 20th and early 21st century estate housing styles. The modern industrial buildings are typical steel-framed sheds.

Building Materials

The 18th and early 19th century former rural buildings tend to be built of stone rubble with brick or rendered stacks and slate or plain tile roofs. The Haywain is thatched. Park Farm House is built in Greensand ashlar with brick and tile outbuildings and a timber porch structure. Later 19th century houses tend to be brick built, sometimes with polychrome decoration, and with hipped or gable ended slate or tile roofs. The mid 20th century council houses are brick built, often painted and with hipped tile roofs. The early 21st century housing estates are brick skinned with a mixture of slate and tile roofs. Modern industrial and commercial buildings are built from a variety of brick and non-local materials.

Key Buildings

19th century Farm Houses: Park Farm, Higher Ham House, Lockwood Farm, Kings Cottage

18th-19th century rural vernacular houses: The Haywain (Grosvenor House), Longways, Rose Cottage, Shaftesbury View.



Figure 66: Kings Cottage, Kingscourt Road.



Figure 67: Rose Cottage, Ham Lane.



Figure 68: Shaftesbury View, Shaftesbury Road.



Figure 69: A row of 19th century semi-detached houses on Shaftesbury Road, Ham.

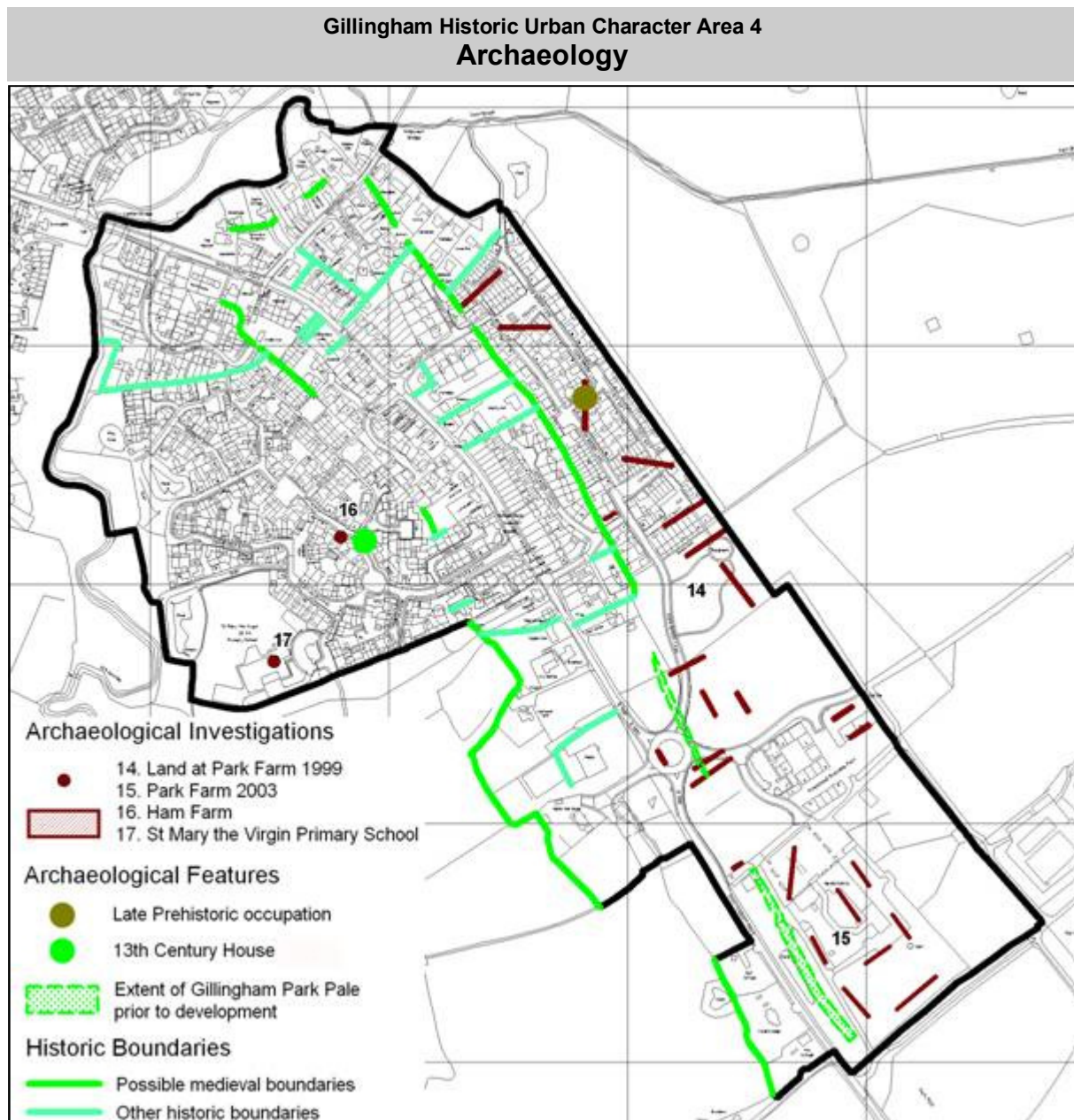


Figure 70: Archaeological investigations in Historic Urban Character Area 4.

Archaeological Investigations

Four archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area, three evaluations and a watching brief, all in advance of redevelopment (Figure 70; Appendix 3, Nos 14-17).

The two evaluations at Park Farm (Figure 70, 14-15) revealed slight evidence for late prehistoric activity together with part of the medieval park pale (Hudson 2000; Robinson 2003b). The evaluation at Ham Farm (Figure 70, no 16) revealed evidence for a 13th century

building (Gardiner 2003). The watching brief at St Mary the Virgin Primary School revealed no significant archaeology.

Archaeological Character

The archaeological interventions that have taken place within this area have demonstrated that the archaeological character is closely bound with the medieval settlement history of the place, as well as its location on the edge of the medieval deer park.

The evaluation at Ham Farm reinforces the information from historic maps in that the

**Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 4
Archaeology**

medieval settlement was located up to 100m back from the modern street frontage, on the edge of a roadside common (Ham Common). Furthermore this settlement tended to be on the south side of the common because the deer park abutted the common on the north side. Higher and Lower Ham Farms are located on the site of houses depicted on the 1624 forest map and may retain evidence for earlier buildings within their fabric. The course of the park pale in the vicinity of Park Farm survived as a slight earthwork prior to the development of Kingsmead Business Park in 1999.

Slight evidence for late prehistoric activity has been found and it may be that a significant settlement site remains to be discovered on this low ridge.

A small number of historic boundaries are marked on Figure 70. These are the extant remains of the boundary of Ham Common, as well as later subdivisions within it following enclosure, recorded on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.



Figure 71: Park Farm, Kingsmead Business Park.

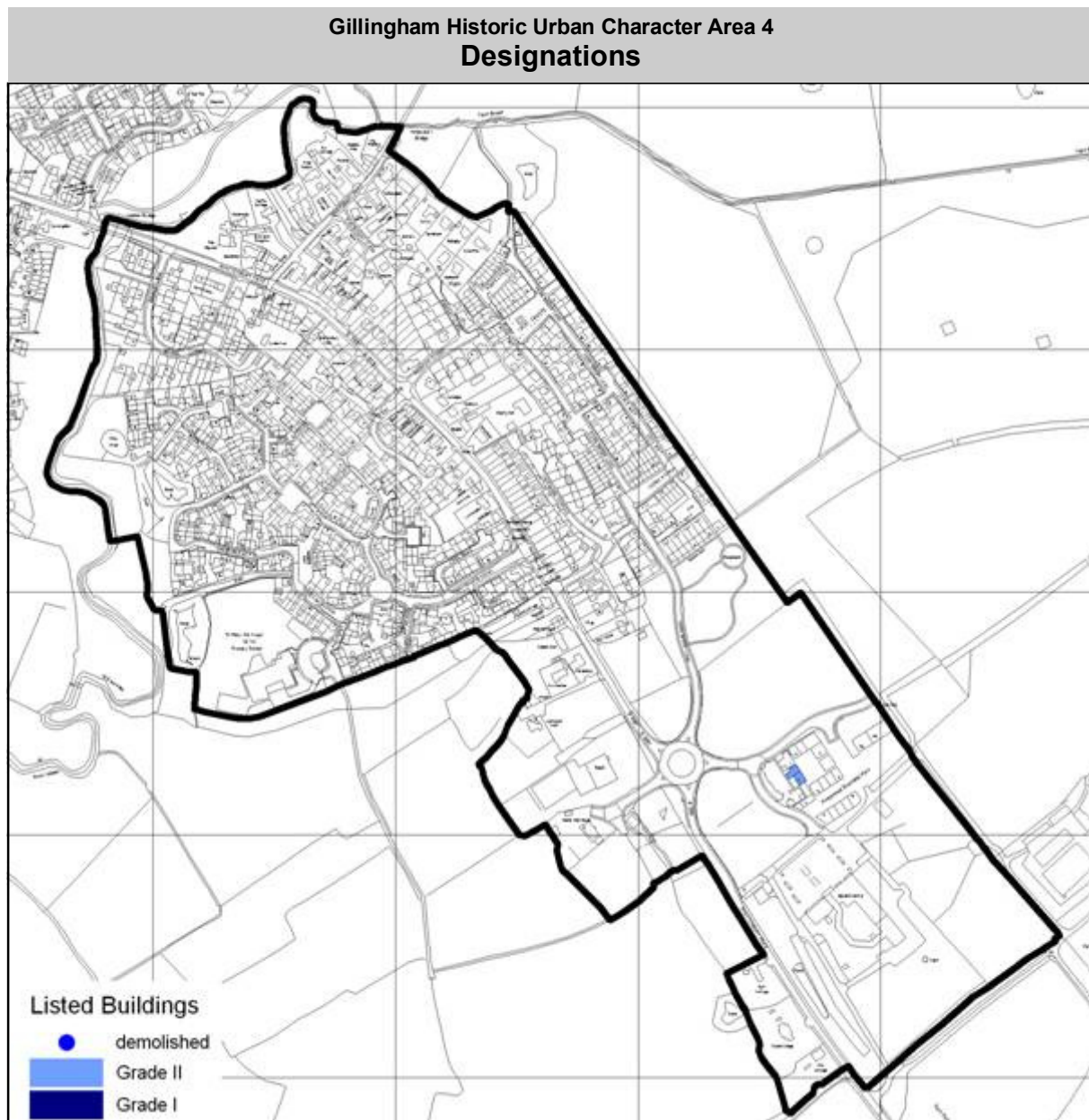


Figure 72: Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 3.

Listed Buildings

There is one Listed Building in the Character Area; the Grade II Park Farmhouse which is now included within the Kingsmead Business Park (Figure 71).

Conservation Areas

The entire character area lies outside the Gillingham Conservation Area (Figure 39).

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

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

Scheduled Monuments

There are no Scheduled Monuments within the Character Area, although a well preserved section of the Park Pale is scheduled outside the study area to the east.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 4 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **medium**. Surviving historic elements have generally been subsumed and diluted within a wider modern development both domestic and commercial in nature. The historic street frontage has also been diluted by the insertion of modern and inter-war housing as well as the modernisation of the main road to include large roundabouts and a high volume of traffic. The area essentially has the character of a modern edge of town commercial estate and housing development. Nevertheless, the side streets of Kingscourt Road and Ham Lane have a decidedly different and well preserved historic rural character.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change, providing development does not visually impact on the historic townscape of Gillingham. It is possible that future development may enhance the historic character through the reinstatement of elements of the Common and street frontage. The historic farmsteads at Higher and Lower Ham and Park Farm, as well as the Kingscourt Road-Ham Lane area.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **medium**. The archaeological

interventions that have taken place have demonstrated the potential for remains relating to medieval settlement, particularly on the southern fringes of Ham Common south of the Shaftesbury Road. The medieval park pale also survives as an earthwork and there is the potential for more of it surviving as sub-surface deposits on the fringes of Ham Common north of the Shaftesbury Road. The origins of the settlement at Ham Common are not fully understood and archaeology has the potential to illuminate this question.

Archaeological investigations on the north side of Ham Common have also demonstrated the potential for the survival of deposits dating for the later prehistoric period. The evidence is slight, consisting of a few pits and ditches, but is suggestive of settlement activity within the vicinity. The prehistoric and Roman settlement pattern of the region is poorly understood. An enhanced knowledge of prehistoric and Roman settlement may help in the understanding of the pre-urban landscape from which the town of Gillingham and the forest emerged.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 3, 11, 19-21 and 23-25 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Historic rural settlement of Ham Common
- Main Road to Shaftesbury
- Medieval Royal deer park and park pale
- Modern housing and commercial development