

## Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 7 Wyke

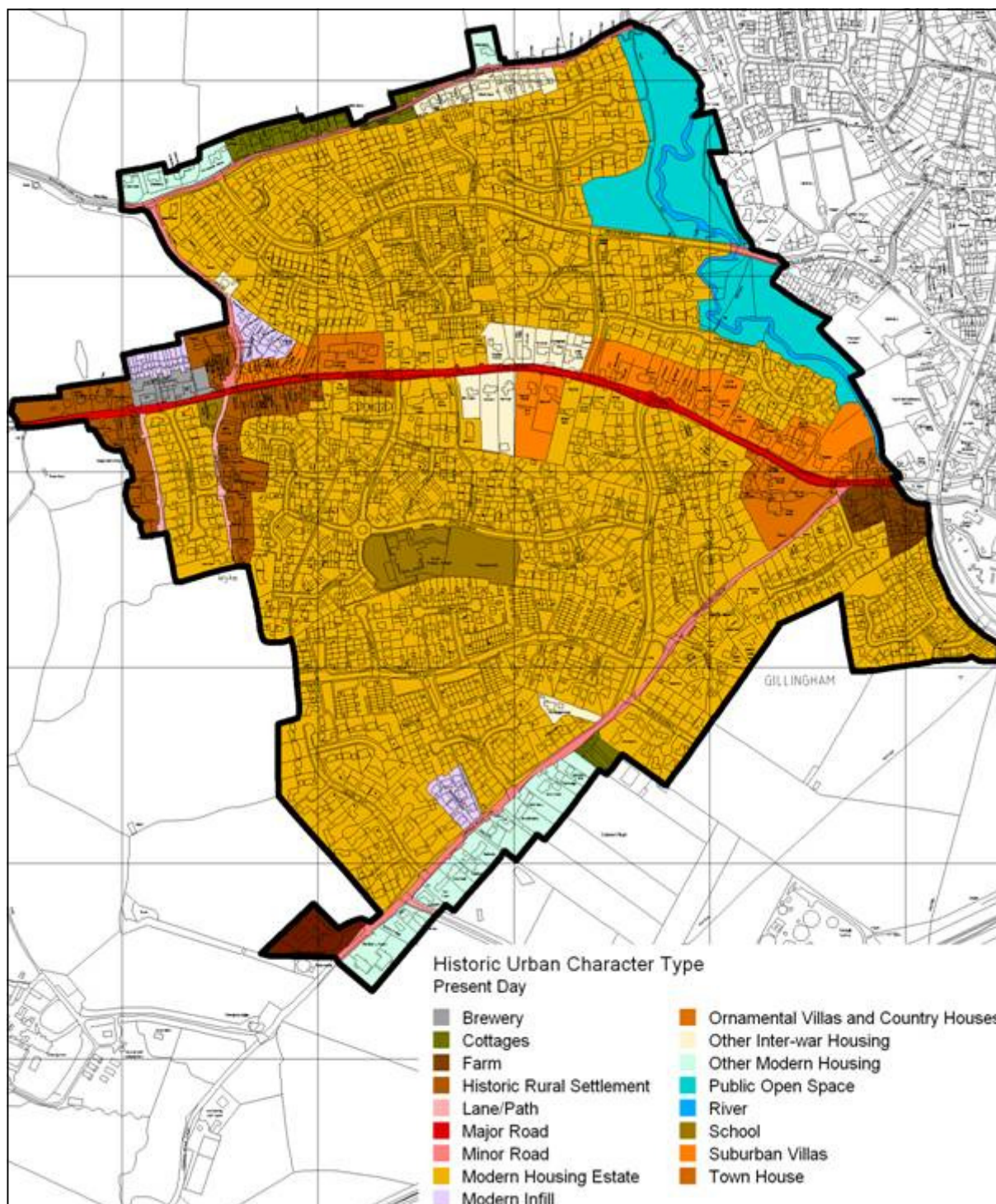


Figure 91: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 7, showing current historic urban character type.

## Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 7

### Structure of Character Area

#### **Overview**

This area comprises the western suburb of the town of Gillingham. It sits between the historic rural settlement of Wyke and the town centre of Gillingham. Wyke Road (the modern B3081 to Wincanton) is the main axial route through the area. Large modern housing estates have developed to the north and south of it, behind the historic street frontage. The area is bounded to the north by Wavering Lane and to the South by Common Mead Lane.

#### **Topography and Geology**

The character area lies to the west of the Upper Stour. Essentially the land rises gently from the lowest point, 72m above sea level, at Wyke Bridge in the east to Wyke Village in the west at approximately 90m. The highest point of the area is at Wyke Primary school at just over 90m. The geology comprises Kimmeridge Clay, with Corallian Limestone at the western tip of the area.

#### **Urban Structure**

Four historic roads or lanes radiated out from the centre of Gillingham through this character area: Common Mead Lane, Wyke Road, Rolls Bridge Lane and Wavering Lane. Wyke Road forms the major route through the area. There is a discontinuous ribbon of rectilinear plots of differing shapes and sizes along its length and also some ribbon development of short rectilinear plots along Wavering Lane. Between the historic lanes are a series of curvilinear roads which link them together and give access to the extensive areas of suburban housing estates throughout the area with their complex curvilinear dendritic arrangements of local access roads and culs-de-sac.

#### **Present Character**

Figure 91 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area is dominated by Modern Housing Estates, with other character types only present around the fringes of the area or along the axial Wyke Road. The northern fringe, along Wavering Lane, comprises Cottages, Inter-war Housing and large modern detached housing. The eastern fringe comprises the river Stour and its meadows, now Public Open Space. The southern fringe along Common Mead lane comprises a few 19<sup>th</sup> century Cottages, isolated Inter-war Housing, Modern Infill, a Nursing Home and other modern housing. Wyke Road has the site of Chantry Farm at its eastern end together with a pair of early 18<sup>th</sup> century Town

Houses and the late 18<sup>th</sup> century villa, Knapp House. The Cold Harbour area of town lies to the west and comprises Suburban Villas (Figure 92) in a ribbon development dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in the east to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the west, culminating in inter-war detached housing. The Historic Rural Settlement of Wyke lies at the extreme western end of Wyke Road and includes the site of the Wyke Brewery, Suburban Villas, an old school house and the 19<sup>th</sup> century villa, Wyke House, as well as patches of Modern Infill. The modern Wyke Primary School occupies the central part of the Common Mead estate.

#### **Time Depth**

The network of roads and lanes are the earliest elements of this area. Common Mead Lane may be Iron Age or Roman in date. Wyke is likely to represent one of the manors listed under the name of Gillingham in Domesday and Chantry Farm is the site of a medieval farm, established in 1331. The site of the farm was developed for housing during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, although some of the original buildings have been retained. The housing along Wyke Road probably dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and the brewery was also established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The suburban ribbon development of suburban villas and other inter-war housing dates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wavering Lane had an almost continuous development of cottages and inter-war detached houses by the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. The shape of the plots in which the houses were built suggests that they had been enclosed from a former roadside common, possibly from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries on a piecemeal basis. There are some small areas of housing estate development in the post-war period but the main period of suburban housing estate expansion starts in the 1970s in the Common Mead Lane area and has continued into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **Settlement Pattern and Streetscape**

The historic settlement of Wyke originally comprised three rows of cottages arranged around a central rectangular green, which has been infilled with a modern housing estate. Ribbon development along Wyke Road and along Wavering Road, comprises detached or semi-detached houses either on or set back slightly from the street frontage. Modern housing estates arranged around curvilinear culs-de sac dominate the remainder of the character area.



**Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 7  
Built Character**

**Building types**

The majority of buildings in this area are post-war and modern suburban estate houses. There is also a range of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings ranging from the ornamental Knapp House to the 19th century industrial Wyke Brewery building (Figure 13) and also including 18<sup>th</sup> century town houses and vernacular stone cottages and farm buildings along Wyke Road, Common Mead Lane and Wavering Road. There are 19<sup>th</sup> century semi-detached suburban villas along Wyke Road and a 19<sup>th</sup> century school house opposite the brewery in Wyke (Figure 26).

Twentieth century suburban houses include inter-war detached bungalows typical of the period. There are detached and semi-detached bungalows in the 1970s housing estates of Common Mead Lane. Later 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century housing estates at the northern end of the Wyke character area comprise a variety of smaller detached, semi-detached and short terraced houses in smaller plots.

**Building Materials.**

The 18<sup>th</sup> century houses Little Chantry, Folly's End and Old Toll House are built in coursed rubble with tiled roofs. Knapp House has ashlar and rubble walls with a slate roof. Brewery House in Wyke is rendered with a tiled roof. Wyke Brewery is built in coursed squared rubble with a tiled roof and ashlar dressings. Later 19<sup>th</sup> century suburban villas and terraces are of local Gillingham brick. The inter-war houses are mainly rendered brick with slate roofs. Modern housing uses more non-local materials.

**Key Buildings**

*17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular houses:* Chantry Farm, Old Toll House, Wyke Road; Thistledown Cottage, Wavering Road;

*18<sup>th</sup> century town houses and villas:* Knapp House, Wyke House, Brewery House, Folly's End, Little Chantry, Wyke Road.

*19<sup>th</sup> century industrial and community buildings:* Wyke Brewery, The Old School House, Wyke Road



Figure 92: Cold Harbour suburban villas, Wyke Road.



Figure 93: Inter-war housing, Wavering Lane.



Figure 94: View of 1970s Bungalows, Juniper Gardens, off Common Mead Lane.



Figure 95: Old Toll House, Wyke Road.

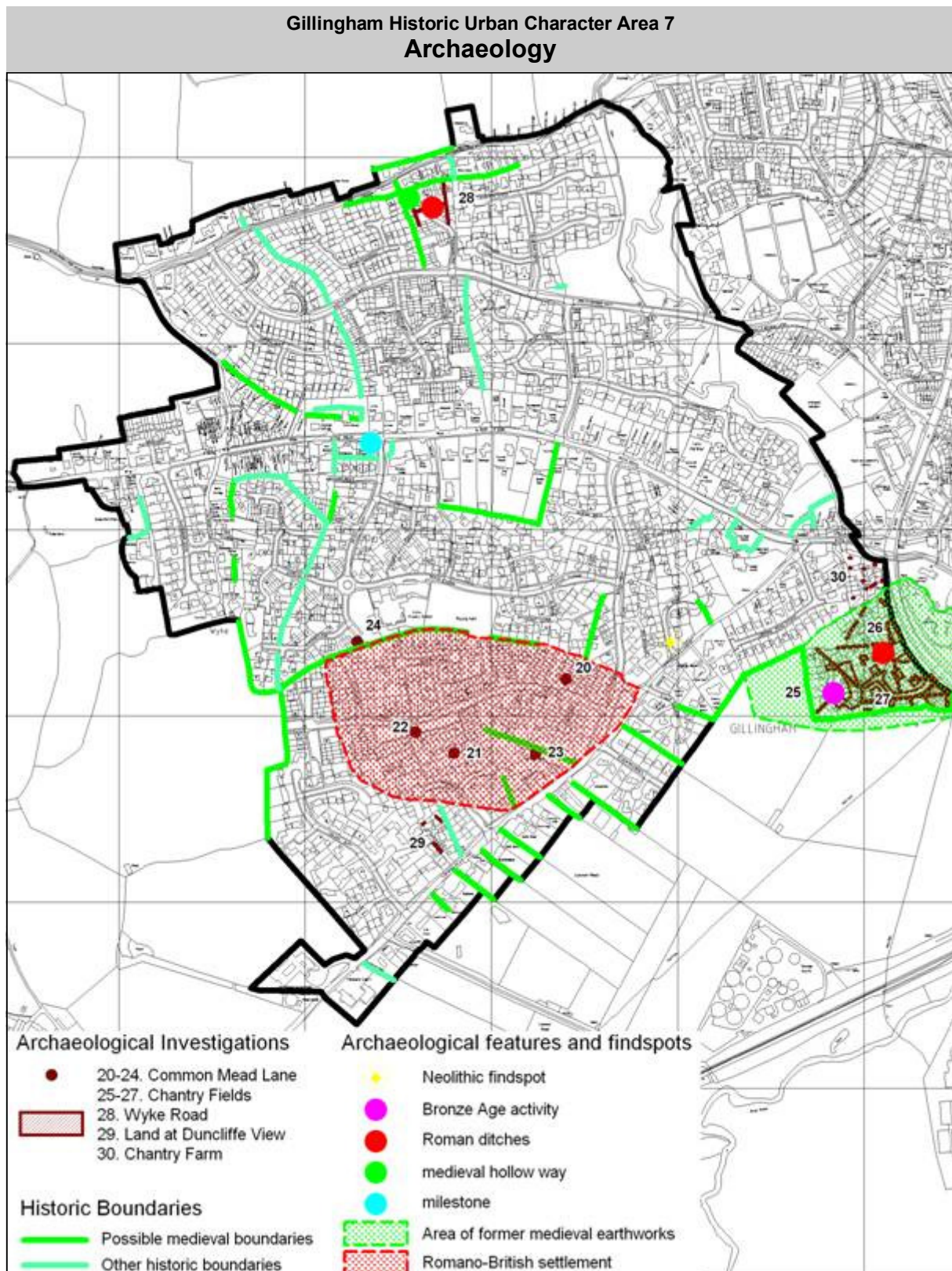


Figure 96: Archaeological investigations in Historic Urban Character Area 7.

**Archaeological Investigations**

Eleven archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Figure 96; Appendix 3, nos 20-30). This work has been focused primarily in two areas at Common

Mead Lane and at Chantry Fields.

The Shaftesbury and District Archaeological Society conducted excavations on the site of an extensive Romano-British settlement along Common Mead Lane in advance of housing



## Gillingham Historic Urban Character Area 7 Archaeology

development. The excavations have indicated that occupation probably started in the late Iron Age and continued into the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (Figure 96 nos 20-24).

The Chantry Fields investigations (Figure 96 nos 25-27) revealed evidence for Bronze Age activity and for extensive medieval features and earthworks relating to the former medieval suburb which lay just to the east of this area on the Waitrose site (Appendix 3, no 10). Other peripheral medieval features were found during an evaluation at Chantry Farm immediately to the north (Figure 96 no 30).

Investigations have also taken place in two other areas. At the northern end of the area Romano-British ditches and a possible medieval hollow way were found during an evaluation off Rolls Bridge Way (Figure 96 no 28). In the southern part of the area, an evaluation at Duncliffe View revealed no significant archaeology (Figure 96 no 29).

### **Archaeological Character**

The archaeological character of this area is dominated by two important settlement sites from two different periods. The Romano-British settlement at Common Mead Lane was first discovered by chance during drainage work in 1869. The approximate extent of the site has been revealed through a number of small rescue excavations undertaken by members of the Shaftesbury and District Archaeological Group (SDAG) during the development of the Common Mead housing estate in the 1970s and 80s. Unfortunately the nature of the excavations, conducted under difficult conditions, means that we still understand very little about the nature of the settlement there,

except that it seems to have been occupied from the Late Iron Age and throughout the Romano-British period.

The medieval settlement at Chantry Fields is better understood. Well-preserved earthworks have been largely destroyed by development, although a record of their nature and extent from an earthwork survey shows that they were the remains of a medieval suburb under the site of the modern Waitrose supermarket and the associated gardens and paddocks. It is the latter aspect of the settlement which lies within this character area. Other investigations have revealed isolated ditches and hollow ways of Roman and medieval date, lying outside the main settlement areas but revealing an intensively used landscape divided into tracks and fields throughout the last two millennia.

There have also been isolated finds of prehistoric material, including a polished Neolithic flint axe near Common Mead Lane, slight evidence for Bronze Age activity in the southwestern part of Chantry Fields, and Late Iron Age material associated with the Common Mead Lane Roman settlement.

There is an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century milestone on Wyke Road.

A small number of historic boundaries are marked on Figure 96. These are the remnants of the edge of the medieval roadside Commons on Wavering Lane and Wyke Road, arable field boundaries close to Common Mead Lane (either medieval or later enclosure boundaries) and later 19<sup>th</sup> century subdivisions.



Figure 97: Milford House (formerly Brewery House), Wyke Road.



Figure 98: Wyke House, Wyke Road.

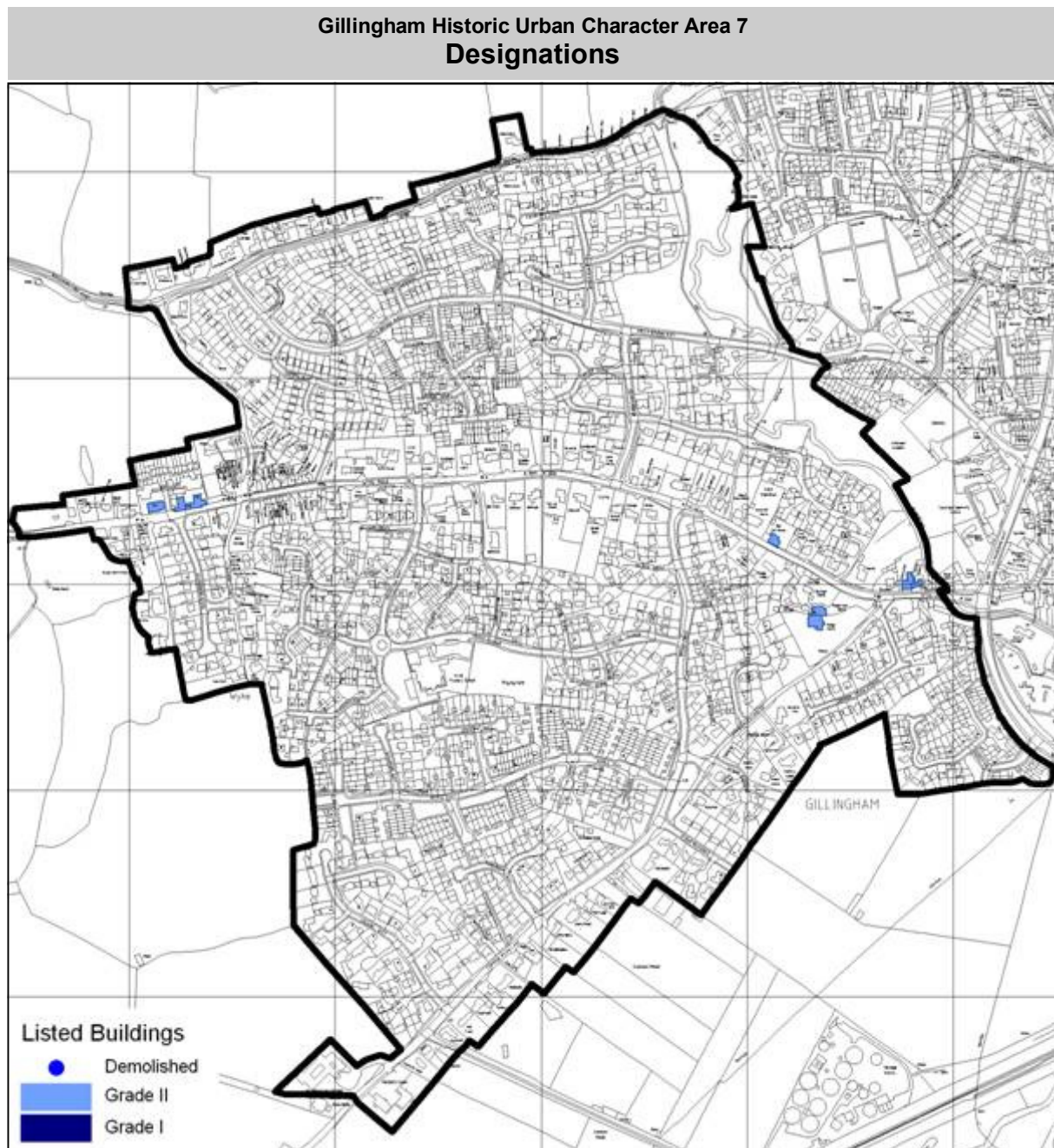


Figure 99: Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 7.

**Listed Buildings**

There are six Listed Buildings in the Character Area, all Grade II and all on Wyke Road.

**Conservation Areas**

The western end of the Gillingham Conservation Area lies within this character 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 7 Evaluation

### **Strength of Historic Character**

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **medium**. This represents a combination of a relatively high rating for the historic rural settlement of Wyke and the historic suburb of Cold Harbour, and a low rating for the modern housing estates behind. Both historic foci on Wyke Road contain well preserved groups of stone-built vernacular houses and cottages, as well as larger 18<sup>th</sup> century villas. Furthermore the two foci originate in the medieval period or earlier. The intervening frontage of Wyke Road contains buildings from a variety of periods, although later 20<sup>th</sup> century infill is minimal. The character of the modern housing estates retains little of an historic nature apart from the occasional former field boundary preserved in property boundaries.

### **Sensitivity to Large Scale Development**

The area has a **medium** sensitivity to major change. This sensitivity is particularly high in the immediate vicinity of Wyke village and Cold Harbour. The housing estates on either side are less sensitive, although any work would need to take account of the visual impact on the Wyke Road street frontage, as well as the need to preserve the archaeological record in the Common Mead Lane and Chantry Fields areas.

### **Archaeological Potential**

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. There is in particular a high potential for information relating to the Romano-British settlement at Common Mead Lane. Despite the numerous small interventions here, very little is known of the scale and nature of the site. There is also a high potential for the presence of archaeological deposits that will aid a better understanding of the origins of Wyke and the suburb at Cold Harbour. In particular, how they relate to the earlier Roman settlement, their date of origin and economy. It is possible that a closer examination of standing buildings in these areas may reveal medieval elements and that back plots may preserve medieval or Roman pits, boundaries and structures.

Archaeological investigations have also demonstrated the potential for the survival of prehistoric deposits. In particular the only evidence for Neolithic and Bronze Age activity in Gillingham has been recovered from this area.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 4, 6, 10-11 and 16-25 (Part 7).

### **Key Characteristics**

- Medieval settlement of Wyke
- Post-medieval suburb of Cold Harbour
- Historic street frontage on Wyke Road
- Modern housing estates
- Wyke Brewery
- Site of Romano-British settlement