

Sherborne Historic Urban Character Area 5 Westbury

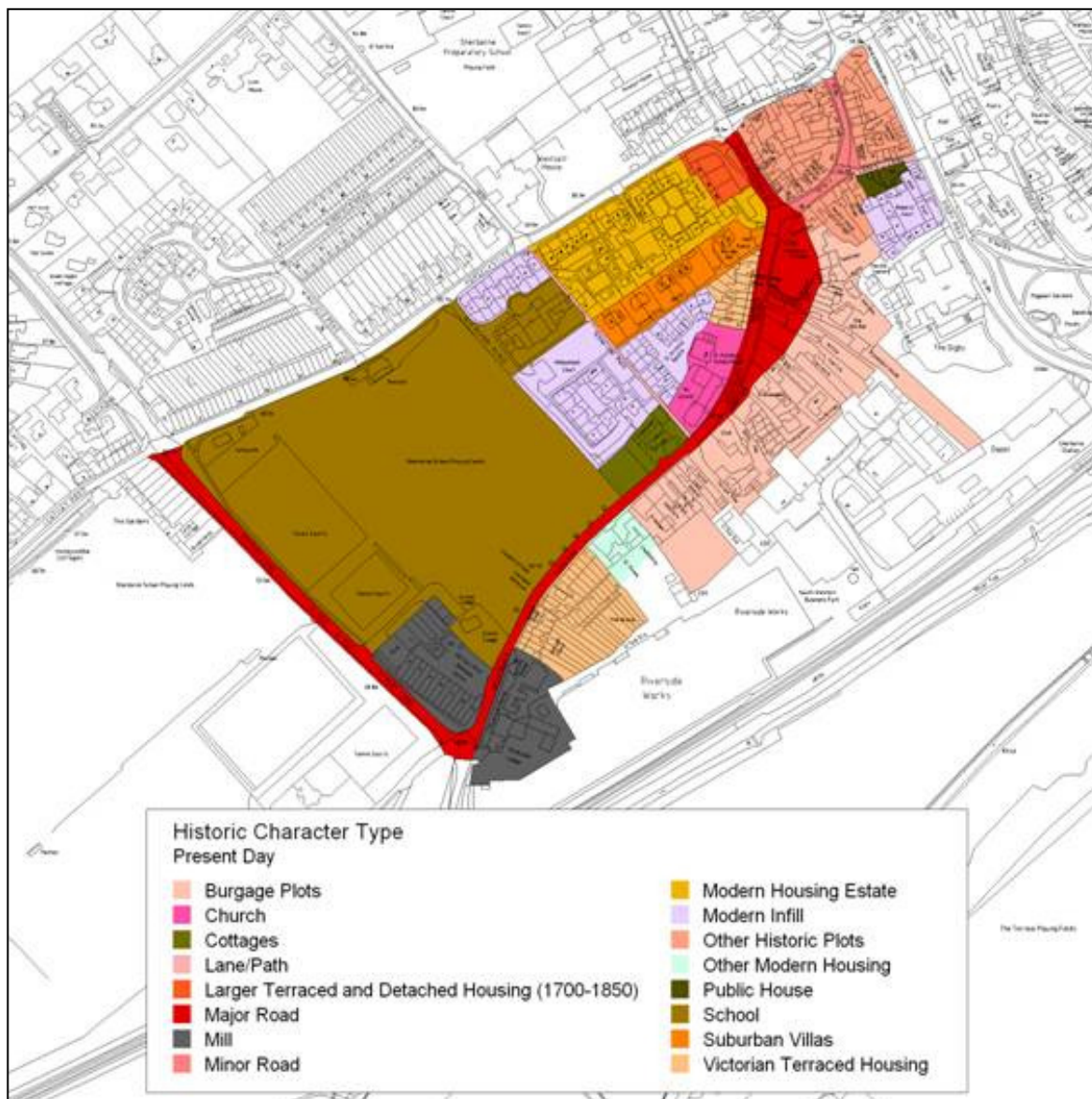


Figure 131: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 5, showing current historic urban character types



Figure 132: Horsecastles Pavilion, Sherborne School Playing Field



Figure 133: View along Westbury from the junction with Lower Acreman Street, looking east

Sherborne Historic Urban Character Area 5

Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area lies south west of the medieval town centre and monastic precinct. Its primary components include the road of Westbury and associated burgage plots. The east end of Westbury was largely undeveloped in the medieval period, but has been part of the urban core of the town since the 17th century. The road is the major entry route in to the town from the SW. Westbury Mill is at this point and is another major component of the character area.

Topography and Geology

This character area lies on the north side of the River Yeo and is relatively flat. There is Oolitic limestone in the north and west, and Fuller's Earth clay in the south and east. A layer of river terrace gravels lies above the clay.

Urban Structure

Westbury originated as a medieval tithing with plots fronting Westbury Road and burgages extending to the River Yeo. These plots survived into the 20th century, but are now largely truncated by development. Westbury Road runs through the centre of the character area from south west to north east, and Ottery Lane is the western boundary. Westbury's north and east ends were probably undeveloped in the medieval period; the east end being 17-18th century compact urban development and the north side being partly developed with a church and housing in the late 19th century.

Present Character

Figure 131 shows the present day historic urban character types. The western part of the area is dominated by playing fields (Figure 132). Modern infill and housing estates occupy the sites of the former Sherborne Abbey School and Westbury Workhouse. Gravel Pits Lane, a row of suburban villas, occupies the south side of

the workhouse site. The north side of Westbury is lined with cottages, The Sacred Heart and St Aldhelm's Catholic church and former convent and West Terrace. The south side is dominated by the former burgage plots with Victorian terraces and modern housing further west. The eastern part of the character area lies close to the town centre and is a block of compact 17th and 18th century houses (Figure 133), the Digby Tap Inn (Figure 134) and modern infill.

Time Depth

Westbury was a separate tithing of Sherborne from at least 1327. Plot boundaries on the south side of the road probably date from this period, but only the garden of Stonedyke House survives intact. Road straightening in the 19th century created a large green north of the plots (Figure 135). The green is partly on the site of the *Troy Town* labyrinth, shown on a 1725 map. At first the burgages were separated from the town by a strip of land, but this was filled in by the 18th century. Development of the western end of the area and on the north side of Westbury began in the 19th century. A new mill was built in Ottery Lane in 1840. In World War II the Westbury Mill site extended into the area of the former burgage plots. The site of the 18th-century workhouse was developed as a hotel in the 19th century after the arrival of the railway.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

Settlement falls into three types. Along Westbury itself are burgages and Victorian terraces, with most houses set back from the street. The east end of the area is a compact block of urban housing with buildings fronting directly on the street. Occasional shops and commercial premises line the main streets. The northern part is dominated by modern housing arranged behind the street frontages around courtyards or culs de sac, but includes a row of 19th century suburban semis and a Victorian



Figure 134: The Digby Tap, Cook's Lane; site of the 18th and early 19th century workhouse



Figure 135: Winton, The Firs and The Lawns, Westbury.

**Sherborne Historic Urban Character Area 5
Built Character**

Building types

A significant group of buildings is that of eastern Westbury, Trendle and Lower Acreman Street (Figure 136). This compact block of 17th-19th century stone terraces appears to represent 17th century infill between Sherborne and Westbury. On the south side of Cook's Lane the Digby Tap, and the former Digby Hotel stables between were constructed in the 19th century to exploit the potential of the new railway.

The church and former St Anthony's convent form an important group. The convent and former school have been converted to apartments (Figure 137). A group of listed 17th-19th century houses, including the 17th-century Westbury Cottage, now front on to a curving green in the central part of Westbury. Westbury Mill and forms an important group of 18th and 19th century industrial buildings with the Old Yarnmills business centre.

Other key buildings include the 19th century former Abbey School house and a terrace of 18th-19th century stone rubble cottages on the west side of Lower Acreman Street.

Building Materials

A variety of building materials are evident in the character area, although the local Sherborne stone still dominates. Eastern Westbury, Trendle and Lower Acreman Street are almost entirely constructed from Sherborne Stone, in keeping with the historic centre of Sherborne. St Anthony's Church and School House are constructed in Ham stone rock faced ashlar instead of the usual Sherborne stone. Two unlisted terraces on Westbury (Westbury Terrace and Raleigh Place) are built in contrasting patterns of red and yellow brick. There is a large early 20th century corrugated iron Hall on Gravel Pits Lane. Boundary walls are of Sherborne stone rubble, sometimes coursed with ashlar gate piers. Roofs are generally plain tile, pantile, slate or thatch. Chimney stacks are of stone render or brick (Figure 138).

Key Buildings

Public and ecclesiastical buildings: Sacred Heart and St Aldhelm Catholic Church; St Anthony's School House; The former Abbey Primary School, Horsecastles; Rawson Hall, Gravel Pits Lane; Britannia Inn (formerly Lord Digby's School for Girls), Westbury.

16th-18th century houses and estate cottages: Numbers 4 and 6 Westbury; Digby Estate numbers 256-7 and 251-5 Westbury; Wessex House, Westbury; Digby Estate Numbers 169

and premises adjacent to 168 on the west, Trendle Street

19th houses and terraces: West Terrace; Cricket View; Raleigh Place; The Grove; numbers 234-231 Gravel Pits Lane; Hurcot, Escot and Westcot, Westbury; The Lawns, Winton and The Firs, Westbury;

Industrial and Commercial Buildings: Riverside Lodge; Old Yarn Mills; Digby Tap



Figure 136: View south along Lower Acreman Street from the junction with Trendle Street



Figure 137: The former St Anthony's School House, Westbury



Figure 138: Westbury roof line looking south east

Sherborne Historic Urban Character Area 5 Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

Seven archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Figure 139; Appendix 3, Nos. 77-83).

Evaluations at Saunder's Garage [77], St Anthony's Convent [78-80] and Abbey School [81] revealed post-medieval occupation and a medieval field system following the trends of a possible late prehistoric system.

Observations revealed evidence of 16th-17th century pin manufacture at the junction of Westbury and Lower Acreman Street [82], and a medieval pit [83] in Durrant Close .

Archaeological Character

A number of alignments in the area correspond with those of a late prehistoric field system (Davey 2010). These include the courses of

Westbury (prior to the 19th century) and field boundaries north of Westbury. The medieval character of the area is dominated by the fact that it was a medieval tithing by the 13th century. Fragments of the former burgages associated with this settlement survive on the south side of Westbury. These plots would have been the location for industrial and commercial activity in the medieval period. A 19th-century smithy in a plot at Willis Hay suggests that this activity continued into the post medieval period. Westbury Mill is likely to have had medieval origins. Evidence for post-medieval industrial and commercial activity has been found at the junction of Acreman Street and Westbury.

Figure 139 shows historic boundaries visible on 18th and 19th century maps. The 18th century or earlier boundaries on the south side of Westbury are assumed to be medieval in origin.

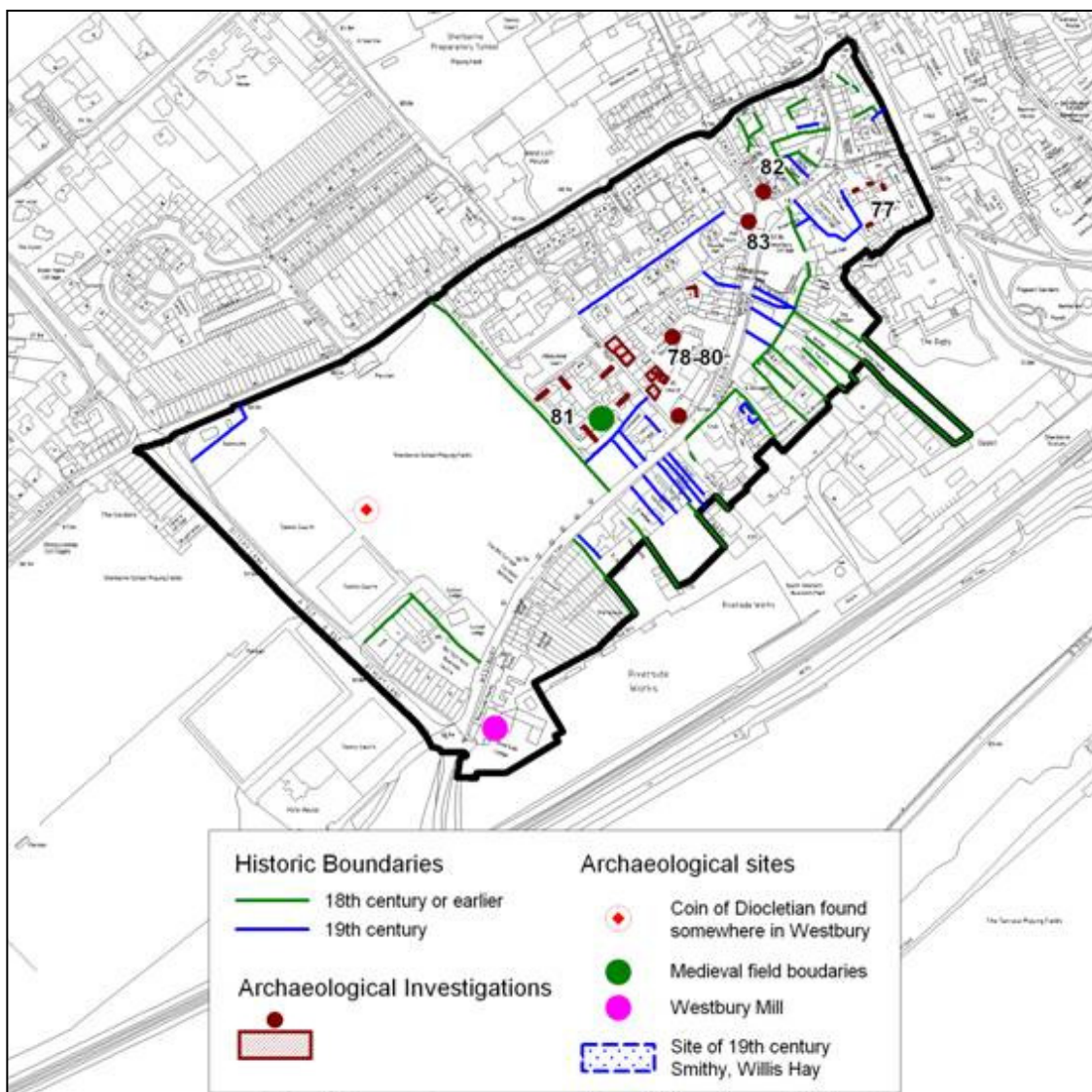


Figure 139: Archaeological Sites and Investigations in Historic Urban Character Area 5

Sherborne Historic Urban Character Area 5 Designations

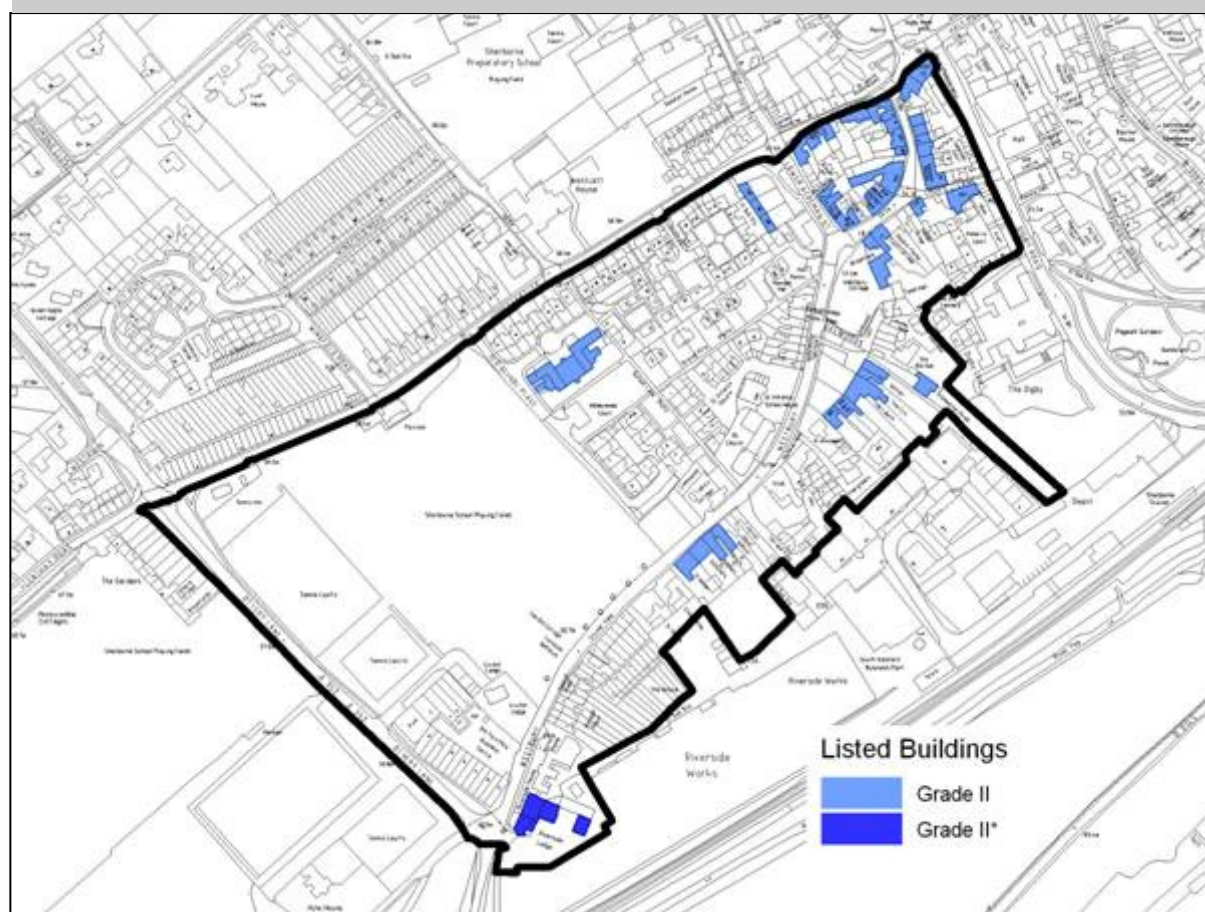


Figure 140: Historic Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 5

Listed Buildings

There are 36 Listed Building designations in the Character Area. Riverside Works and Lodge (Westbury Mill) are Grade II*. The remainder are all Grade II (Figure 140).

Conservation Areas

Almost all of this Character Area lies within the Sherborne Conservation Area. The Riverside Lodge and Works lie outside the Conservation area, as do two garden plots at the rear of properties on the south side of Westbury (Figure 88).

Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

No Registered Parks and Gardens lie within the Character Area.

Scheduled Monuments

No Scheduled Monuments lie within the Character Area.

Sherborne Historic Urban Character Area 5 Evaluation

Strength of Historic Character

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**, being a combination of the significant historical background and time depth, the positive contribution made by a very high number of historic buildings and the rich archaeological record. Approximately 62% of the buildings within the character area date from the late 19th century or earlier. In fact, 81% of all 20th century buildings lie in a small area in the angle between Lower Acreman Street, Westbury and Horsecastles. The high number of mature trees and open recreational spaces is also important. The compact block of 16th-19th century buildings on the south side of the Trendle forms an unbroken group of historic buildings adjacent to the historic core of Sherborne. The industrial buildings and history of Westbury Mill are significant.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. There is already a compact group of modern housing on the east side of the Sherborne School playing fields between Westbury and Horsecastles. This places the playing fields themselves at increased risk from development. However, any such development of these 19th century sports fields would have a significant detrimental effect on the historic character of the area. The remainder of the character area comprises a largely intact, although irregular, group of historic buildings. Many of the 19th century terraces and houses are unlisted, although they make a significant

contribution to the character of the area. Gravel Pits Lane is a case in point where a row of late 19th century semi-detached houses and an early 20th century corrugated iron hall, adjacent to a modern development, is at particular risk. The industrial heritage of Westbury Mill also needs protection.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of Westbury is judged to be **high**. This potential is partly linked with its origins as a medieval tithing. Archaeological deposits containing significant evidence of the plan, development and economy of Westbury might be anticipated, particularly on the south side of Westbury road. Potential for evidence relating to the development of rectilinear field systems on the north side of Westbury has been demonstrated through archaeological evaluation. Further evidence of post-medieval industrial activity is likely to be found in the vicinity of Trendle Street. There are also a number of post-medieval sites with specific potential to inform about their particular origins and development. These include the former workhouse site at the Digby Tap, the Union Workouse site on the south side of Horsecastles and the Westbury Mill site at Riverside Works.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1-3, 11-12, 14, 16-18 and 20-24 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- 13th century tithing of Sherborne
- Medieval or earlier rectilinear field system
- Medieval burgage plots
- 16th and 17th century expansion of the urban centre of Sherborne
- Site of medieval mill
- 19th century school playing fields