

## Shaftesbury Historic Urban Character Area 2 Shaftesbury Town Centre

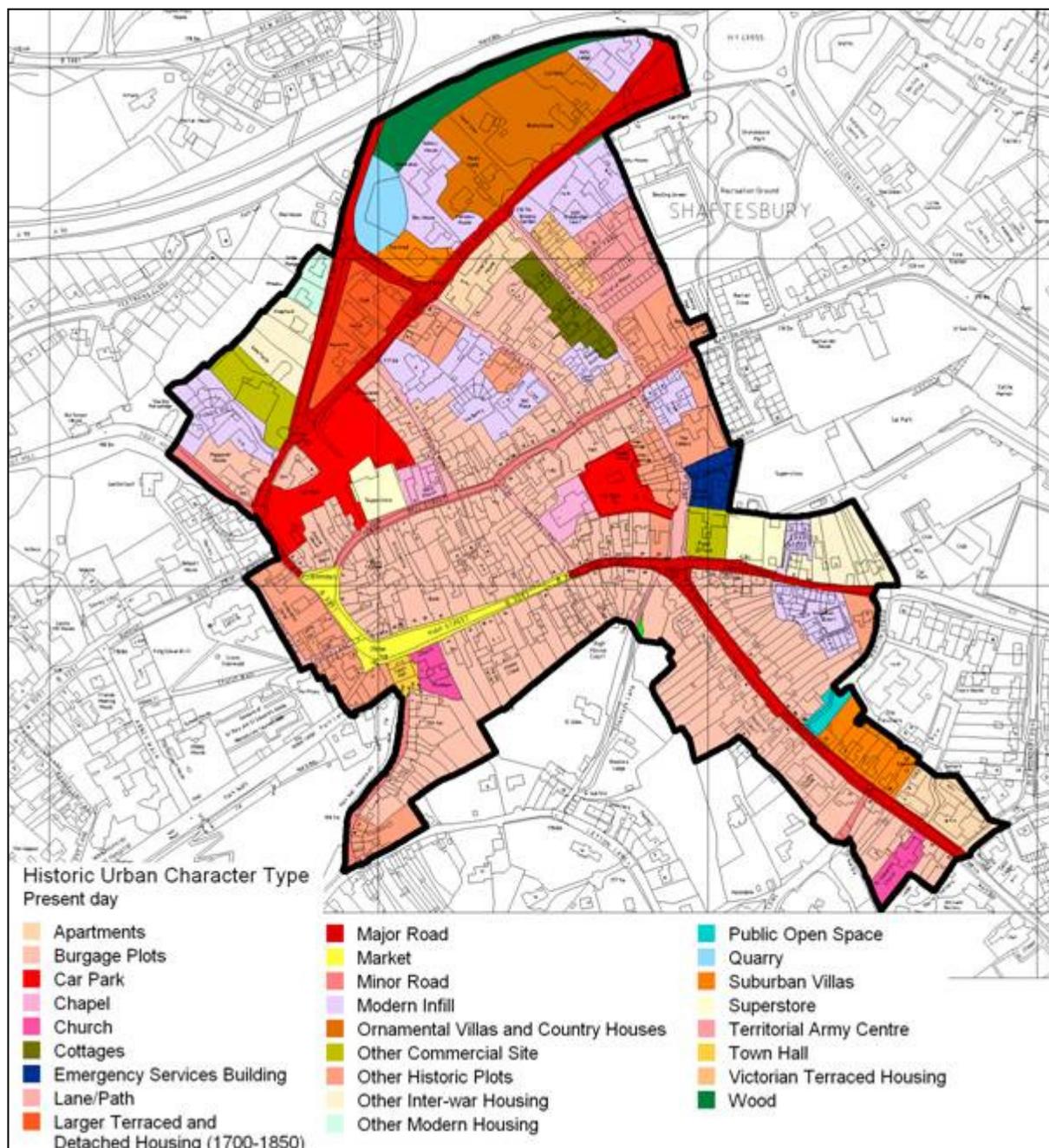


Figure 63: Map of Historic Urban Character Area 2, showing current historic urban character type.

## Shaftesbury Historic Urban Character Area 2 Structure of Character Area

### **Overview**

This area represents the core of the medieval and post-medieval market town, lying to the east of the abbey and burh. It is defined by its historic dimension, street layout, tightly packed urban character and historic buildings.

### **Topography and Geology**

This area lies on a plateau of Upper Greensand immediately east of the spur. The area is relatively flat and slopes gently and evenly up to the north and east. Steep slopes define the limit of the character area to the north and south. The underlying geology of the area consists entirely of Upper Greensand.

### **Urban Structure**

This character area, more than any other in Shaftesbury, has a tightly developed street frontage typical of a town centre urban environment. The streets themselves are organised in a grid pattern. The three main streets of High Street, Bell Street and Bleke Street run parallel to the topographic grain and are linked by the small cross lanes of Parsons Pool, Muston's Lane, Haimes Lane and Angel Lane. Tout Hill and Gold Hill run up the north and south sides of the spur at the west end of this area. New Street, by contrast, is not on the dominant street alignment, but runs diagonally down the northern side of the spur. Salisbury Street is also on a different alignment, following the southeast edge of the high ground.

### **Present Character**

Figure 63 shows the present day historic urban character types. Burgage Plots are the dominant character type, lining High Street, Bell Street and Salisbury Street. Fitted within the burgage plots are areas of Modern Infill, Cottages, Car Park, Church, Chapel, Superstore and Suburban Villas. There are Irregular Historic Plots along Lyons Walk and at the bottom of Gold Hill. The form of the Market is preserved in the High Street and the Commons. The area north of Bleke Street is different, comprising mainly Ornamental Villas and Country Houses, Suburban Villas and Larger Terraced and Detached Housing (1700-1850), Suburban Villas and areas of Minor character types include Apartments, Other Inter-war Housing, Other Modern Housing and Modern Infill. Town Hall, Other Commercial Site, Emergency Services Building, Territorial Army Centre (the former Drill Hall), Wood and Quarry.

### **Time Depth**

This area is probably Late Saxon in origin, but it is unclear how much of the present street pattern and property divisions date from that time. It is likely that the streets date to this period but the property divisions could have their origin in the medieval period. Settlement along Gold Hill and along Salisbury Street may be later, perhaps late 12<sup>th</sup> to late 13<sup>th</sup> century in date. Settlement to the east of Victoria Road is late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century in origin. The majority of the buildings in the commercial centre of the town are 19<sup>th</sup> century. New Street dates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and much of the present settlement pattern to the north of Bleke Street dates from a similar period. The later 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the infill of many back plots and the clearance of areas of the town for car parking and supermarkets.

### **Settlement Pattern and Streetscape**

The settlement pattern comprises a somewhat irregular grid of streets and lanes, which generally have slightly sinuous lines. The High Street with its funnel-shaped market area is distinctive. The settlement pattern is mainly high density housing in a generally regular perimeter block layout, with ribbon development along Salisbury Street. The buildings tend to be set directly along the street frontage. The frontages are nearly all built up, though there are some gaps along Coppice and Salisbury Streets and the car park behind Bell Street has created a large gap at the north end of the High Street. A number of narrow passageways give access into the rear of the properties. Gold Hill with its cobbled carriageway is a famous historic streetscape. The area north of Bleke Street is different, with low density housing set back from the streets in large garden plots, often with large mature trees. Elsewhere in this area, trees and open green spaces are generally absent.



Figure 64: High Street streetscape, looking east.

## Shaftesbury Historic Urban Character Area 2 Built Character

### **Building types**

This area has a high proportion of historic buildings. These include a range of vernacular cottages and houses of 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century date concentrated along Gold Hill and Bell Street. Georgian and Victorian buildings are widespread, but particularly evident along the High Street. Twentieth century houses and commercial properties are scattered throughout the area, but tend to be fitted behind the main street frontages, with a few exceptions. Inter-war and modern housing is perhaps most visible along Coppice Street.

There are a few early buildings. St Peter's Church is the most complete medieval church in the town. 'King Alfred's Kitchen' is the only house in Shaftesbury with visible timber framing and is of 17<sup>th</sup> century origin. Most of the vernacular houses and cottages are of two storeys and of little architectural distinction, but contribute greatly to the general historic character of the town. Of particular note is 22 & 24 Bell Street with its diaper-patterned brick first floor and thatched roof, the 17<sup>th</sup> century 17 Bell Street with its mullioned windows and arched carriage entrance and the 17<sup>th</sup> century Ship Inn at the top of Tout Hill.

Georgian buildings include the Grosvenor Hotel, an 1820s coaching inn, which dominates the Commons and Lloyds Bank on the High Street. Victorian buildings along the High Street are large in scale compared to the rest of the town, frequently three or four stories high. Salisbury Street has mixture of Georgian houses, vernacular houses and Victorian terraced houses and suburban villas. Most of the public buildings in Shaftesbury were rebuilt during the 19<sup>th</sup> century including the Town Hall, the Wesleyan and Congregational Chapels and the old Market House (now Shaftesbury Arts Centre). The Roman Catholic Church of St Edward The Martyr in Salisbury Street was built in Late English style by Doran Webb in 1910.



Figure 65: Bell Street streetscape looking west towards Trinity church tower.

The modern buildings are generally typical 20<sup>th</sup> century in style with little local distinctiveness. The Post Office is perhaps the most visible and notable modern building, Box House, Bleke Street is a striking modern house.

There are few identified industrial buildings in this area, the most visible is the Old Granary, Barton Hill, with a long stable range behind.

### **Building Materials**

Upper Greensand is the dominant building material for historic buildings of early 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier date. This is used as ashlar in higher status buildings such as the Town Hall or rubble in lower status houses. Red brick is the most common material for Victorian and Edwardian buildings often using greensand dressings. Stucco and render is used on a number of buildings, particularly along the High Street and the Commons. The modern buildings are constructed in a range of non-local bricks and stone. A variety of roofing materials are used in this area including plain tile, slate and thatch.

### **Key Buildings**

*Public Buildings:* St Peter's Church, Town Hall, Wesleyan Chapel, Congregational Chapel, Church of Edward the Martyr, Old Market Hall

*Commercial & industrial:* Grosvenor Arms, 2 The Commons, 12 High Street, 25-7 High Street, Lloyds Bank, the Old Granary, Post Office, the Ship Inn

*17<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup> century vernacular cottages:* 5-15 Gold Hill, 17 Bell Street, 22 & 24 Bell Street, St Martins Angel Square, 6 Haines Lane, 14 Parsons Pool, 9-13 Parsons Pool, 19 Salisbury Street.

*17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Town Houses:* Grosvenor House, 36 & 47 Bell Street, Avishays and Sunridge (Bleke Street), The Cedars (Angel Lane).



Figure 66: Salisbury Street streetscape, looking north.



## Shaftesbury Historic Urban Character Area 2 Archaeology

### **Archaeological Investigations**

Twenty-four archaeological investigations have been undertaken in this character area (Figure 67; Appendix 3, 26-50). Most of these have been small in scale, either watching briefs during development or small test trenches.

Late Saxon pottery has been found on a small number of sites, including St Peter's Church, 41-45 High Street, and the Crown Public House (Figure 67, 26-9), indicating Saxon activity in this area. A possible Saxon boundary ditch was found at the Crown Public House site.

There is more widespread evidence for medieval features and activity. Medieval pits were found across a number of sites in this area, including the former Electricity Depot, Swans Yard (Figure 67, 32-3), the High Street (Figure 67, 31), 28-30 Bell Street (Figure 67, 35), The Cedars (Figure 67, 37), 1 Salisbury Street (Figure 67, 38), and Shaftesbury Museum (Figure 67, 40). Most of these pits appeared to contain domestic rubbish, but at The Cedars traces of lead working and some glass slag was recovered suggesting industrial activity (Hawkes 1993). Some evidence for medieval activity was also found at Parson's Pool House (Figure 67, 36).

Evidence for post-medieval activity has been found across this area in most of the sites mentioned above. The remains of a 17th century building were found at 28-30 Bell Street and the remains of a 16th or 17th century building were found at Parson's Pool House. At 8 Gold Hill the remains of a 16th or early 17th century house were found below the present building and several post-medieval pits were found under the former Pike's car showrooms (Figure 67, 45). A number of other minor features and deposits of 18th and 19th century have been found at other sites in this area.

### **Archaeological Character**

The archaeological investigations in this area provide some insight into its archaeological character. Evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British activity is conspicuous in its absence. There is a very small amount of evidence for Saxon activity (a ditch, a pit and some residual pottery) mainly along the High Street, perhaps indicating a focus of Saxon activity in this area, though some Saxon pottery has been found near Parson's Pool. A large hoard of 11th century silver coins was found, probably somewhere in the Bleke Street area, but these may have been deposited outside the Saxon town itself (Dolley 1956).

The medieval archaeology has been mainly restricted to 'backland' areas and is typified by the presence of medieval pits containing mainly domestic refuse, together with a small range of other features. These areas may also contain evidence of industrial activity, but this has been very restricted in this area of Shaftesbury, but this is likely to be a reflection of the piecemeal nature of much of the archaeological investigation in this area, rather than an absence of craft activity within the town. The post-medieval archaeology has also been concentrated in the same 'backland' areas and has demonstrated the survival of remains of both buildings, refuse pits and a range of other minor features across the area. Of interest is the remains of an earlier house on a previous street alignment at 8 Gold Hill. Similar examples may survive elsewhere in this area.

Figure 67 shows historic boundaries depicted on maps dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Some of these are likely to represent medieval burgage plots fossilised in the modern townscape.

### Shaftesbury Historic Urban Character Area 2 Designations

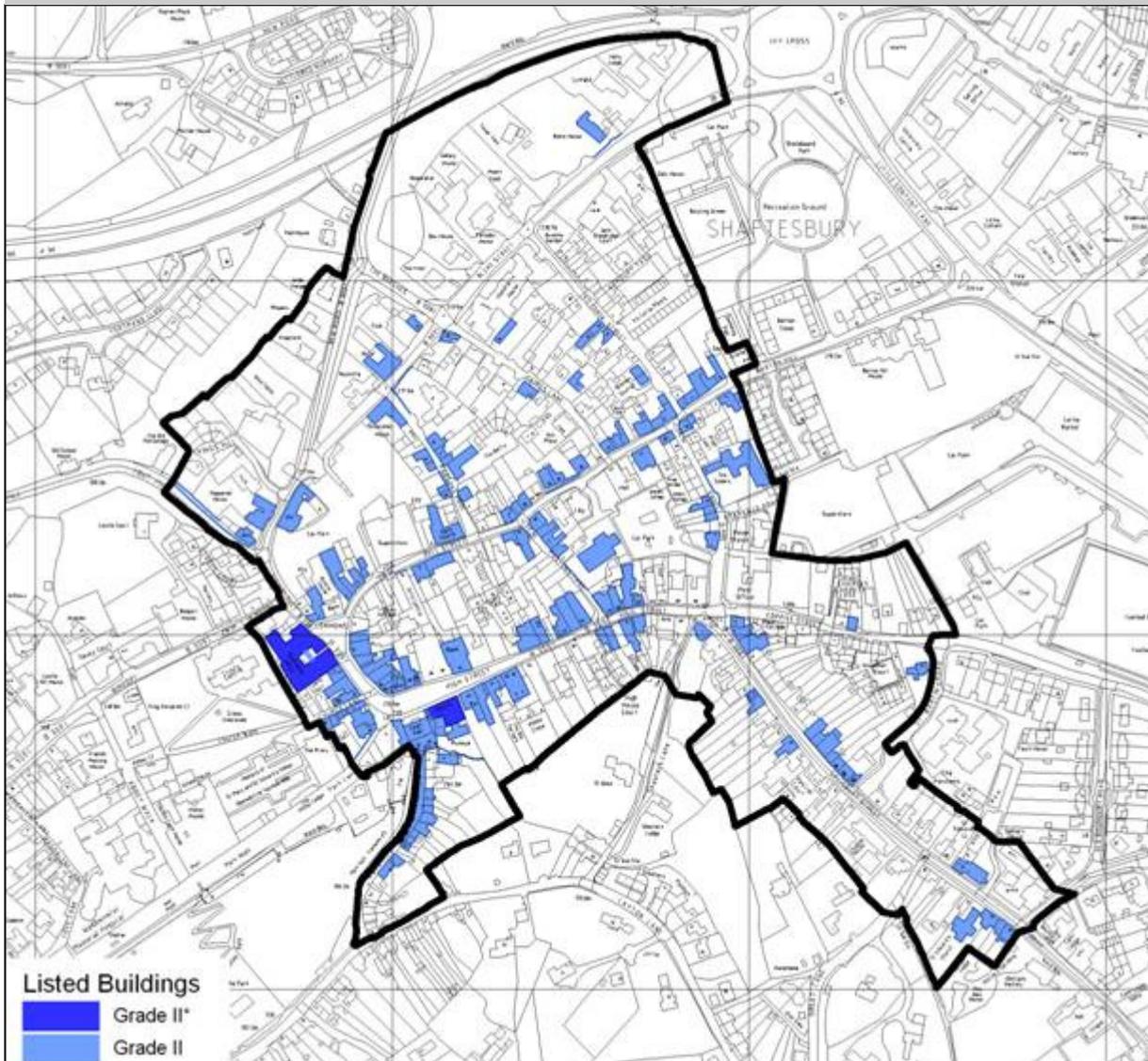


Figure 70: Listed Buildings in Historic Urban Character Area 2.

#### **Listed Buildings**

There are 124 Listed Building designations in the Character Area, all Grade II apart from two Grade II\* buildings (St Peter's Church and the Grosvenor Arms Hotel) (Figure 70).

#### **Conservation Areas**

The majority of this Character Area lies within the Shaftesbury Conservation Area. The north side of New Road, the east end of Bleke Street and Coppice Street are not within the

Conservation Area (Figure 54).

#### **Registered Historic Parks and Gardens**

There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within the Character Area.

#### **Scheduled Monuments**

No Scheduled Monuments lie within this character area. However, the former abbey precinct wall on the west side of Gold Hill (Dorset 6b) forms part of the western boundary of the character area.

## Shaftesbury Historic Urban Character Area 2 Evaluation

### **Strength of Historic Character**

The strength of character of this area is judged to be **strong**. The area is underpinned by a structure of streets and property boundaries which probably have their origin in the late Saxon or medieval period. The High Street and The Commons have fossilised the medieval market places. The buildings in this area make a strong contribution to the historic character, with a wide range of vernacular houses and cottages along Bell Street and Gold Hill, with their assortment of differing architectural details and positions to the street frontage. The tall brick and stone Georgian and Victorian buildings along the High Street reflect a particular period in the history of the town and underscore the historic commercial importance of the market streets and give a coherence to the present commercial centre of the town. The northern part of this area along Bleke Street has a less strong historic identity through modern development and traffic management, but has a range of historic and modern villas and houses overlooking the vale to the north as a result of early villa development on the fringes of the town centre.

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

The area has a **high** sensitivity to major change. The town centre provides a vital component to the historic character of Shaftesbury. Most of the street frontages are built up with historic buildings, many set within property boundaries which may date to the medieval period. To date modern development has largely been limited to small scale work within the boundaries of former burgage plots.

Larger scale development amalgamating a number of properties or removing buildings from the street frontage would have a detrimental effect on the historic character, as can be witnessed by the example of the car park and supermarket on the site of the former cattle market at the north end of the High Street, which has opened up the frontage with the result that this area lacks coherence.

### **Archaeological Potential**

The archaeological potential of this area is judged to be **high**. Late Saxon archaeology has already been noted for the area and it is known to have been the commercial focus of the town from at least the late 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Archaeological investigations have revealed there is potential for a range of archaeological finds and features dating from the Saxon, medieval and post-medieval periods to survive in this area. The survival of pits, buildings, boundaries and other features, particularly in back plot areas has the potential to inform on the economy, diet, craft industry and other aspects of life in the centre of historic Shaftesbury. There is potential to uncover information on the suggested Saxon origins of this area. There is some potential for surviving medieval architectural components to survive within ostensibly later buildings, which would contribute to the further understanding of the town's development.

This area has the potential to provide information which would contribute to Research Questions 1-5, 10, 13-22 and 24-9 (Part 7).

### **Key Characteristics**

- Historic commercial centre of Shaftesbury, possibly from late Saxon period onwards
- Historic street grid of near parallel roads, with lanes linking them
- Medieval and post-medieval market areas at the High Street and The Commons
- Large number of surviving historic buildings and intact street frontages
- Range of vernacular houses and cottages with varied building lines along some streets and lanes
- Georgian and Victorian High Street frontage
- Some possible medieval or earlier plot boundaries