

Stalbridge Historic Urban Character Area 2 The Ring

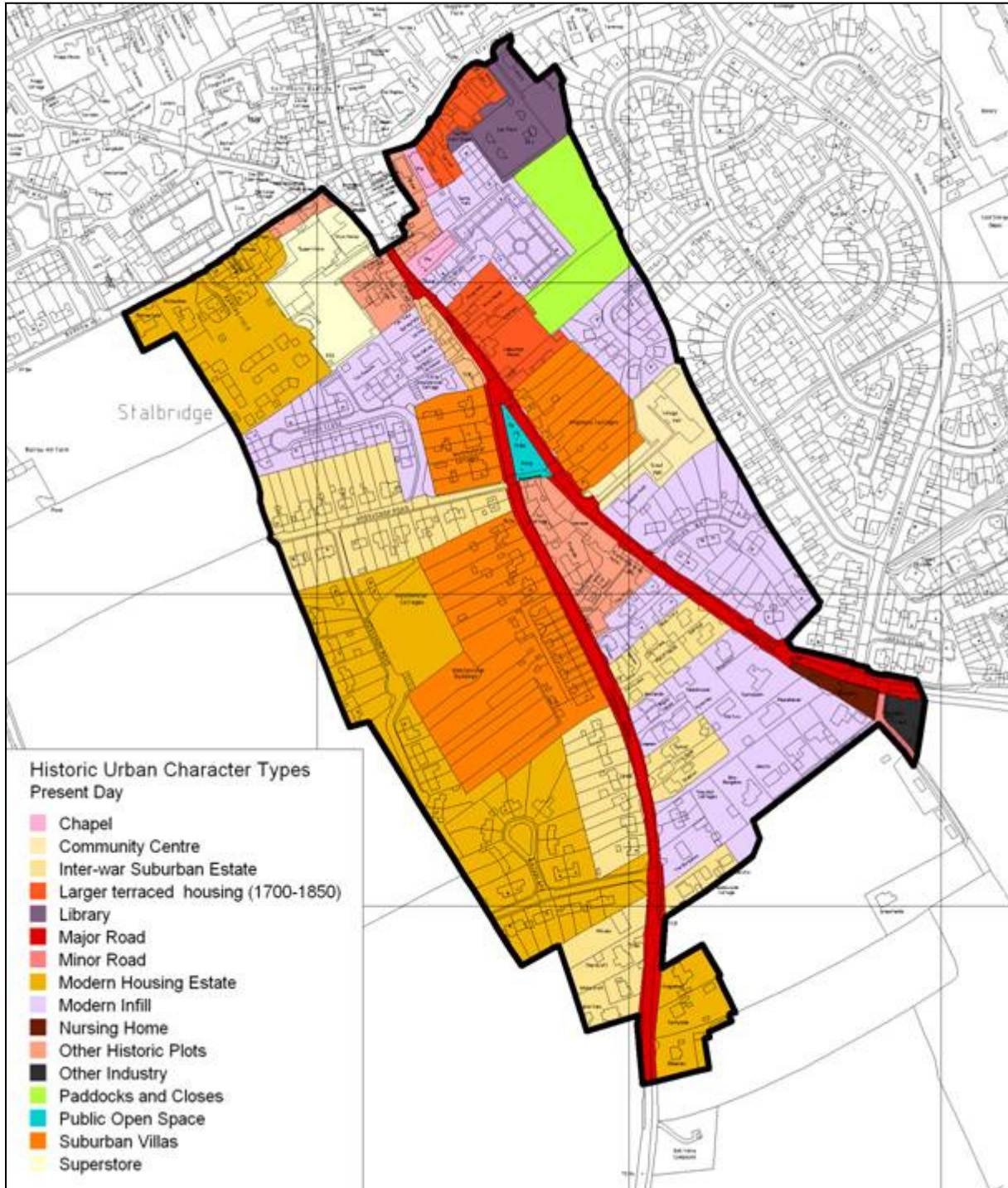


Figure 46: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type.

Stalbridge Historic Urban Character Area 2 Structure of Character Area

Overview

This area represents post-medieval expansion to the south of the medieval town, originating as a market and fair site along the main street south of the town. It is defined partly by its historic dimension and partly by the geographical limit of former fields alongside Ring Street.

Topography and Geology

The Ring, like the medieval core of the town, lies on the western dip slope of the N-S aligned ridge formed from a southerly projection of Forest Marble and Cornbrash strata into the Oxford Clay vale. The majority of this character area lies on the well drained and fertile Cornbrash. The southeast corner and the eastern edge of the area lies on Oxford Clay.

Urban Structure

This area is centred along a Y-shaped junction of Ring Street with Lower Road and Thornhill Road, which form the main routes into the town from the south. There is ribbon development along Ring Street and on Thornhill Road. Behind the main street frontages there is modern housing served by local access linear and curvilinear culs-de-sac. The broadly rectangular shape to the character area is a function of the former field boundaries on either side of Ring Street. These fields were progressively developed for suburban housing from the 19th century onwards.

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Present Character

Figure 46 shows the present day historic urban character types. The area essentially comprises



Figure 47: View north along Ring Street.

historic plots fronting on to Ring Street in the north and suburban villas fronting onto to Lower Road and Thornhill Road to the south. Inter-war and modern housing estates fill in the plots to the rear. A variety of urban commercial and public services are represented at the northern end, including a superstore, library, non-conformist chapels and a community centre.

Time Depth

This area represents post-medieval expansion of the town, beginning in the 17th century. However, The Ring itself may have originated as a medieval fair site along a wide unenclosed road. The earliest extant buildings date from the 17th century and lie on Station Road at the extreme north of the area (Figure 49). The Ring itself and the southern end of Ring Street was developed by the late 18th century. Other significant historic 19th century suburban housing exists towards the southern end of Ring Street and on Thornhill Road, a 19th century turnpike road.

Settlement Pattern and Streetscape

The settlement pattern essentially comprises discontinuous ribbon development along the major roads, with typical 20th century suburban housing estate layouts behind the frontages. At the north end there are tightly packed vernacular buildings set on the street frontage, which give way to a more open 19th century suburban semi-detached and terraced housing layout set back from the roads in the south. The streetscape retains significant historic character along the entire length of Ring Street, which retains a partially open aspect reminiscent of its origins as an unenclosed road and fair site. The open space of Ringtree Green forms a focal point in this area. The former back plots and adjoining fields have been developed for modern housing set back from curvilinear culs-de-sac.



Figure 48: View of Ringtree Green; looking southwest.

Stalbridge Historic Urban Character Area 2 Built Character

Building types

The buildings can be subdivided into three main types. Eighteenth century cottages with coursed rubble walls dominate the north end of The Ring and Ring Street. The second type is represented by 19th century suburban villas on the main street frontage to the south of The Ring. These are a mixture of stone and brick buildings set back from the street frontage with predominately slate roofs. Behind them sit the third type of building; mid 20th century detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows on linear and curvilinear culs-de-sac (Figure 51).

Two of the more imposing buildings are the 19th century Independent and Methodist chapels (Figure 52) on Station Road and Ring Street respectively. The only other commercial or public buildings are the modern developments at Dike's Superstore, Ring Street and Stalbridge Library, Station Road.

Building Materials

The historic 17th and 18th century buildings are all constructed in Forest Marble coursed stone rubble. These frequently have stone tile eaves and slate or thatched roofs. Only a few are painted or rendered. Anglesey Cottages, built in 1831, have rendered stone walls with ashlar dressings and hipped slate roofs. These buildings were the first in Stalbridge to utilise imported Welsh slate as a roofing material. The Methodist chapel is also in Forest Marble with Ham Hill stone dressings. The Independent Chapel is stone built with red brick detail. Westminster Cottages are stone Victorian suburban villas, semi-detached, with slate roofs and retaining many period details such as cast iron drainpipes. Westminster Terrace is also built in Forest Marble with red brick detail. Mid-late 20th century suburban houses tend to utilise pale brick and tile roofs. Dike's superstore is a modern glass fronted building incorporating elements of natural stone. The library is a modern red brick gabled single storey building with tiled roof.

Key Buildings

Public Buildings: Independent Chapel, Methodist Chapel, village pump.

Commercial Premises: Dike's Superstore, Skye House, Stalbridge Arms

17th /18th century cottages: Ringtree House, Greenwoods, The Cottage (Station Road)

19th century Houses: 1-10 Anglesey Cottages, Westminster Cottages, Westminster Buildings.



Figure 49: Rose Cottage and Well Cottage, Station Road.



Figure 50: Westminster Cottages, Thornhill Road.



Figure 51: Former View of post-war semi-detached housing on Coppem Way.



Figure 52: Methodist Chapel, Ring Street.

Stalbridge Historic Urban Character Area 2 Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations

Only one archaeological investigation has been undertaken in this character area (Figure 53; Appendix 3, No 4). A watching brief during development at Dorset House revealed a small number of ditches, all relatively modern.

Archaeological Character

The limited archaeological investigation gives little indication of the archaeology of this area. The medieval fair site is likely to produce stray

finds, rather than structures, though the latter are also possible. There may be surviving post-medieval structures and pits at the rear of the historic plots. Eighteenth century field boundaries surviving in the modern townscape have been marked on Figure 53. As a rule these are aligned along, and perpendicular to, the topographical grain and may represent continuity of field alignment from the late prehistoric period.

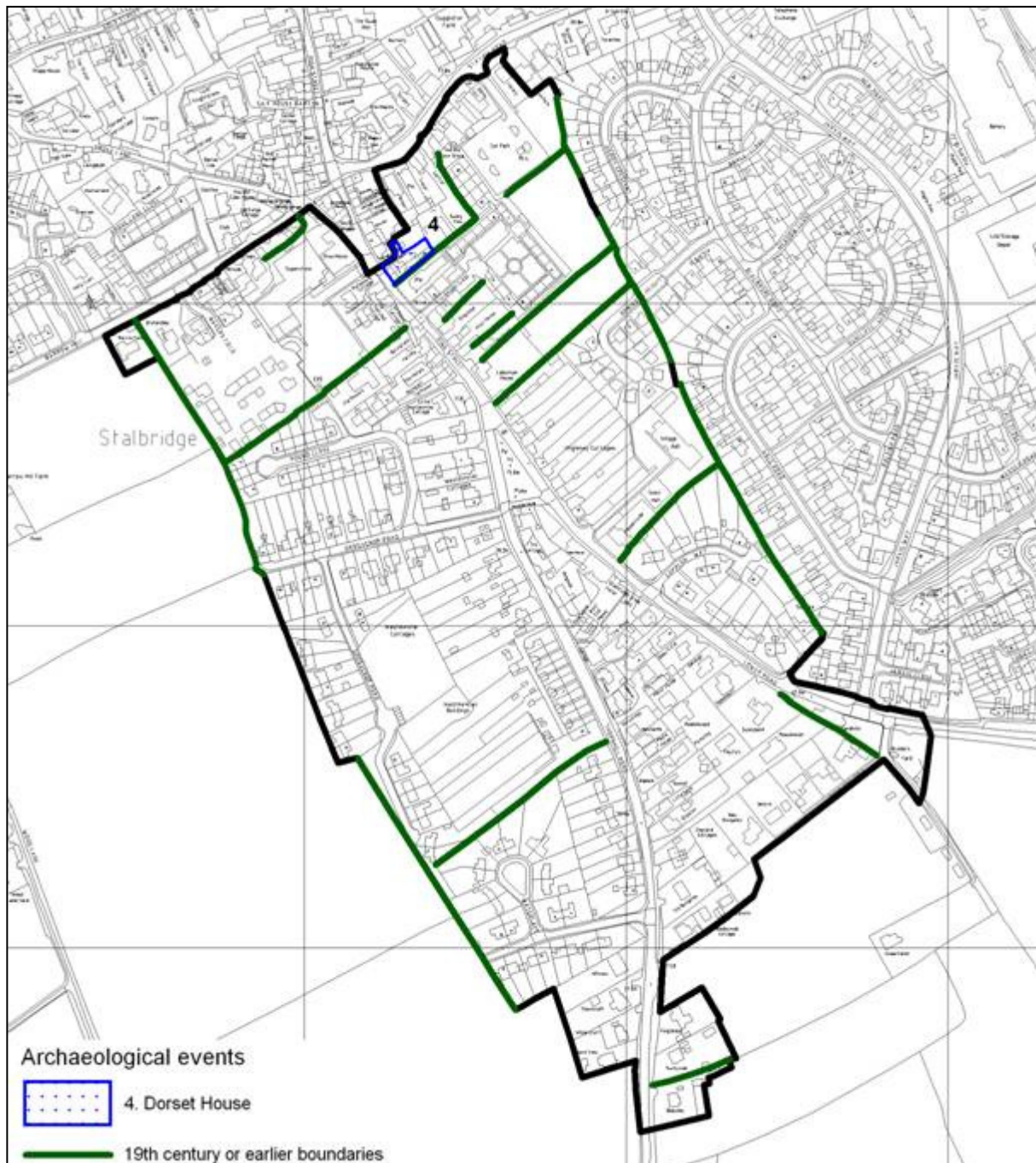


Figure 53: Archaeological features in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Stalbridge Historic Urban Character Area 2 Designations

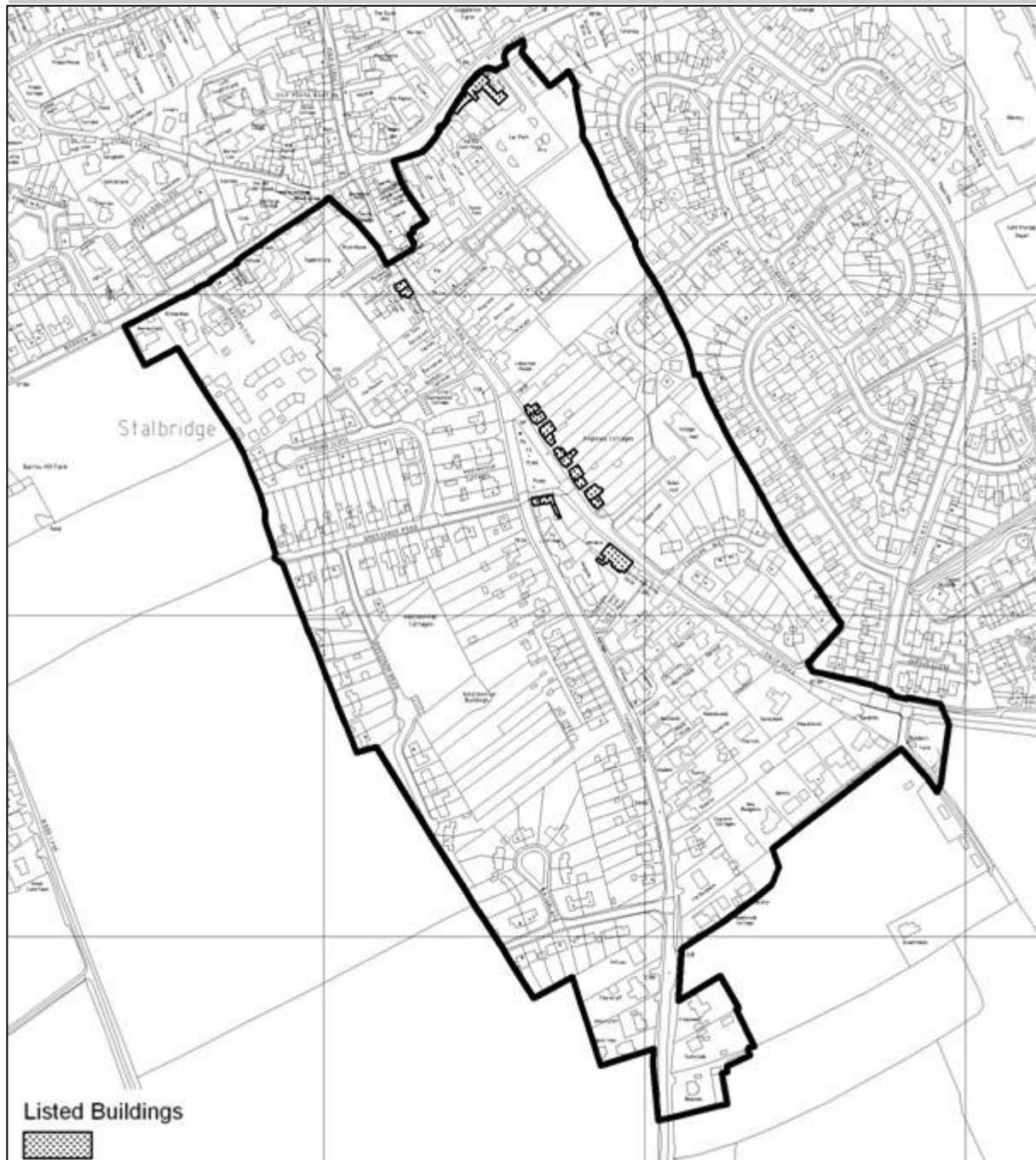


Figure 54: Listed Buildings and other designations in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

Listed Buildings

There are seven Listed Building designations in the Character Area, all Grade II. One of the designations refers to ten houses at Anglesey Cottages.

Conservation Areas

The northern three-quarters of this Character Area lies within the Stalbridge Conservation Area (Figure 36). Waterlake, Coppern Way and the southern parts of Thornhill and Lower

Roads are not within the Conservation Area.

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.

Stalbridge 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 18th and 19th century historic buildings on Ring Street and The Ring. Surviving elements of the medieval fair site and potential late prehistoric field alignments also add to the sense of character. However, this is counterbalanced by the large areas of 20th century development behind the historic street frontage, including a glass-fronted supermarket. The area does benefit from the fact that the majority of modern development does not impinge on the historic streetscape of Ring Street.

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 housing and commercial development. This has damaged historic plot boundaries but has not severely damaged the historic street frontage.

Archaeological Potential

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. The Ring, together with the adjacent land, is known to be the site of post-medieval fairs. There is a strong possibility that Stalbridge's medieval fairs were also held on this site. These episodic events are unlikely to leave remains of substantial structures, although there is the potential for durable artefacts relating to fairs and commerce

surviving anywhere within the character area. The distribution of these artefacts has the potential not only to answer questions concerning the history and development of the medieval and post-medieval town, but also the economy of the wider region. The development of a 17th century market and extension to the town just beyond the northern part of the area also strongly suggests that there is potential for surviving pits, structures and boundaries here. Furthermore, this report has presented a possible outline for the development of Stalbridge and archaeological evidence from this area has the potential to corroborate or refute this scheme. For example, if there is survival of medieval structures hidden within 17th and 18th century buildings in this area, then the suggestion that this area represents post-medieval expansion would be compromised. The potential for surviving medieval architectural components and their distribution could therefore contribute to the further understanding of the town's development.

There is also potential for recovering archaeological information concerning pre-urban activity, considering the position of the area close to the spring line and at the conjunction of a range of natural resources associated with the well drained fertile ridge and the wetter, potentially forested clay vale.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1- 4 and 12-24 (Part 7).

Key Characteristics

- Site of medieval fair
- Post-medieval market site
- 17th and 18th century vernacular cottages
- 19th century suburban housing
- Medieval and earlier street plan
- Medieval and earlier plot boundaries