Dorset Historic Towns Project

Weymouth

Historic Urban Characterisation

DORSET County Council

ENGLISH HERITAGE

Dorset Historic Towns Project

Weymouth

Historic Urban Characterisation

February 2011

Historic Environment
Environment Directorate
Dorset County Council
County Hall
Colliton Park
DORCHESTER
DT1 1XJ

Acknowledgements

This report was produced as part of the Dorset Historic Towns Survey, undertaken by Dorset County Council, in partnership with Weymouth and Portland Borough Council and funded by English Heritage.

It was written by Peter Bellamy, Claire Pinder and Gordon Le Pard.

The maps in this report are based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Crown Copyright 2009. OS Licence number: 100019790.

© Dorset County Council, 2011

Contents

List of Illustrations iii
Summary 1
Part 1: Introduction 3
1.1 Background to the Project 5
1.2 Rationale 5
1.3 Aims 5
1.4 Report Structure 5
1.5 Who is this document for? 6
Part 2: Overview of Approach 7
2.1 Guiding Principles 9
2.2 General Approach 9
2.3 Historic Urban Character Types 9
2.4 Town Plan Components 9
2.5 Historic Urban Character Areas 10
2.6 Extent of Study Area 10
2.7 Definition of Terms 10
Part 3: Town Context 13
3.1 The Setting of the Town 15
3.2 Topography 15
3.3 Geology 17
3.4 Landscape Character 18
3.5 The Present Town 19
Part 4: Sources 21
4.1 Previous Research 23
4.2 Historic Maps 23
4.3 Documentary Evidence 23
4.4 Archaeological Evidence 23
4.5 Historic Buildings 23
Part 5: Historical Analysis 25
5.1 Medieval Weymouth and Melcombe Regis (AD1250-1597) 27
5.2 Post-medieval Weymouth and Melcombe Regis (AD1540-1750) 31
5.3 Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century Weymouth (1750-1857) 35
5.4 Later Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Weymouth (1857-1913) 40
5.5 Inter-war Weymouth (1914-1945) 44
5.6 Later Twentieth Century Weymouth (1945-present day) 46
Part 6: Historic Urban Character Appraisal 49
6.1 The historic urban character of Weymouth 51
6.2 Historic Urban Character Areas of Wimborne 53
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 1: Weymouth Historic Core 55
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 2: Melcombe Regis Historic Core 61
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 3: Wyke Regis and Ferrybridge 68
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 4: The Military Coast 75
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 5: Northern Weymouth 81
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 6: Radipole and Greenhill 88
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 7: Broadwey, Elwell and Littlemoor 95
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 8: Lodmoor 102
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 9: Southill and Westham 107
Weymouth Historic Urban Character Area 10: Radipole lake and shore 113
Part 7: Historic Environment Research Framework 119
7.1 Pre-urban Activity 121
7.2 Origins of the Town 121
7.3 Medieval town 121
7.4 Post-medieval and Modern town 122
Appendices 123
Appendix 1 References 125
Appendix 2 Chronology 128

Appendix 3 Archaeological Investigations in Weymouth.....129
Appendix 4 Historic Urban Character Types.....131
Appendix 5 Archaeological Potential 136

List of Figures

1 Vertical aerial photographic view of Weymouth, 2005 2
2 Map of Dorset showing the location of Weymouth and the other towns in the Dorset Historic Towns Survey 6
3 Weymouth's topographic setting 15
4 Solid Geology of the Weymouth Area 16
5 Weymouth in its landscape character setting 17
6 The Church of St Nicholas, Broadwey. 27
7 The approach to All Saints' Church, Wyke Regis. 27
8 Medieval Plan Components (South) 28
9 Chapelhay Steps—the approximate location of the medieval chapel of St Nicholas 29
10 Elwell 29
11 Medieval Plan Components (North) 30
12 The Tudor Merchant's House, Weymouth 31
13 Milton Arms 31
14 Post-Medieval Plan Components (South) 32
15 Post-Medieval Plan Components (North) 33
16 The White Hart, former home of the Thornhill family 34
17 The Black Dog, St Mary Street. 34
18 The remains of Sandsfoot Castle 34
19 The Old Rooms, Weymouth's first assembly rooms 35
20 Gloucester Lodge, where King George III stayed during his visits 35
21 Late Eighteenth—Early Nineteenth Century Plan Components (South) 36
22 Holy Trinity church, built in 1836 for the new parish of Weymouth 37
23 Hope Street Chapel, built in 1822 37
24 Late Eighteenth-Early Nineteenth Century Plan Components (North) 38
25 Cove Passage, once the waterfront onto the harbour 39
26 Statue erected in 1809 to commemorate the visits of King George III 39
27 The rails and loading platforms on Custom House Quay 40
28 Victorian terraces in Park Street 40
29 Nineteenth Century Plan Components (South) 41
30 Nineteenth Century Plan Components (North) 42
31 Chapel in Melcombe Regis Cemetery 43
32 Ferrybridge Cottages, built for workers at the Whitehead Torpedo Factory 43
33 Jubilee Clock built in 1887 43
34 Art Deco pier bandstand 44
35 Inter-war housing along Dorchester Road 44
36 Sandsfoot Castle Gardens 45
37 Weymouth Gasworks 45
38 Weymouth Pavilion and Ferry Terminal 46
39 Twentieth century housing estate, Littlemoor 46
40 Twentieth century housing estate, Broadwey 47
41 Map showing major periods of development in Weymouth 51
42 Weymouth Historic Urban Character Areas in relationship to the Conservation Areas 52
43 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 1, showing current historic urban character type 55
44 Cove Row, built on land reclaimed at the beginning of the 19th Century 55
45 Weymouth & Portland Council offices 55
46 Friends Burying Ground 56
47 Former Weymouth Barracks 56
48 Former Devenish Brewery 57
49 Brewers Quay, former Devenish Brewery 57
50 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 1 58
51 Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 1 59
52 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type 61
53 St Thomas's Street 61
54 Former chapel, St Thomas's Street 61
55 Frederick Place, St Thomas's Street 62
56 Masonic hall, School Street 63
57 Ruins of Maiden Street Methodist church 63

58 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 2....64
59 Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 2....66
60 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 3, showing current historic urban character type....68
61 Former school, All Saints Road, Wyke Regis 68
62 Belfield House 68
63 Wyke Castle 69
64 'Ferrybridge Cottages' , workers housing built for the Whitehead torpedo Works....70
65 Memorial to Whitehead Torpedo Works and modern estate....70
66 All Saints' Church, Wyke Regis 70
67 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 3....71
68 Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 3....73
69 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 4, showing current historic urban character type....75
70 Nothe Fort, retaining wall 75
71 Victorian housing, Old Castle Road....75
72 Sandsfoot Castle Gardens 76
73 Nothe Parade walk below gardens....76
74 Newtons Cove....77
75 Newtons Cove bridge 77
76 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 4....78
77 Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 4....79
78 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 5, showing current historic urban character type....81
79 Gloucester Lodge 81
80 Town Bridge 81
81 Pier bandstand 82
82 Alexandra Gardens, Baptist Chapel 82
83 Queen Street, Raneleagh Road junction 83
84 Westham Road, Salvation Army Citadel 83
85 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 5....84
86 Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 5....86
87 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 6, showing current historic urban character type....88
88 St John's Church....88
89 Dorchester Road, Late 19th century terraced housing 88
90 Dorchester Road, St Augustine's Church 89
91 Dorchester Road, Late 19th century villa 89
92 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 6....91
93 Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 6....93
94 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 7, showing current historic urban character type....95
95 Broadwey, former Methodist Church 95
96 Broadwey, Edwardian housing 1901 95
97 Broadwey, St Nicholas Church 96
98 Main street, Elwell 96
99 Dorchester Road, Broadwey, old Congregational Chapel 97
100 Littlemoor, St Francis Roman Catholic church 97
101 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 7....98
102 Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments in Historic Urban Character Area 7....100
103 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 8, showing current historic urban character type....102
104 Dorchester Road, former Weymouth Technical College 102
105 Dorchester Road, former Weymouth Technical College chapel 102
106 Dorchester Road, Late 19th century villa 103
107 Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 8....105
108 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 9, showing current historic urban character type....107
109 Memorial in Melcombe Regis Burying ground 107
110 Weymouth Cemetery chapel 107
111 Westham, Abbotsbury Road 108
112 Westham, Abbotsbury Road 108
113 Abbotsbury Road, St Paul's Church 109
114 Melcombe Regis Burying Ground, Cemetery Lodge 109
115 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 9....110
116 Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 9....111
117 Map of Historic Urban Character Area 10, showing current historic urban character type....113

118 Radipole lake 113
119 Radipole lake and wildlife 113
120 Radipole nature reserve 114
121 Radipole Park Drive, industrial estate....115
122 Radipole Park Drive, playground 115
123 Archaeology of Historic Urban Character Area 10....116
124 Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments in Historic Urban Character Area 10....117

Summary

This report contains the results of a consideration of the historical, archaeological, architectural and map evidence relating to the development of Weymouth. It has focused on the understanding of the overall development of the town from its earliest beginnings to the present day, with a view to defining how this has influenced the modern townscape, identifying what historical features and structures survive within the modern town, and comprehending what is the contribution of its historic dimension to the character of Weymouth today. This will enable an informed approach to the management of change and conservation of the urban environment to be undertaken.

Historical Background

The origins of Weymouth can be found in two medieval ports, Weymouth and Melcombe Regis, which were both created boroughs in the 13th century. Despite setbacks as a result of the Black Death in the 14th and several enemy raids in the 15th centuries they flourished and were officially united in the mid 16th century. In the Civil War they were badly damaged and failed to recover. This was followed by a period of decline until the mid 18th century when the town became one of the first seaside holiday resorts in the world. It grew extensively from the mid 18th century, also regaining its position as a port dealing with traffic to the Channel Islands. Despite set backs to the tourist trade in the 20th century the town has continued to expand, engulfing several surrounding settlements with modern development.

Town morphology

Weymouth's form reflects that of the two original towns. Weymouth is a linear settlement lying alongside the harbour, whilst Melcombe is laid out in a grid pattern. Away from the historic core the development tended initially to follow the main roads, and later modern developments have infilled large areas between the town and the outlying historic settlements.

Built character

Weymouth has a large number of historic buildings within the town. There are a number of good 17th century houses, particularly in Weymouth, mostly built of Portland Stone. Melcombe is still dominated by a large number of high quality late 18th and early 19th century buildings, particularly terraces, which line the sea front in an almost unbroken line. Many of these Georgian buildings are of brick, frequently stuccoed, as Weymouth is surrounded by large areas of high quality brick earth which supplied many brick kilns during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Around the harbour there are a number of old industrial buildings, some converted to other uses whilst in the outlying villages there are old agricultural buildings, as well as several important military remains. Modern housing in Weymouth is typical of its period and has no remarkable local characteristics.

Landscape Setting

Weymouth has a distinctive topographic setting, along the valley of the River Wey and at the point where the river meets the sea. The Ridgeway to the north is a distinct feature. This topographic location provides a dramatic natural background, with the countryside to the north and coastline to the east in particular being visible from many parts of the town. The landscape and topographic setting of the town is fundamental to its character. The harbour with its constant pattern of various vessels of differing types and sizes contrasts with the curving seafront and wide bay of an archetypical seaside town.

Historic Urban Character

There are perhaps two main components that contribute to the local distinctiveness of Weymouth, the historic buildings, and the landscape setting. The historic buildings, both along the sea front and around the harbour are absolutely key to the town's distinctiveness. The town is focussed on the harbour and the sea. The original towns looked towards the harbour, with a varied waterfront reflecting the many uses that have been made of the estuary. The later, visitor-oriented town has looked towards the sea, particularly the long curving bay which was depicted in numerous paintings, prints and photographs from the late eighteenth century to the present.

Further Research

This report has highlighted many aspects of the historical development of Weymouth and how this has shaped the modern town. It has also indicated gaps in our knowledge and areas which would repay further research.

The main areas of suggested further research include:

- Research into local activity before the thir-

Figure 1 Vertical aerial photographic view of Weymouth, 2005

teenth century when the ports appear in the documentary record, we there earlier settlements and if so where?

- The investigation of the evidence for the medieval towns, in particular the harbours and external trade.
- Research into the medieval and post medieval military history, the town was apparently well defended but no physical remains of any such defences have ever been recorded.
- Research into the post-medieval harbour and trade.
- Research into the development of the town as a spa and resort.

Part 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Project

The Dorset Historic Towns Survey forms part of a national programme of urban surveys of historic towns, launched by English Heritage in 1992 (English Heritage 1992) and subsequently modified in the light of approaches developed as part of English Heritage's Historic Landscape Characterisation programme (Thomas 2005).

The 23 places selected for inclusion in the Dorset Historic Towns Survey are shown on Figure 2. For the purposes of this project, Dorset is defined by its post-1974 boundary and includes the present administrative county of Dorset and the area of the Unitary Authorities of Bournemouth and Poole.

1.2 Rationale

Town centres have always been a focus for trade, industry and housing, consequently there have been many different pressures on their development. This has led to both the creation of a potentially rich, complex, deeply-stratified urban archaeological resource through past development of the town and, on the other hand, to serious threats to the survival of this archaeological resource and to other elements of the historical townscape through modern developmental pressure. Without knowledge and understanding of the historic urban environment it is too easy for significant elements to be damaged or removed through modern redevelopment.

The potential for the historic environment to play a complex and highly significant role in economic regeneration was outlined in *Power of Place* (English Heritage, 2000) and its value is highlighted in the government's response *The Historic Environment: A Force for the Future* (DCMS 2001). The potential of the historic environment is particularly significant in towns, where a high quality historic urban environment and the resulting distinctiveness and sense of place that this brings, has been shown to be a primary asset in promoting regeneration. The effect may be direct – through heritage tourism, for example – or more subtle, promoting a strong sense of identity and pride of place, thus creating new confidence and a positive climate for investment and growth.

However, before we can build upon the potential positive effects of the historic urban environment, we must understand it. Characterisation provides a means of understanding the diverse range of factors which create distinctiveness and a sense of place. However, in order to make the characterisation of the historic urban environment relevant and meaningful, it needs to be based on a thorough assessment of the nature, quality and quantity of the historic resource of each urban centre. It is to this end that the Dorset Historic Towns Survey has been undertaken.

1.3 Aims

The aim of the project is to present a review of the existing archaeological, historical and urban morphological evidence and set out the historic character and development of Dorset's Historic towns:

- to produce a useful and flexible tool to aid in the understanding and management of the town
- to inform archaeological and historic environment research
- to inform the management and interpretation of historic urban buildings and land use.
- to provide an evidence base to feed into the Local Development Framework
- to encourage the integration of urban historic characterisation into the wider process of protecting and enhancing urban character.
- to address a number of research aims set out in the South West Archaeological Research Framework into developing understanding of urban settlement from the Roman to the post-medieval periods (Webster 2008).

1.4 Report Structure

The Historic Urban Characterisation Assessment reports all have a similar structure, divided into seven major sections. These are briefly described below to enable easy navigation to the various elements.

Part 1: Introduction is a general introduction to the Dorset Historic Towns Project and to this report.

Part 2 : Overview of Approach is a brief methodological section outlining the guiding principles and approach, together with an explanation of the main technical terms used in this report.

Part 3: Town Context is a consideration of the wider natural setting of the town. It includes a

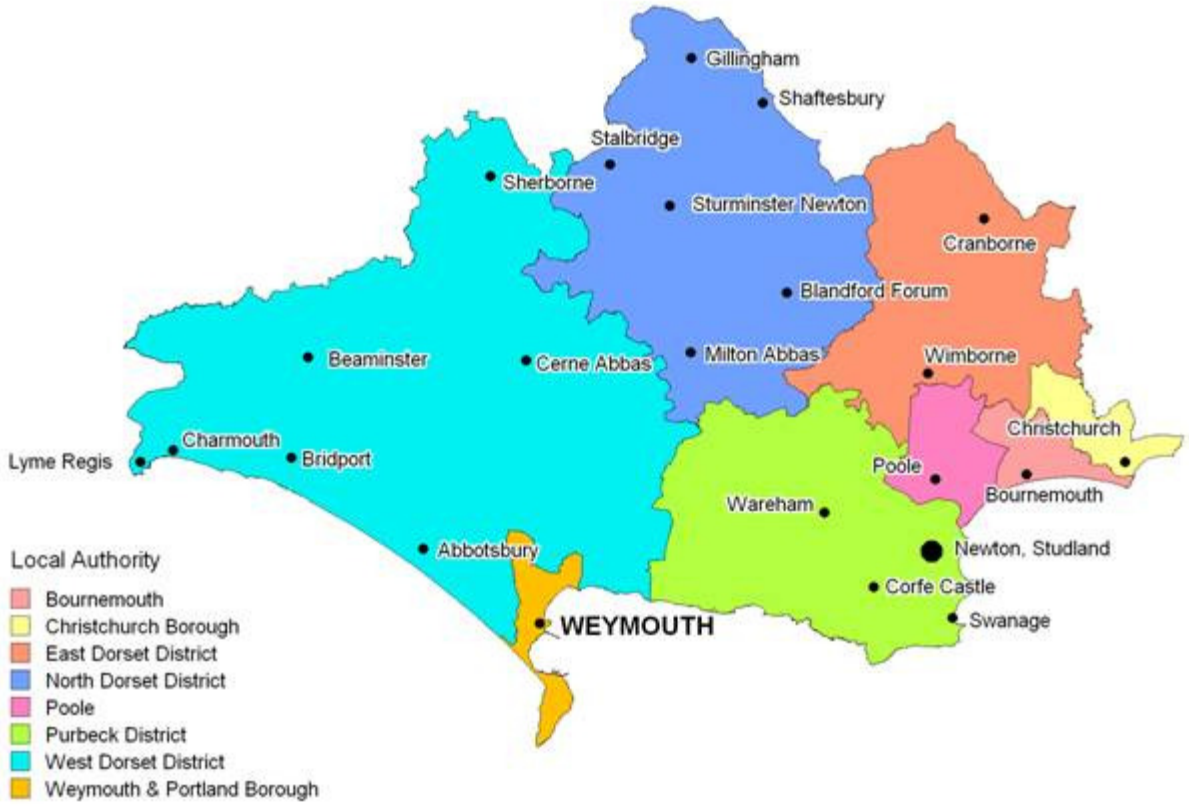

Figure 2 Map of Dorset showing the location of Weymouth and the other towns in the Dorset Historic Towns Survey

summary account of the geology and topography and makes reference to any Landscape Character Assessments undertaken in the area. It includes a summary of the present town, its population, economic base, etc.

Part 4: Sources is an outline of the main sources of historic, cartographic, archaeological and other information used in the report, together with a summary of previous research in the town.

Part 5: Historical Analysis provides a summary account of the chronological development of the town from its origins to the present day, and is a synthesis of the available documentary, archaeological, topographic and morphological information, based largely on a review of published sources. This provides the context for the consideration of Historic Urban Character.

Part 6: Historic Urban Character Appraisal presents the details of the historic urban characterisation work, identifying the physical remains of the past in the present day townscape. It includes a summary of the overall historic urban character of the town and a description of the Historic Urban Character Areas defined as part of this work.

Part 7: Historic Environment Research Framework outlines the major research questions which could be used to guide and inform future research into the town and how these fit into the South West Archaeological Research Framework.

1.5 Who is this Document for?

The information in this report is aimed at the public bodies, organisations and groups that play a role in the planning and management of the urban and historic environments. Additionally anyone who has an interest in the historic urban environment, including community groups, developers, architects and academics, may find aspects of this work of interest and relevance.

Part 2: Overview of Approach

2.1 Guiding Principles

Historic Urban Characterisation is a method of defining and mapping the historic dimension of modern townscapes. The approach used by this project has been developed and adapted from Historic Landscape Characterisation studies. The guiding principles of historic urban characterisation are as follows (adapted from Clark *et al.* 2004, 6):

- Present not past: it is the present-day townscape that is the main object of study.
- Townscape as history not geography: the most important characteristic of the townscape is its time-depth; change and earlier townscapes exist in the present town.
- All aspects of the townscape, no matter how modern, are treated as part of the urban character, not just 'special' areas.
- Characterisation of the urban landscape is a matter of interpretation not record.
- Urban landscape is and always has been dynamic: management of change, not preservation is the aim.
- The process of characterisation should be transparent, with clearly articulated records of data sources and methods used.

2.2 General Approach

In order to characterise the distinctive historic dimension of the present day urban landscape, the systematic identification of the historic attributes of the contemporary townscape is undertaken using a number of cartographic, historic, archaeological and standing building sources. These sources are used to identify 'Historic Urban Character Types' which are mapped onto the modern Ordnance Survey MasterMap base. These character types are used to inform the identification of a series of town plan components for the major periods of development for each town from its origins to the present day. The character types are also used to define a series of 'Historic Urban Character Areas' within each town. The character areas form the basis of a more detailed assessment of historic urban character.

2.3 Historic Urban Character Types

The identification of the historic urban character is based on the collation and analysis of a large quantity of information, including town plan form, building form, historic map evidence, aerial photographic evidence and archaeological data. This information has been used to define specific areas of single character type within the modern town plan, based on the current settlement character, but taking into account previous uses and settlement history. These Historic Urban Character Types form the basic building blocks for analysing the historic urban character.

The methodology and terminology of these Historic Urban Character Types has been developed from that of Historic Landscape Characterisation and comprise a series of ten Broad Types each sub-divided into a number of more specific Historic Urban Character Types. The list and description of the character types is set out in **Appendix 4.** The Historic Urban Character Types used are a standardised classification across all the Dorset Historic Towns. This enables direct comparisons to be made between towns across the county and allows consistency in analysis of the historic environment of the different towns.

The Historic Urban Character Types are mapped onto the digital map base using a Geographical Information System (GIS), linked to a table containing data on the settlement attributes of the current Historic Urban Character Type, the period from which it derives, and data on all previous Historic Urban Character Types. This enables the character of the town to be displayed for all periods and allows a comprehensive picture of the development of the town through time and the time depth of the current urban character to be presented.

2.4 Town Plan Components

Town Plan Components are a series of recognisable morphological units with a definable time depth within an individual townscape. These plan components have been identified through the analysis of the town plan and building fabric, together with their historic urban character types, to form a series of larger units (on a street or block scale rather than on a plot scale) that illustrate the composition of the town within a specific chronological period. These town plan components have been used to identify and illustrate the historic development of each town, as set out in Part 5 of this report. A series of twenty seven standard types of town plan component have been identified.

2.5 Historic Urban Character Areas

The historic urban characterisation of the Dorset towns 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 character of the town, simplifying the large quantity of data presented by the Historic Urban Character Types and enabling a more detailed appraisal of the historic urban character to be undertaken.

The Historic Urban Character Areas are recognisable distinctive areas which have meaningful coherence within the modern townscape. They are defined by one or more of the following attributes

- consistent historic urban character
- common historical development
- similar topographic location
- similar degree of archaeological and/or historic building preservation.

Each character area will have its own individual 'biography' that 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.

2.6 Extent of the Study Area

The Dorset Historic Towns Project Study Area for Weymouth is taken as the present-day urban extent as shown on the 2007 Ordnance Survey MasterMap digital mapping. It comprises part of the Borough of Weymouth and Portland and a very small part of Bincombe Parish. To the west, the boundary follows the Parish boundary between Wyke Regis and Chickerell. To the east the boundary of the southern part is formed by Lodmoor Nature Reserve. Preston, Overcombe and Sutton Poyntz have been excluded from this study area. The urban extent includes areas of recreational open space, school playing fields, etc. around the fringes of the settlement. Where practicable, the boundary to the Study Area is along boundary lines marked on the MasterMap base.

2.7 Definition of Terms

2.7.1 Characterisation Terms

Historic Urban Character Area
See section 2.5 above.

Historic Urban Character Type
See section 2.3 above.

Sensitivity to Large Scale Development
The assessment of sensitivity to large scale development has been developed from that included in the landscape character assessment undertaken by West Dorset District Council (WDDC 2008). Large scale development is taken to mean any form of development that is on a scale much larger than the existing plot pattern and building size.

Strength of Historic Character
The strength of character in each area is determined by judging the survival of historic urban elements in the modern townscape, together with its distinctiveness and recognisability. The strength of character is assessed as Strong, Medium or Weak.
Strong character is where there is widespread survival of historic boundaries and buildings reflecting considerable time depth, where modern development remains unobtrusive.
Medium character is where there is survival of historic boundaries and buildings, but modern development is more evident.
Weak character is where there may be some historic elements present, but there is little time depth evident in the visible structures, which comprise mainly modern buildings and street and boundary layouts.

Town Plan Component
See section 2.4 above.

Urban Structure
This is the framework of routes, plots and spaces and the way they relate to one another, which forms the basic plan on which all other aspects of the built environment and historic development and use are based.

Housing Density
Low Density = < 30 dwellings per hectare (dph)
Medium Density = 30-50 dph
High Density = >50 dph

2.7.2 Archaeological Terms

Archaeological Intervention
A general term for any type of formal archaeo-

logical recording.

Archaeological Potential
Archaeological potential is an assessment of the probability of discovering archaeological finds and features, the likely amount and complexity of the archaeology, and the level of survival. See Appendix 5 for more detail.

Building Recording
Building recording refers to any survey and recording of the structure of a building.

Evaluation
An archaeological evaluation is a limited programme of fieldwork to determine the presence or absence of archaeological deposits or remains within a specified area or site. It can include trial trenching, test pitting, geophysical survey, etc.

Excavation
An archaeological excavation is a programme of controlled fieldwork exposing, investigating and recording an area of below-ground archaeology.

Watching Brief
A watching brief is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons.

2.7.3 Historical Terms

Hundred

A hundred was an administrative subdivision of a shire based notionally on a grouping of 100 hides. They originated in the Saxon period and had their own courts and jurisdiction usually held at a meeting place close to the geographical centre of the administrative area, or at a point easily accessible from any part of the hundred.

Hide

A hide was an area of land defined for tax assessment purposes and was based on the amount of land required to support a family. The size of land unit covered by a hide varied according its productivity but is generally thought to equal approximately 120 acres. Hides originated in the Saxon period but may be based on earlier land units.

Tithing

A tithing was a small administrative subdivision of a hundred notionally containing ten land owning families.

Manor

A manor was a parcel of land, often assessed at 5 hides, over which a lord held domain and could exercise certain rights and privileges, such as the right to have the populace of the manor work the Lord's lands. The lord of manor could be a secular noble, the church, or the King himself; more important nobles held several manors. The manorial system was established in the late Saxon period, around the 10th century AD and became increasingly feudal following the Norman Conquest.

Borough

A borough was a town or part of a town upon which a degree of self governance had been conferred through the granting of a charter. Boroughs held their own courts, markets and were often subdivided in to burgage plots held by burgesses (freemen of the borough) for cash rent rather than by feudal service.

Lay Subsidy

The Lay subsidy is a term given to a tax levied on the general populace (as opposed to the clergy or military) and was calculated as a proportion of their moveable wealth. The poor were exempt. The tax was levied occasionally as the king demanded in order to raise money for military campaigns from the late 13th to the 16th century. The lay subsidy rolls are documents recording the names of each person in a village or tithing within a specific hundred and the amount of tax payable by them. The rolls are particularly useful in the context of the Historic Towns Project because during the 13th and 14th centuries, surnames tended to reflect either occupation or place of habitation. The documents thus provide information on the size of the taxable population within a town, the range of crafts within a particular town or tithing, the names of the individual tithings and boroughs within a hundred and the names of other dispersed settlements within them.

Hearth Tax Returns

The Hearth Tax was a tax introduced in 1662 and abolished in 1689. It was payable by householders on the number of hearths or fireplaces within a household. The tax amounted to 1 shilling per hearth or stove payable twice a year. The Hearth Tax Returns generally date from 1662-6 and 1669-74; periods when the tax was administered by royal bailiffs rather than private firms. They include a list of householders eligible for the tax per parish and the number of hearths in each household. The documents are used in this report to give an estimate of the population of the town during the late 17th century.