

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 2

St Michael's Lane

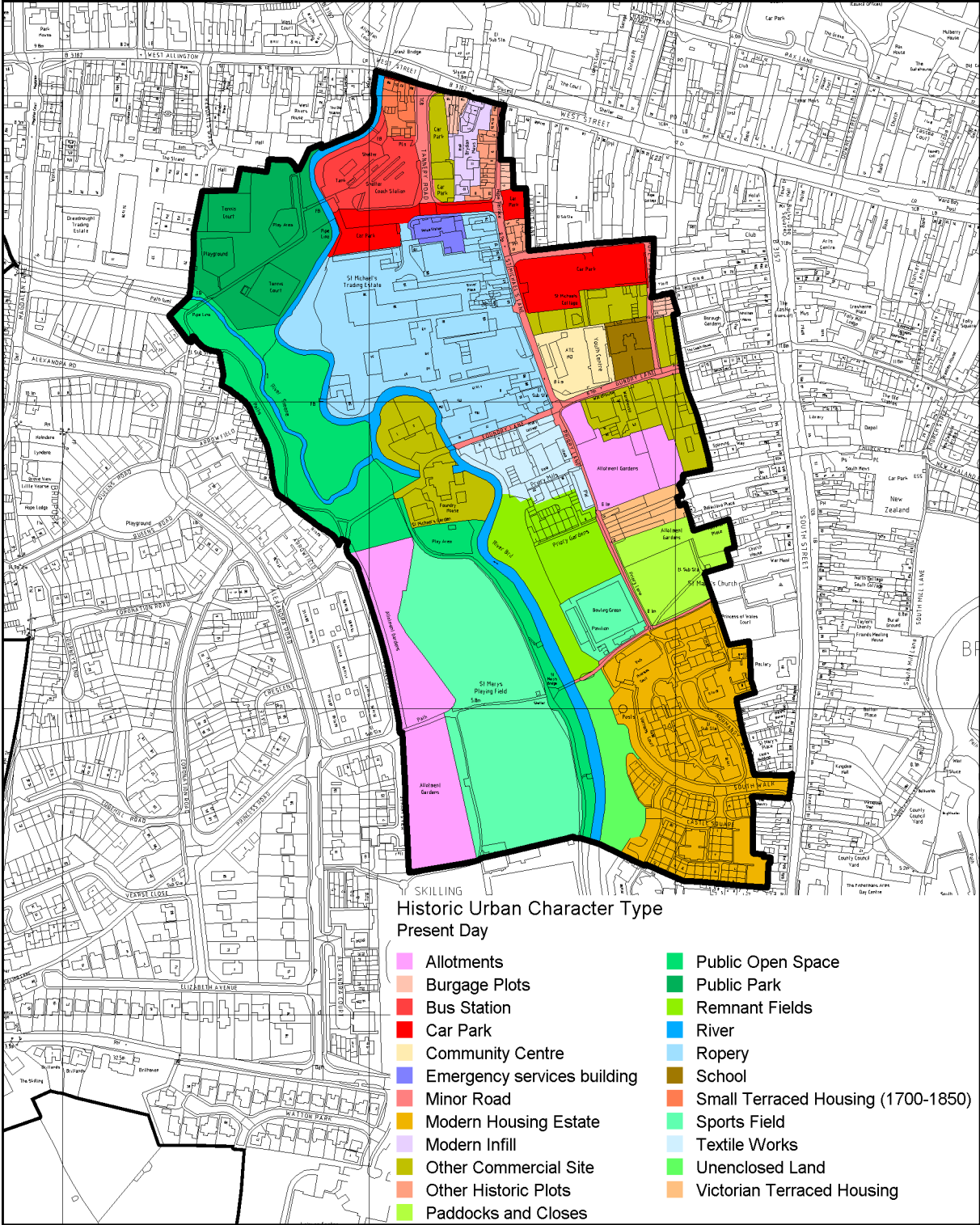


Figure 52: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type.

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 2 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This character area lies in the southwest quadrant of the historic centre, along the River Brit and represents one of the main historic industrial areas of Bridport. It lies immediately outside the medieval town and is defined by West Street to the north, the river valley to the west and the southern end of the historic town centre. It is defined primarily by the historic industry located by the River Brit.

Topography and Geology

The area is located in the floodplain of the river Brit and the low-lying western fringes of the low promontory between the rivers Brit and Asker. The geology is siltstones and limestones of the Eype Clay Member, overlain by deposits of Alluvium.

Urban Structure

The street pattern consists of the narrow St Michael's Lane/Priory Lane running south from West Street, with Gundry Lane/Foundry Lane and other paths crossing it at right angles. The modern Tannery Road gives access to the bus station and car parks and has opened up the West Street frontage and area behind. The majority of the urban development lies along St Michael's Road and is concentrated in St Michael's Trading Estate, which contains the long narrow plots and larger amalgamated plots of the former net and rope making factories. Other warehouses and malhousers lie along Gundry Lane in larger plots. The area to the south is a series of larger rectilinear open fields, gardens, playing fields and allotments. At the southern end of the area is the curvilinear cul-de-sac layout of the modern housing estate accessed from South Street.

Present Character

Figure 52 shows the present day historic urban character types. The core of the area consists of Roperies and Textile Works with large areas

of car park and bus station to the north and east. There are fragments of burgage plots along West Street and Small Terraced Housing and Other Historic Plots to the east. The southern end of the area is Modern Housing Estates. Much of the area around the river and in the southern part is open ground comprising Public Open Space, Public Park, Allotments, Sports Fields, Paddocks and Closes and Remnant Fields. Other minor historic urban character types include Emergency Services Building, School, Community Centre, and some Modern Infill behind West Street.

Time Depth

This area lies immediately outside the medieval town and much of the area was agricultural land, used for growing hemp and for orchards, until the late 18th century. The roads and lanes probably date to the Saxon and medieval periods, but the character of much of the rest of the area derives from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is highly fragmented in this area and exists largely along West Street and St Michael's Lane. The buildings are densely packed along the street frontages, with occasional exceptions. The frontages have a number of gaps, largely through demolition to form car parks, the bus station and Tannery Road. Much of the western and southern part is open green spaces bounded by hedges or fences forming a green corridor either side of the river.



Figure 53: View north along St Michael's Lane.



Figure 54: View across open part of character area towards Priory Mills.

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 2 Built Character

Building types

The built character of this area forms two distinctive groups: large-scale 19th century industrial buildings and the smaller residential or mixed residential/industrial/commercial buildings. The West Street frontage has two and three storey 18th century houses, some with inserted 19th century shopfronts. The north part of St Michael's Lane has mixed 19th century industrial housing and small warehouses. Further south is a mixture of former warehouses (Nos. 29 & 40), worker's housing (Nos. 36 & 38) and former rural buildings (Nos. 26 & 28). St Michael's Trading Estate has a number of former industrial buildings, the most distinctive being the Bridport Industries building with its clock tower. The most impressive industrial buildings are those of Priory Mills and the associated Whetham's Warehouse. Adjacent to the latter is a terrace of good quality industrial housing at Nos. 37-45 Rope Walks.

The southern part of the area is modern estate housing, which has few distinguishing local features in terms of house type, road layout and materials used.

Building Materials

The buildings are predominantly stone-built, but with a significant number of brick buildings. The roofs are mainly Welsh slate, plain clay tiles and corrugated iron.

Key Buildings

Industrial Buildings: 40 St Michael's Lane. Bridport Industries building, former William Gale and Sons and Robert Hounsell and Sons net works, Priory Mills, Whetham's warehouse, the New Brewery.

Public Buildings: St Mary's School.

Houses: 26 & 28 St Michael's Lane, 66 & 68 St Michael's Lane, 37-45 Rope Walks, 13-23 Priory Lane.



Figure 56: View from Ropewalks car park towards St Michael's Works building behind Cattle Market.



Figure 57: Former twine store and covered walk behind No. 40 St Michael's Lane.



Figure 58: Corrugated iron covered ropewalk, St Michael's Lane.



Figure 55: Whetham's Warehouse, with St Mary's School in front.



Figure 59: 37-45 Rope Walks.

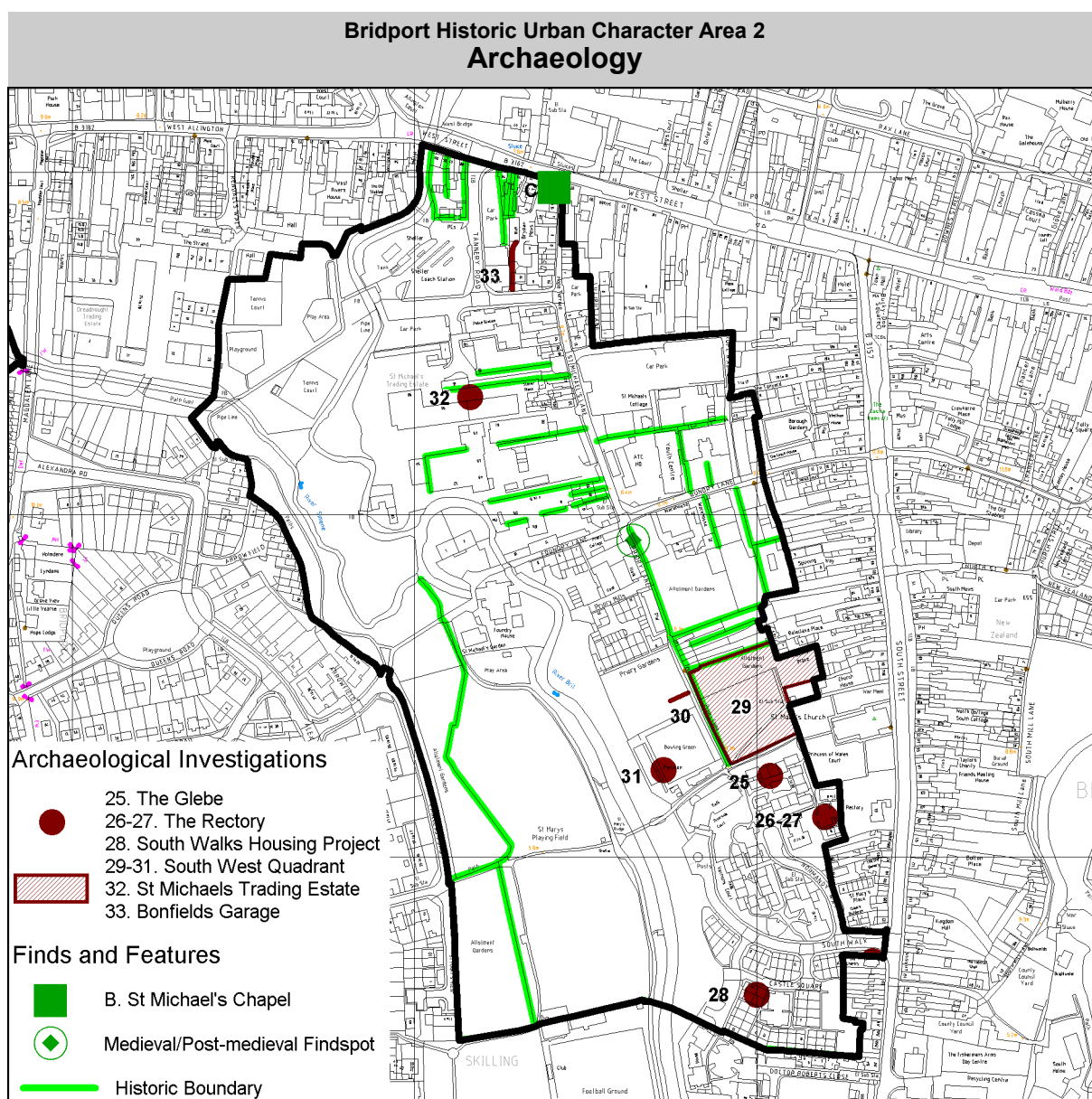


Figure 60: Archaeological investigations, findspots and features in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Archaeological Investigations

There has been relatively little archaeological recording within this character area and most has focussed on proposals to redevelop the St Michael's Trading Estate. A desk-based assessment, a watching brief during geotechnical test-pitting and evaluation excavation in the South West Quadrant was undertaken in 1997-8. This revealed much of the area is covered with fairly deep post-medieval soils over alluvial deposits (Cox *et al.* 1997). An important assessment of the industrial archaeology was done in 2007, identifying the remaining standing buildings of the rope and net works (Stanier and Cox 2007). A very limited watching brief was undertaken during the redevelopment of Bonfield's Garage site in 2006. Only modern disturbance was recorded (Whelan 2006).

There has been some investigation in the more open area south of the industrial area. A small excavation was undertaken on former glebe land behind St Mary's Church in 1975 (Bailey 1975) and an evaluation excavation was carried out on adjacent land at the rear of the Rectory in 1996 (Hewitt 1996). A watching brief was undertaken during the building of the South West Housing Project in 1993 (Graham 1993). The results of these archaeological works have indicated a low level of past activity, suggesting the area was either cultivated land before modern development or was part of the alluvial floodplain.

A lead alloy spindle whorl of medieval or early post-medieval date was found in this area (Figure 60).

Archaeological Character

The below-ground investigations suggest a low level of buried archaeology across much of the area. The majority of the evidence is likely to relate to the industrial archaeology of the area, contained within the surviving buildings and buried remains of former buildings and other structures. The remains of St Michael’s Chapel may survive below ground in the northern part of the area. The floodplain is likely to contain evidence of former channels of the Brit and may

contain buried evidence in alluvial deposits for the presence (or otherwise) of the location of the Saxon and medieval harbour postulated in the southern part of this area.

Figure 60 shows historic boundaries depicted on maps dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. These are a mixture of former medieval burgage plots fossilised in the modern townscape on West Street, other historic boundaries or fossilised field boundaries.

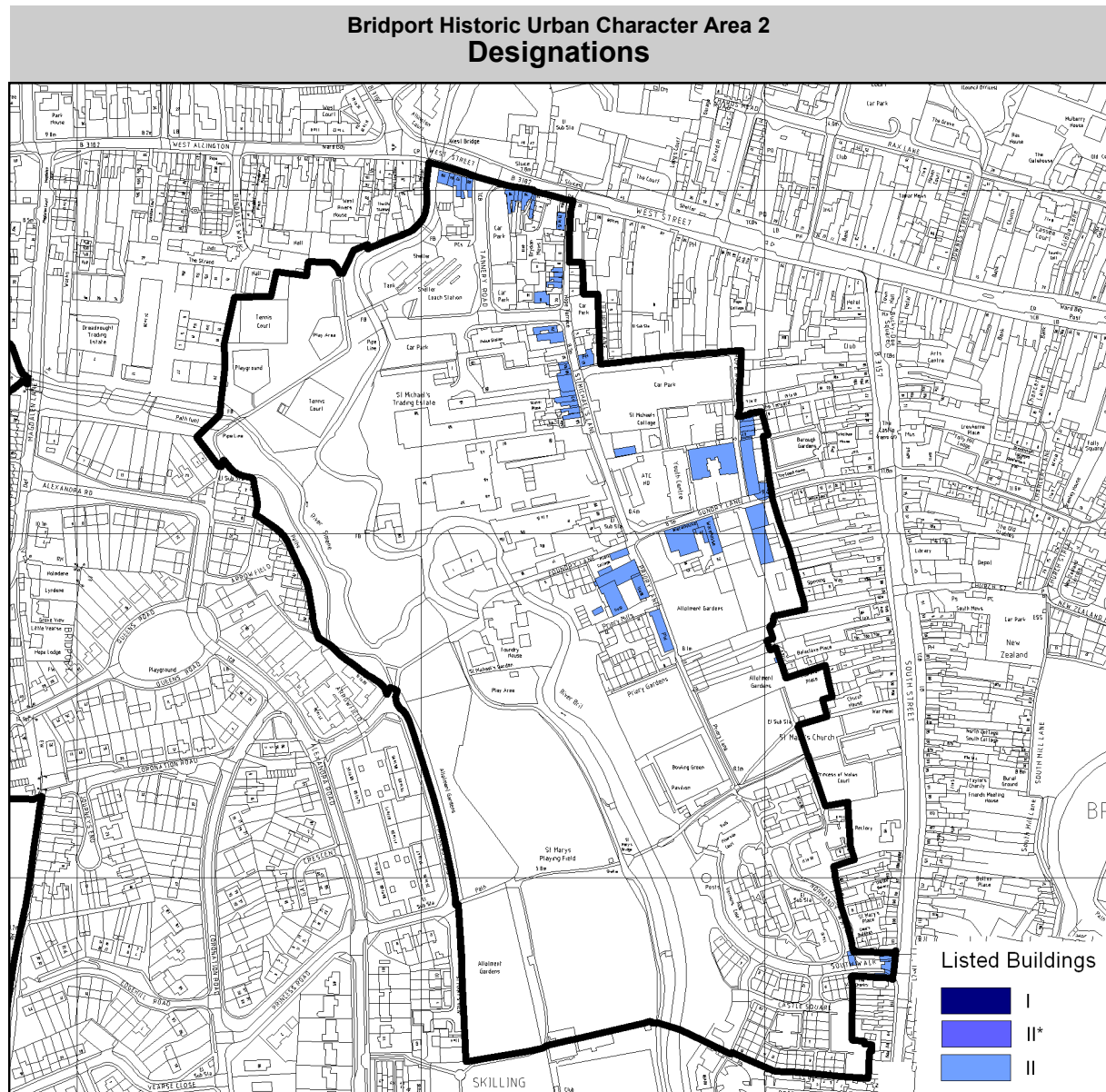


Figure 61: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Listed Buildings

There are 28 Listed Buildings and structures in the Character Area. All are Grade II.

Conservation Areas

This character area lies partly within the Bridport Conservation Area (Figure 41).

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.

Bridport Historic Urban Character Area 2 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of historic character in this area is judged to be **High**. It has fairly good survival of historic industrial buildings and former fields which form the main character elements of this area, but more recent development of the bus station and the creation of a number of car parks have opened up a formerly built up areas. Nevertheless, the main historic character of this area is still strongly legible.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **High** sensitivity to major change. Any major alteration of the surviving industrial buildings is likely to have a severe negative impact on part of Bridport's unique historic industrial character. Any encroachment on the open green spaces would also have a negative impact on the character of the area. The sensitive development of the modern open spaces formed by the bus station and car parks could have a positive effect on the character area.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this character area is judged to be **Medium**. It contains crucial evidence for the study and understanding of Bridport's industrial heritage, in the form of the

surviving standing industrial buildings and other structures.

The postulated line of the Saxon town defences runs through this area and archaeology has a high potential to answer whether there was a defensive work here or not, particularly in the southern half of the area, where there has been little development. The archaeological evidence indicates a low level of activity prior to the 19th century, suggesting a low potential for buried archaeological remains earlier than this date. There is a much higher potential for geoarchaeological investigation of the alluvium and for water-logged palaeoenvironmental material, which could answer questions about the landscape and environment during the Saxon and medieval periods. The survival of archaeological deposits and features is low to medium.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 22, 25-29 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- 19th-20th century industrial remains
- Open green spaces and hedges
- Alluvial deposits
- Potential for Saxon defences
- Buried remains of St Michael's Chapel