

Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 4 The Town Walls

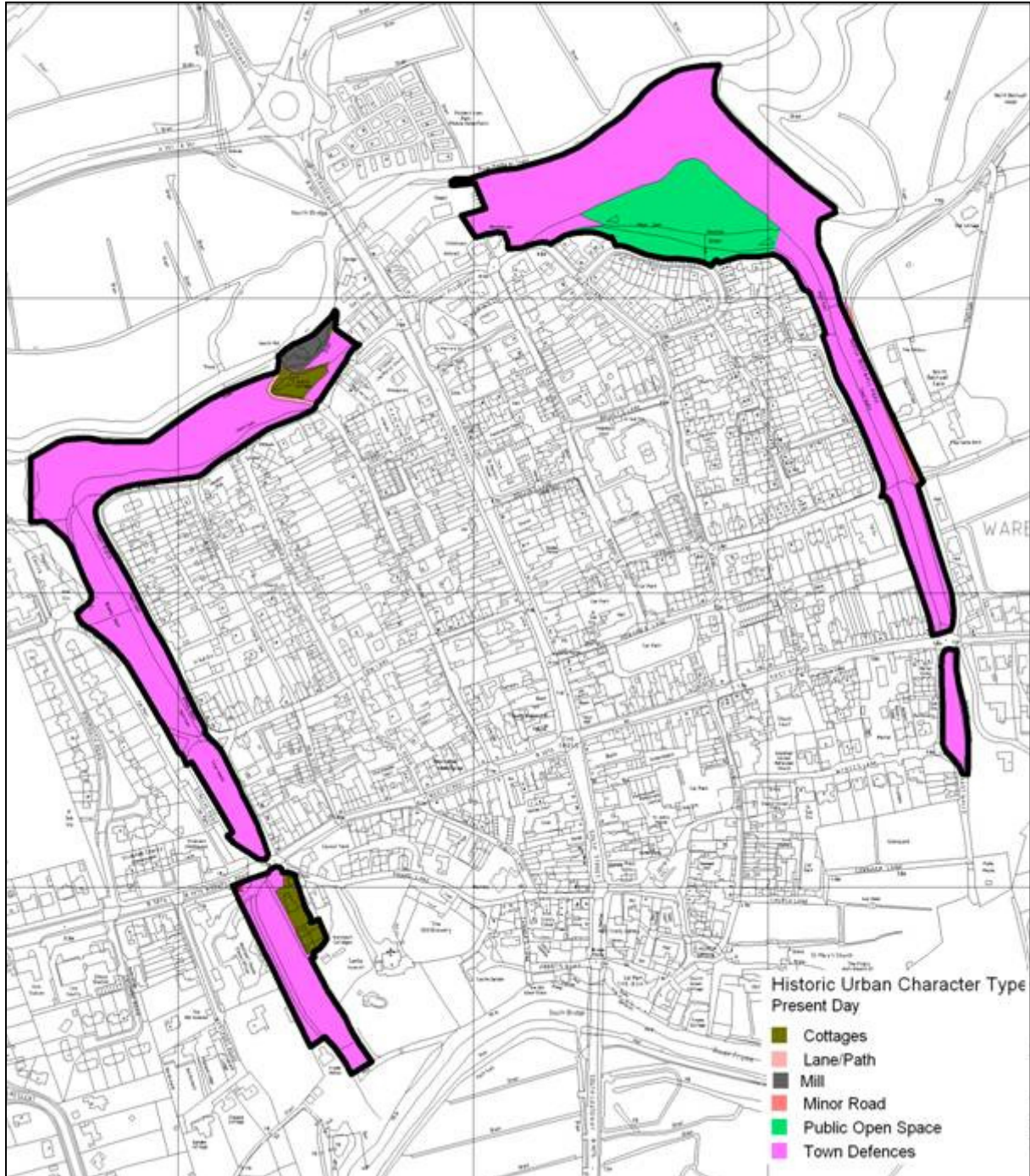


Figure 81: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 4, showing current historic urban character type.

Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 4 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This is the area of the surviving earthwork remains of the Saxon town defences, which survive as a significant physical presence in the townscape and define the extent of the historic core of Wareham on the north, east and west sides.

Topography and Geology

The East and West Walls cross the ridge of gravel running E-W between the rivers Frome and Piddle. The ground rises naturally to the north and west and varies in height from approximately 4m above OD in the southeast to 8m OD in the northeast corner and 11m in the northwest. The land falls again to 4m in the vicinity of North Bridge. The geology of the area consists almost entirely of Eocene gravels of the Lower Bagshot Beds.

Urban Structure

The structure of this area is not strictly urban. It comprises grass-covered earthen banks forming three sides of a square, which define the limits of the historic town to the east, west and north sides. There are gaps in the circuit at the end of North, East and West Streets, and another at the west end of Cow Lane. There is a path running along the top of the bank. A number of houses have been built on the bank at Westport and at the end of North Street. North Mill lies just below the bank on the north side of the walls.

Present Character

Figure 81 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area is almost totally comprised of Town Defences, with small areas of Cottages and Mill and Public Open Space in the northeast corner in the area of the Bowling Green.

Time Depth

The earthworks date from the late 9th century when the Saxon burh was laid out. There have been some additions and modifications to the defences in the late Saxon period, the 12th century, the English Civil War and the Second World War. The Bowling Green is 18th century in date. The buildings of North Mill date to the 17th or 18th century, but the mill may be on the site of a Domesday mill. Westport Cottages were built on the bank in the early 19th century and Belle Vue, just to the north, is late 19th century in date.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

This area now consists almost entirely of public open green space and is an important public amenity, providing green space close to the historic town centre. The walls provide good views over the surrounding countryside, particularly to the north, overlooking the Piddle valley. There are a number of trees along the walls, particularly along East Walls.



Figure 82: 'Bloody Bank' West Walls.



Figure 83: North Walls..



Figure 84: North Bestwall Road and the East Walls.

Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 4 Built Character

Building types

There are very few buildings in this area. The oldest structure is North Mill dating from the 17th century with a 19th century extension forming an L- shaped plan. Westport Cottages are a short terrace of early 19th century houses. Belle Vue is a typical late Victorian detached suburban villa built in 1885. The Town Pound is a square walled structure with an entrance in the north-west wall.

Building Materials

North Mill House is built in a mixture of brick and stone rubble with a hipped tile roof with stone easing course. Westport Cottages are rendered with tile roofs. The Town Pound has brick walls.

Key Buildings

North Mill, Watts Cottage, Belle Vue, Westport Cottages.



Figure 85: North Mill viewed from the North Walls..



Figure 86: Westport Cottages.



Figure 87: Belle Vue and the Town Pound.



Figure 88: The Bowling Green.

**Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 4
Archaeology**

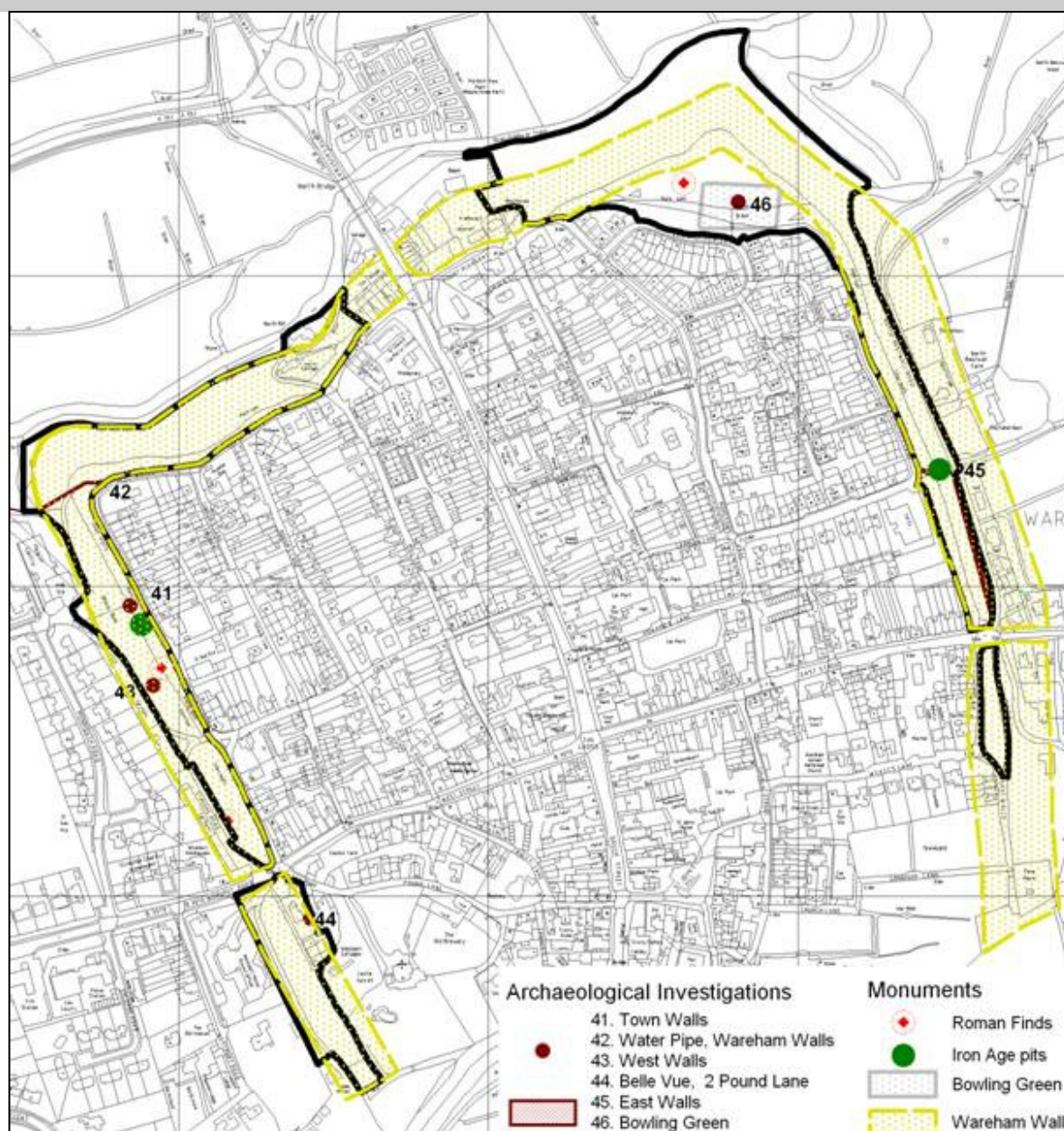


Figure 89: Archaeological Investigations and features in Historic Urban Character Area 4.

Archaeological Investigations

Six archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Figure 89; Appendix 3, Nos. 41-46).

The town walls were investigated in the 1950s and 1960s by the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England (RCHME) (41-43). This work revealed that the walls were originally built as a rampart with an external ditch, subsequently topped with a stone wall during the late Saxon period. The ditch was re-cut and the bank heightened during the 12th century. Residual Roman material was incorporated into the rampart and Iron Age features were sealed

beneath it. A watching brief during the laying of a water main alongside the East Walls produced evidence for an Iron Age feature beneath the rampart (45). The Department of the Environment investigated the ‘Bowling Green’ in the northeast angle of the town walls (46).

Archaeological Character

The dominant archaeological feature is the Saxon town defences, which survive as an earthen bank, with the accompanying external ditch visible along the west side. To the east, there is some suggestion of a second ditch. Within the earthen bank are remnants of several

phases of construction and refortification. The banks seal earlier features, including Iron Age pits beneath both the East and West Walls. Residual Roman pottery has been incorporated accidentally within the structure of the banks.

North Mill may contain evidence for earlier mill structures.

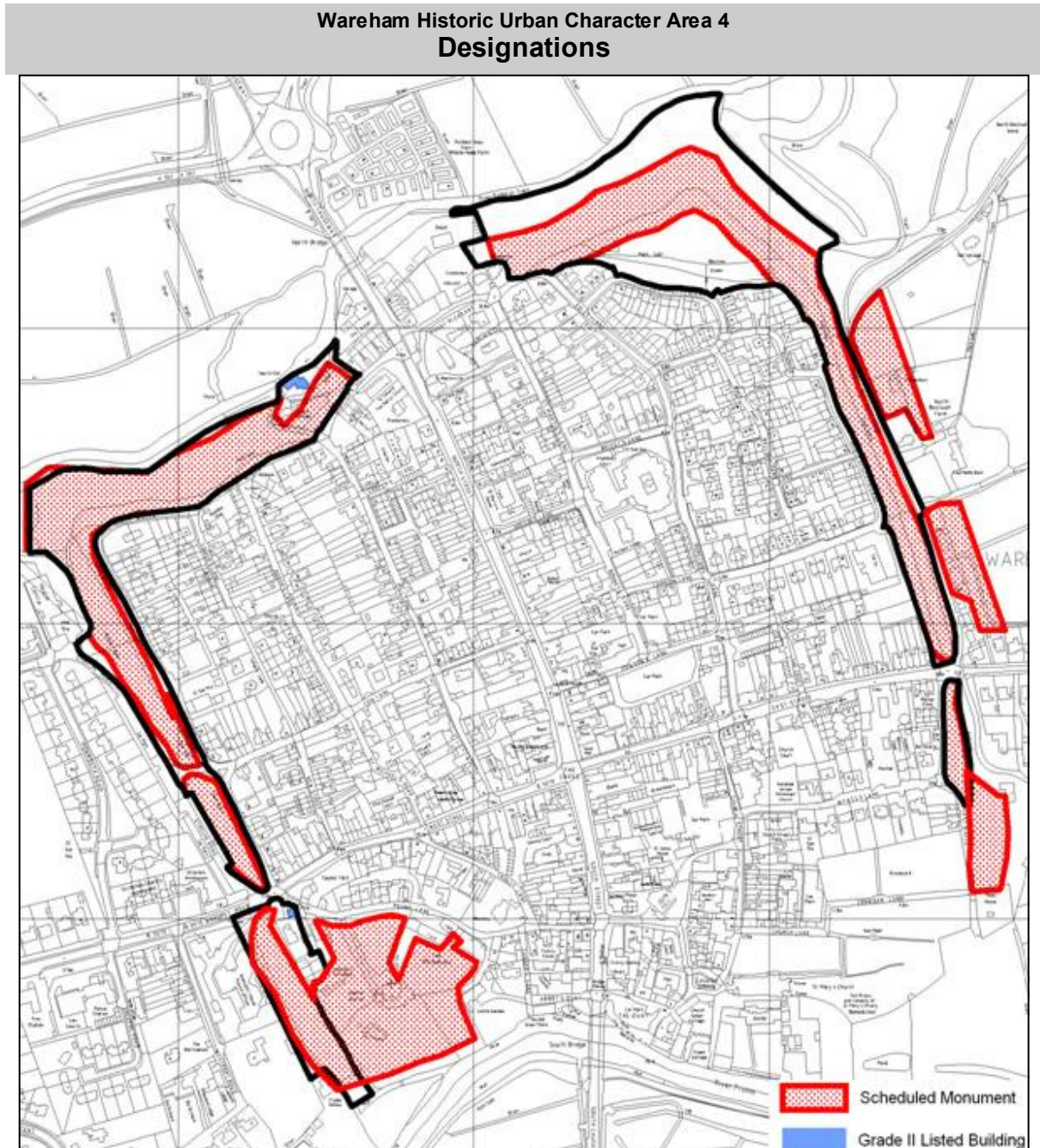


Figure 90: Listed Buildings and other Designations in Historic Urban Character Area 4.

Listed Buildings

There are two Listed Building designation in the Character Area, the Grade II North Mill and the Town Pound.

Conservation Areas

The whole of this Character Area lies within the Wareham Conservation Area (Figure 49).

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

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

Scheduled Monuments

The larger part of the Wareham Town Walls Scheduled Monument lies within the character area (Dorset 94).

**Wareham Historic Urban Character Area 4
Evaluation**

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. The Saxon defences survive for much of their circuit to a considerable height and on the west side, the external ditch still remains as a noticeable landscape feature. The town walls are a nationally important monument.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **high** sensitivity to large scale development. There is very little development that has taken place on the line of the Walls. Any development on or immediately adjacent would have a detrimental effect on the integrity of the monument and its setting.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. The most coherent evidence for Iron Age and Roman activity has been recovered from just inside and beneath the West Walls. The structure of the Saxon defences survives relatively intact and the area has a high potential to inform us of the development of Saxon burhs and of the defences of Wareham in particular.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1-4, 8-9, 13 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Saxon Town Defences
- Iron Age and Roman material beneath the rampart
- North Mill
- Town Walls provide green open space
- 18th century Bowling Green