

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 2

Newbury

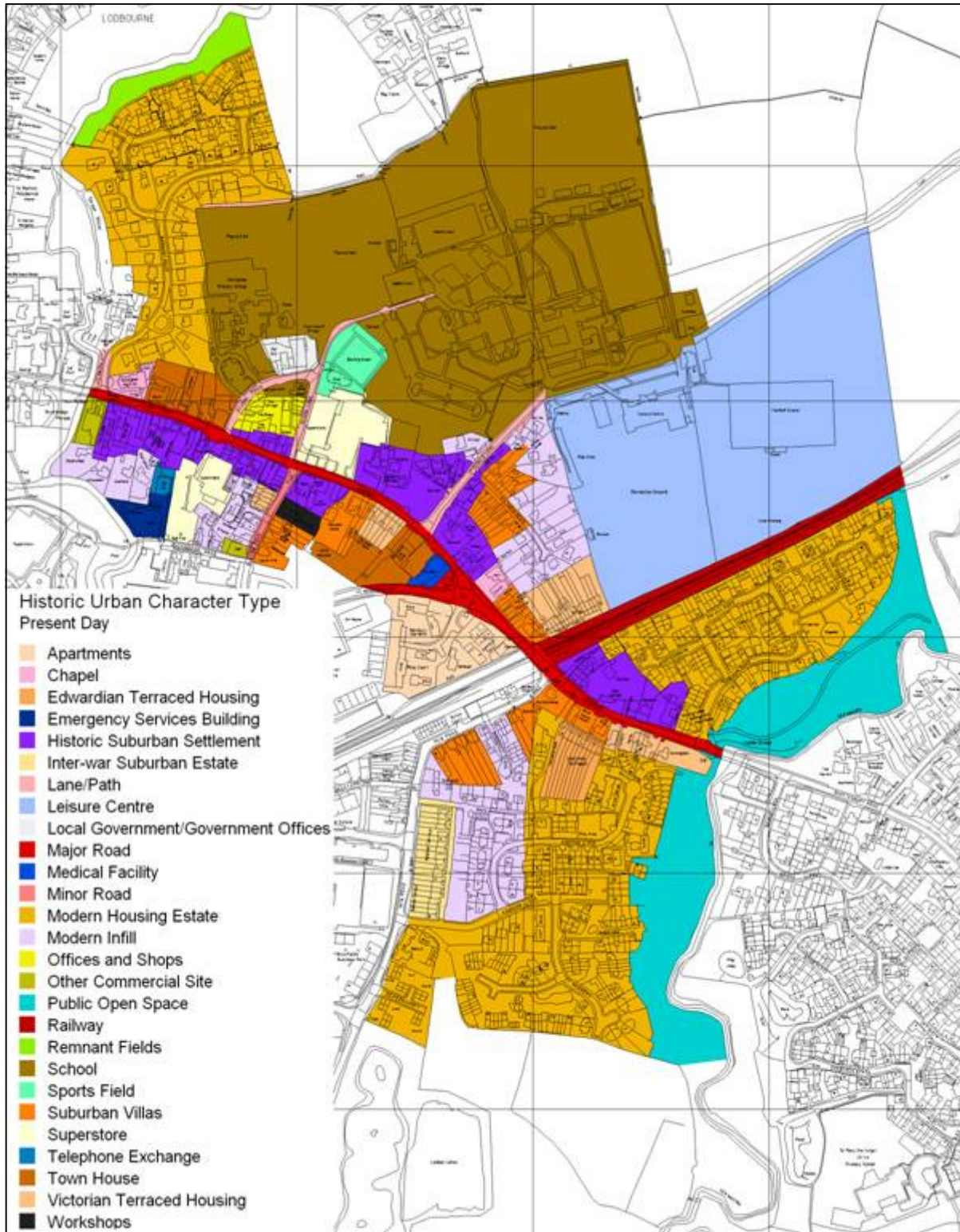


Figure 47: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 2 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area includes the medieval suburb of Newbury, together with Gillingham School to the north and modern housing estates to the south and east, as far as the River Lodden which forms a natural boundary between Newbury and Ham Common. The Shreen Water forms another natural boundary to the west. Thus, the area is defined partly by its historic dimension and partly by the geographical boundaries of the two rivers.

Topography and Geology

The area lies on a slight ridge or spur running between the two rivers, with the highest point occurring at Gillingham School, which sits on a slight rounded hill at a height of just over 90m. The geology of the area is Kimmeridge Clay.

Urban Structure

High Street or Newbury (the old Shaftesbury road) forms the spine of this character area with settlement along both sides. The area is also divided by the railway line. There are a series of short narrow rectilinear plots along both sides of the main road, together with some larger plots. Behind the road corridor are a series of housing estates accessed by a network of curvilinear culs-de-sac. The school and leisure centre form large plots on the north side of the character area. The area along the Lodden is undeveloped.

Present Character

Figure 47 shows the present day historic urban character types. At the heart of the area is a narrow strip of Historic Suburban Settlement aligned on the main street. This is interspersed with sections of Victorian Terraced Housing, Suburban Villas, a Chapel and a Doctor's Surgery, all within plots that may have originally formed part of the suburban settlement. Supermarkets, Modern Infill, Workshops, Offices and Shops, Other Commercial Sites, a Telephone Exchange and Emergency Services Buildings lie in the plots immediately behind the historic suburb. A large area to the north of the suburb is taken over by Gillingham Grammar School and grounds, Gillingham Leisure centre and football ground, Gillingham County Primary School, police Station (Figure 52) and bowling club. The railway line divides the main part of the suburb from the south eastern part which is now dominated by extensive modern housing estates at Lodden Meads. A further extensive modern housing estate has been constructed at Barnaby Mead in the northwest part of the

character area.

Time Depth

The main road represents the earliest structural element. This was originally a wide unenclosed track, which became enclosed during the 13th or 14th century. The oldest plots were long, narrow, and aligned with the main street, but became subdivided over time to form an unbroken street frontage within short plots, not typical of burgages. Settlement only developed beyond these limits from the 19th century with the construction of Victorian and Edwardian terraces, large villas, and the Grammar School. The railway split the suburb in two during the later 19th century. Limited inter-war development in the vicinity of New Road and Hardings Lane has spread in the late 20th century into large estates on meadows of both the rivers.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern is dominated by the axial road of Newbury upon which the settlement was founded. This is still the case today, with the road forming the unifying feature of the character area (Figure 48). Settlement along the main street tends to vary between tightly packed houses fronting directly on to the street, large town houses, detached cottages and suburban villas set back from the street, and short terraces within short narrow plots. Modern commercial and domestic developments have infilled the plots behind the historic settlement. Modern housing estates lie beyond comprising detached, semi-detached and short terraces within curvilinear culs-de-sac.

Open and green spaces form a large but peripheral part of this area, being restricted to the Lodden floodplain and the school and leisure centre grounds.



Figure 48: View West along High Street, Newbury.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 2 Built Character

Building types

There is a wide variety of building type within the character area. These include some former rural buildings, early 19th century houses, Victorian and Edwardian terraces, town houses and suburban villas, late 19th century commercial buildings, non-conformist chapels and a range of 1920's-30's and modern residential properties and commercial premises.

The early 19th century houses tend to be symmetrical with shallow pitched hipped or gabled roofs (Figure 49). Later 19th and early 20th century buildings predominate along the main street frontage and include a range of different houses, some with shopfronts inserted, typical of the period. The Victorian and Edwardian houses include suburban villas, terraces and detached houses, many with moulded brick and tile detail (Figure 50). The 1900-1 Baroque Westminster Bank building (Figure 51) is a prominent building, as are the large Methodist Church and the Baptist Chapel.

Inter-war suburban semi-detached houses are plainer in style with hipped roofs. Modern housing stock tends to be varied in style but with little local distinctiveness. There is one historic bridge, Lodden Bridge, dating from the 18th or 19th century, with two semi-circular arches and a modern parapet.

Building Materials

The earliest buildings in the area tend to be constructed in coursed squared rubble, greensand or Corallian limestone, with slate roofs. Walls are plain, painted, rendered or stuccoed. Later 19th century houses are generally built in brick with slate or tiled roofs. Moulded and polychrome brick detail is common. The Baptist Chapel is brick-built with ashlar dressings. The Gillingham Methodist Chapel is built in rock-faced stone with ashlar dressings and detail. Twentieth century houses tend to be brick faced. Tiled roofs predominate at this time, although some imported slate is used on modern terraces. Lodden Bridge is built of squared rubble.

Key Buildings

Public Buildings: Methodist Chapel, Baptist Chapel and Hall, Old School House, School Lane.

Commercial Premises: Lloyds Bank, NatWest Bank.

Early 19th century houses: The Laurels, Blackmore Vale House, Lodden Bridge Farm House, Newbury House.



Figure 49: Blackmore Vale House, Newbury



Figure 50: Lloyds Bank, High Street, Newbury.



Figure 51: National Westminster Bank, High Street, Newbury.



Figure 52: Gillingham Police Station and Town Hall, School Road, Newbury.

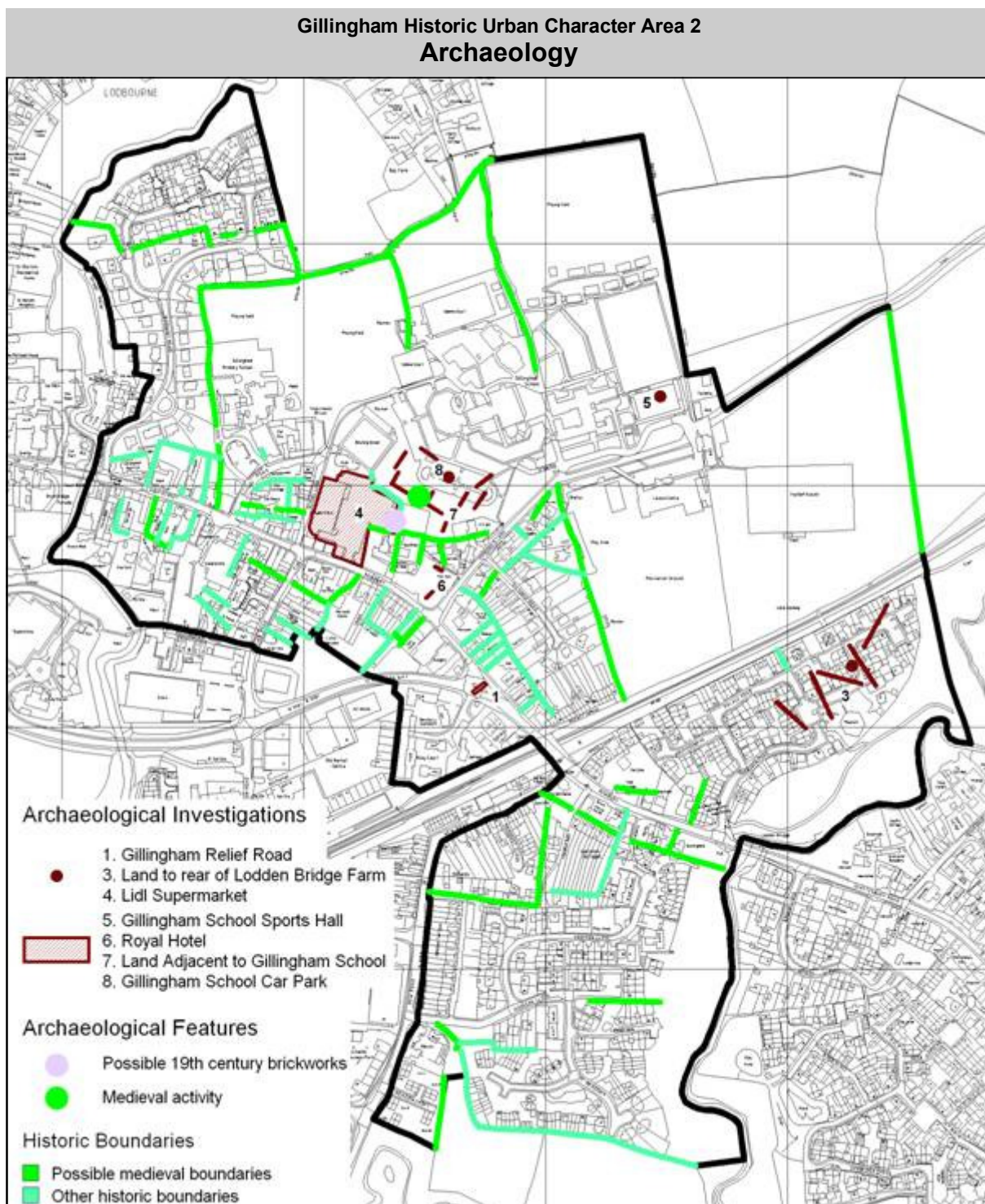


Figure 53: Archaeological investigations in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 2
Archaeology***Archaeological Investigations***

Seven archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area, five evaluations and two watching briefs, all in advance of redevelopment (Appendix 3, Nos. 1, 3-8; Figure 53). It is only in the area of Gillingham School that significant archaeology was encountered. The two investigations in the southwest corner of the school grounds (Figure 53, 7-8) revealed evidence for medieval occupation, including a hearth, linear and discrete features and a large quantity of medieval pottery, dating from the 10th to 14th centuries (Robinson & Valentin 2005). Further evidence of this settlement was found during the watching brief on the Lidl Store, which also revealed some evidence for an early 19th century brick works comprising a brick clamp and clay pits (Bellamy 2003). The other investigations revealed very little archaeology, partly because of later disturbance. A field boundary ditch was found behind Lodden Bridge Farm (Robinson & Valentin 1999) and a 19th century stables on the site of the former Royal Hotel (Heaton 2004).

Archaeological Character

The results of the archaeological investigations in this area clearly demonstrate that the archaeological character of the area is closely bound with its history as a medieval suburb. The evidence supplements that derived from documents and maps to provide a clearer picture of the origin and development of the medieval settlement at Newbury. It appears that the settlement was earlier in its foundation than suggested by documents and that it extended along Harding's Lane from an early date. There is also evidence for post-medieval industry with the remains of a small brickworks found at the Lidl Store site.

Boundaries depicted on the historic maps and surviving in the modern townscape are shown on Figure 53. In general these represent field boundaries, some of which may be medieval in origin and plot boundaries associated with the medieval and post-medieval suburb. The backs of these plot boundaries probably represent the former extent of roadside common enclosed when the settlement was formed.

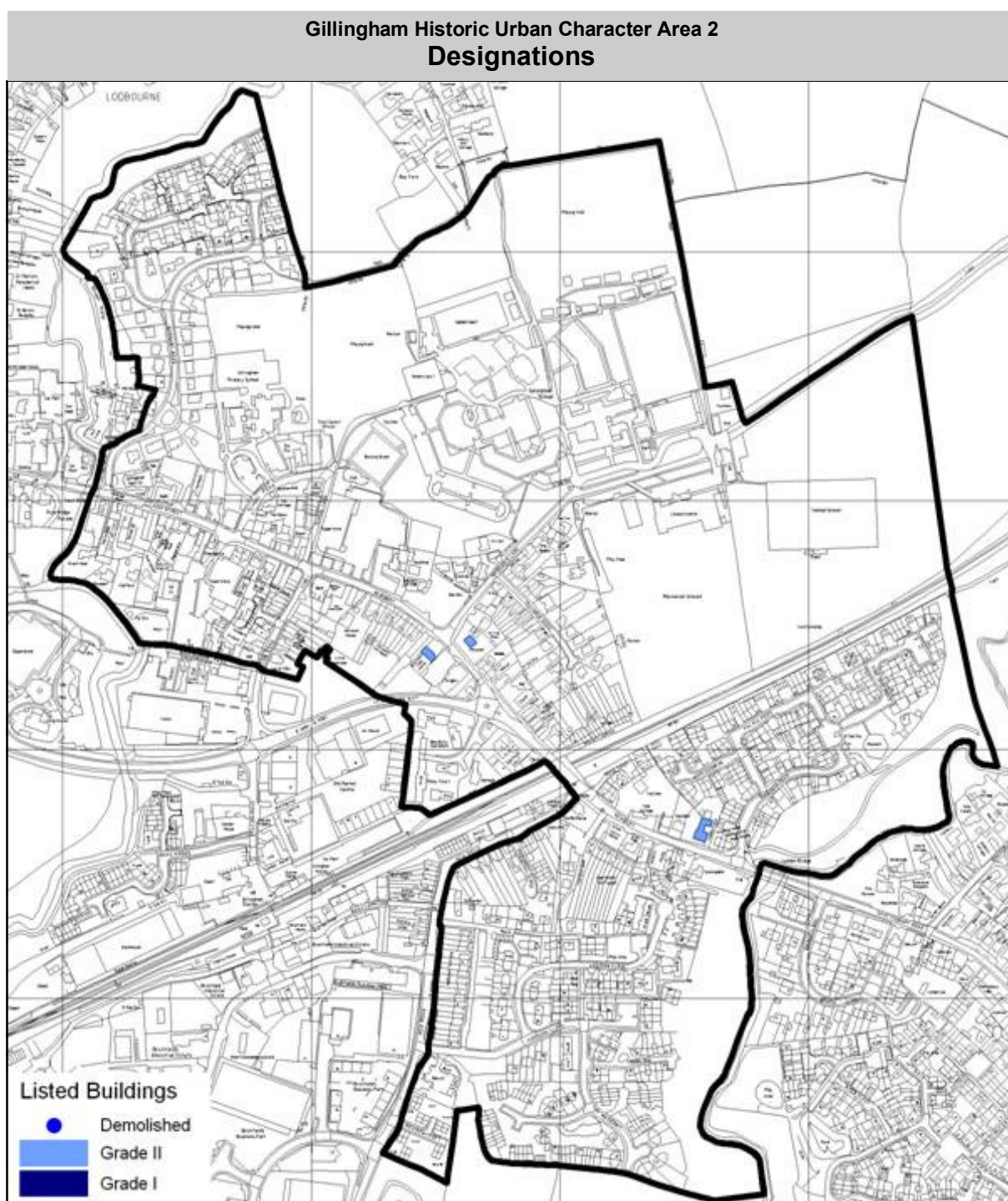


Figure 54: Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Listed Buildings

There are three Listed Building designations in the Character Area; all Grade II (Figure 54).

Conservation Areas

The whole of this 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.

Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 2 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **medium**. There is a strong contribution from the 19th century historic buildings on Newbury Road. Surviving elements of medieval plot boundaries and the pre-existing roadside common also add to the sense of historic character. However, this is counterbalanced by the large areas of 20th century development behind the historic street frontage, including supermarkets, modern housing estates, sports centres, schools and industrial and commercial developments. The western half of the area does benefit from the fact that main street no longer functions as a through route, following the construction of the Gillingham relief road.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change. Major development has taken place within the area during the modern era in the form of housing estates, modern infill and commercial and industrial development. Major development may have the potential to improve the historic character of the area providing development respects historic boundaries and enhances rather than overshadows the historic street frontage.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. Newbury is a poorly documented medieval suburb of Gillingham. Little is understood about its origins, whether it was a planned royal borough planted in the 13th century or whether it grew in a piecemeal fashion from land enclosed from roadside

waste. A fairly high number of excavations have been undertaken in the area and they have demonstrated the potential for surviving medieval remains with the potential to inform this debate. Excavation has already shown that the settlement is likely to have originated earlier than indicated through documentary evidence, and that the junction of Harding's Lane and Newbury was at the hub of this development. This evidence appears to be concentrated at the rear of plots fronting on to Newbury and Harding's Lane and also has the potential to furnish us with details concerning the economy of the medieval town. Potential to further understand the post-medieval economy has also been demonstrated through archaeological work during the construction of Lidl Supermarket, where a suspected early 19th century brick clamp was recorded. The later 19th century brick industry of Gillingham is well documented, and yet the period before the instigation of the Gillingham Brick and Tile Co. is less well understood. This area has the potential to reveal much more on the earlier industrial history of the town. There is also potential for the survival of medieval structures hidden within 19th century buildings in this area, further adding to our understanding of the development of the suburb.

There is also potential for recovering archaeological information concerning pre-urban activity, considering the position of the area on a slight ridge between two rivers.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 3, 10-11 and 15-25 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Medieval suburb
- Post-medieval industrial expansion
- 19th century street frontage
- 19th and early 20th century suburban housing
- Medieval and earlier plot boundaries
- Site of former Grammar School