

## **Part 6: Historic Urban Character Appraisal**



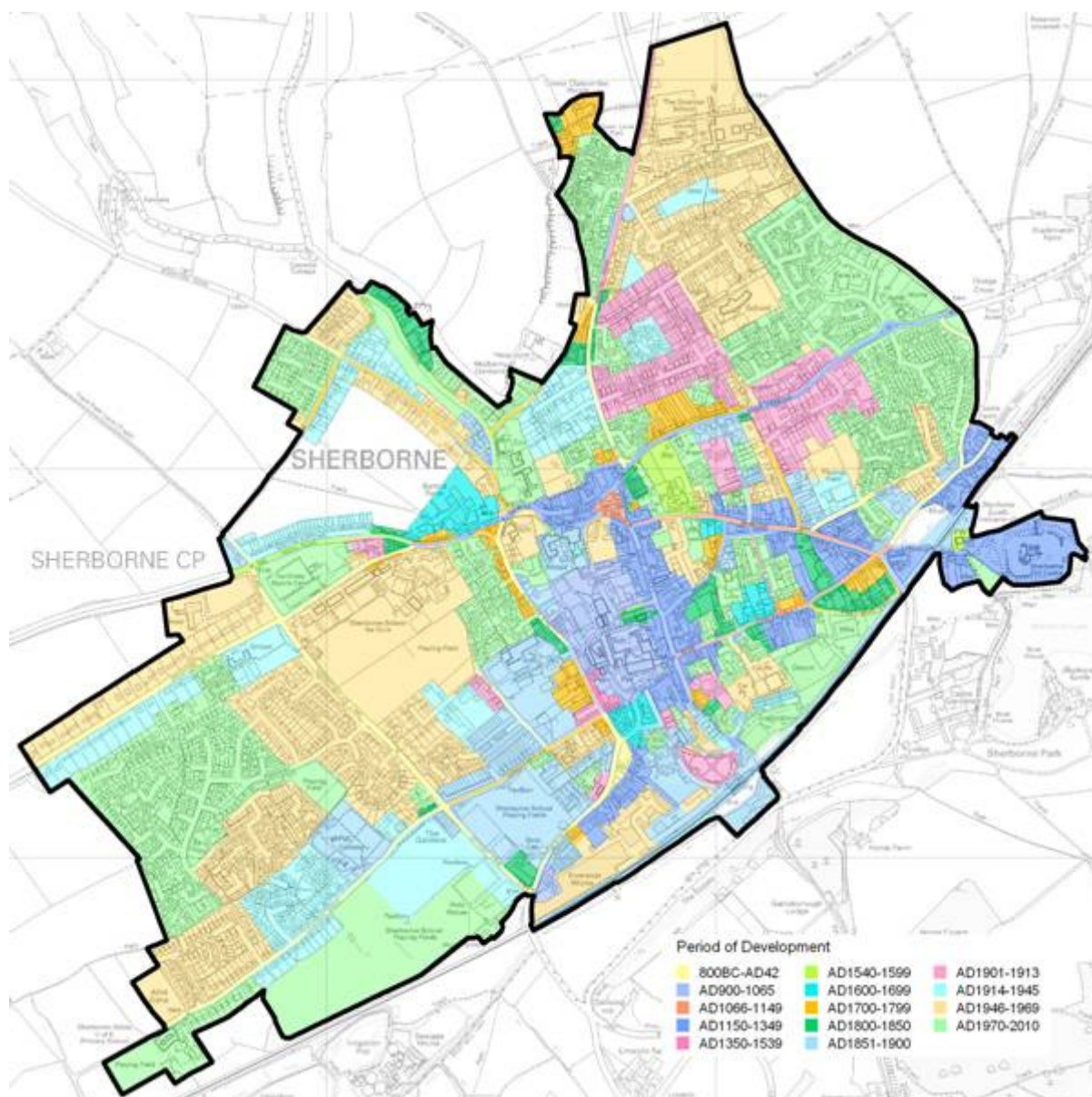


Figure 87: Map showing the major periods of development in Sherborne

## 6.1 The historic urban character of Sherborne

Sherborne is a town steeped in history, the most obvious and formative aspect of which is its ecclesiastical status. The history of Sherborne as a Cathedral town is of national importance and recorded in annals such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. It was the presence of the Anglo-Saxon cathedral and later Abbey that not only encouraged the development of an important market and artisan economy, but also dominates the town architecturally today.

The Abbey church is also still important to the tourist economy of the town. However, the post-medieval secular architecture is of equal significance in defining the historic urban character of Sherborne both as a place to live and visit.

The importance of Sherborne lies in the fact that it is largely unspoilt by unsympathetic modern development. There are many factors that have led to this consequence. Certainly the post-war period, which has ravaged many British Town centres through the creation of concrete shopping centres and urban sprawl, has been relatively kind to Sherborne. This may be in part a result of Sherborne having largely escaped destruction through bombing raids. In one day the town lost about thirty buildings during 1941, but there was no need for large scale reconstruction of the town centre. Large housing estates were constructed in Lenthay and Coldharbour but these were discrete and do not impinge on the character of the historic town centre (Figure 87).

Similarly Sherborne's late 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial estates are well hidden behind tree lines and do impinge on historic character. In fact Sherborne became a very early industrial town during the mid-late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was one of the first silk producing centres in the country, a legacy that continues with the manufacture of glass fibre on the site of Westbury Silk Mill. Thus the industrial character of Sherborne also forms an integral part of the historic character.

Sherborne has been divided into ten historic character areas: the early medieval core, centred on the Abbey precinct (now dominated by Sherborne School); the 13<sup>th</sup> century planned borough of Newland (including Eastbury); the medieval tithing of Westbury; the borough of Castleton, with Sherborne old Castle; the 18<sup>th</sup> century suburb of Coldharbour; the medieval tithing of Nethercoombe; late post-medieval expansion into Horsecastles; modern housing

estates at Lenthay and North East Sherborne; and the industrial zone along the former Yeo meadows.

An important theme of continuity in rural and urban landscape runs through the character areas. Many roads, tracks and property boundaries fossilised in the modern townscape can be shown to follow alignments originating in the late prehistoric period, and associated with a regular dispersed settlement pattern.

The layout of the late Saxon monastic precinct has also influenced the plan of the modern town. Many late medieval monastic buildings survive, as well as Tudor half-timbered structures and hundreds of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century listed buildings dominate the town. The modern through road layout is also largely unaltered from that established by the 18<sup>th</sup> century turnpike trust.

The historic characterization of the towns of Dorset produces a large quantity of detailed data recorded within individual Historic Urban Character Types. This information is at a too fine-grained scale to enable easy understanding of the character of the town. Therefore, the information has been used to define a smaller number of larger areas of distinctive character within the town known as Historic Urban Character Areas. These can be used as a means of understanding the past and the present of the town, simplifying the large quantity of data presented by the Historic Urban Character Types.

These Historic Urban Character Areas are recognisable distinctive areas within the modern town which have consistent character, common historical development, similar topographic location, degree of preservation, etc, which gives them a meaningful coherence within the modern townscape. Each character area will have its own individual 'biography' which has defined its present character. Consequently, the Historic Urban Character Areas can be used as a tool to help maintain and reinforce the historic character and individuality of these areas and the town as a whole.

## 6.2 Historic Urban Character Areas of Sherborne

A total of 10 Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined for Sherborne (Figure 88). The boundaries are based on areas of homogenous character, or conversely on areas of diversity as a result of changes in the urban environment, or on distinctive topographic features.

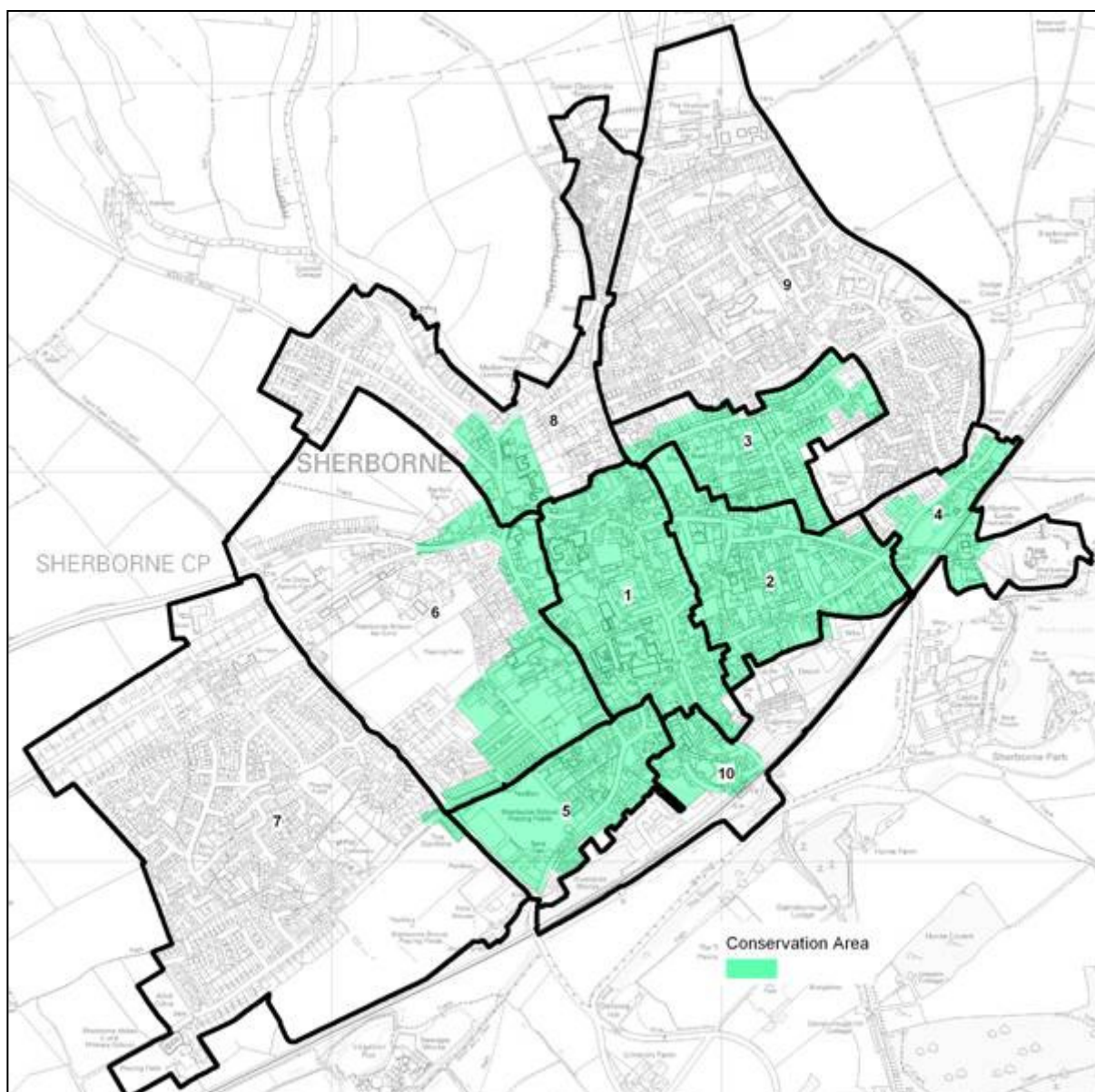


Figure 88: Sherborne Historic Urban Character Areas in relationship to the Conservation Area

Each character area is presented below with a summary of its overall character, built character and archaeological potential.

- 1 Historic Core
- 2 Newland, Hound Street and Long Street
- 3 Coldharbour
- 4 Castleton
- 5 Westbury
- 6 Horsecastles and Barton
- 7 Lenthay
- 8 Nethercoombe and Clatcombe
- 9 NE Sherborne Housing Estates
- 10 Riverside Industrial and Commercial Area