

# Flint:

## Understanding Urban Character



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



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In carrying out this study, Cadw grant-aided Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust to prepare a detailed report on the archaeology and history of Flint, including the definition and mapping of character areas and an assessment of archaeological potential. An edited version of the Trust's report forms the basis for the discussion of the history, topography and archaeological potential of Flint in this publication. The full report is available on the website of Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust. [www.cpat.org.uk](http://www.cpat.org.uk)

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# Introduction

## Aims of the Study

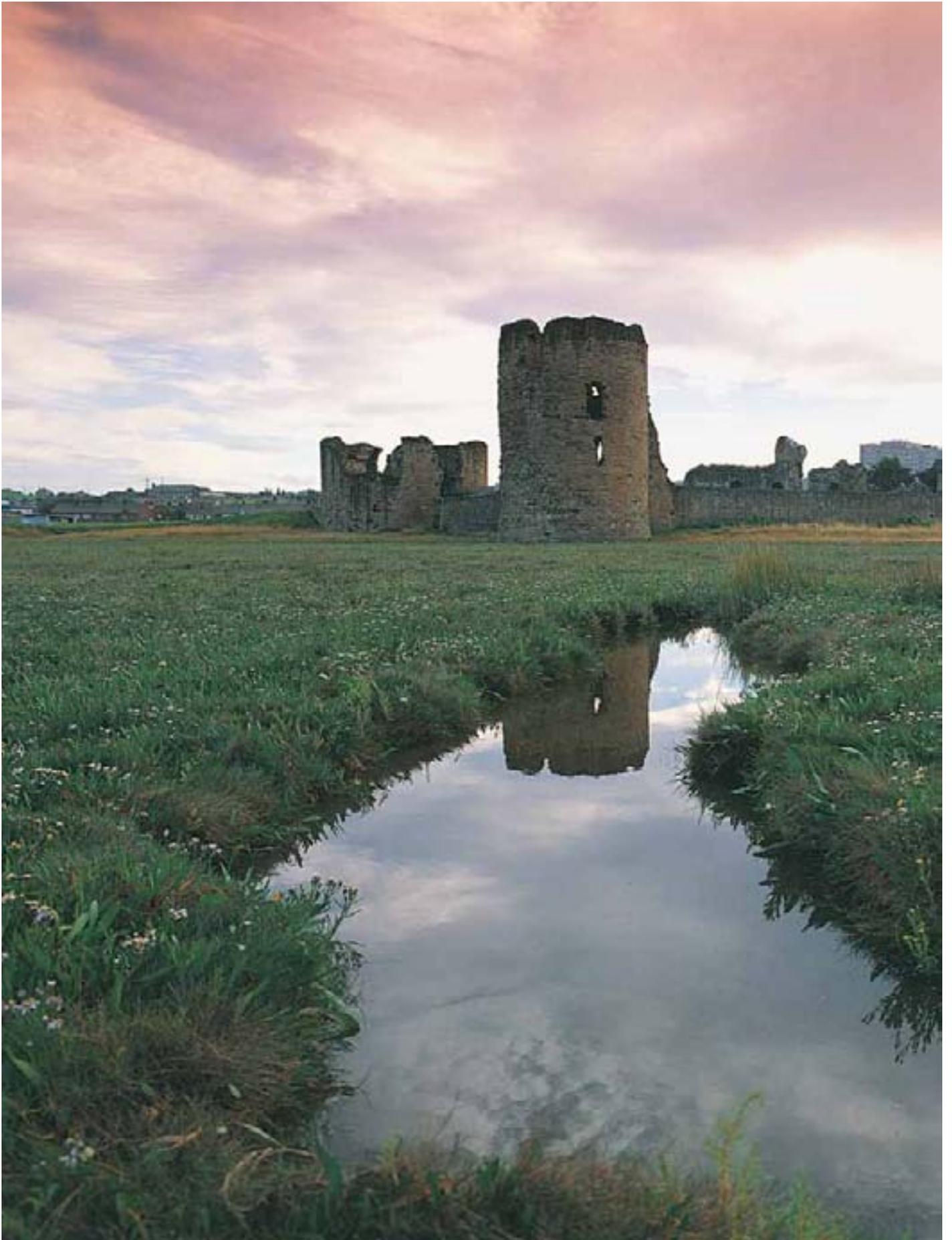
Urban characterization aims to describe and explain the historic character of towns, to give a focus to local distinctiveness, and to serve as a tool for the sustainable management of the historic environment. It seeks to inform and support positive conservation and regeneration programmes, help improve the quality of planning advice, and contribute to local interpretation and education strategies.

Urban characterization defines the distinctive historical character of individual towns, and identifies the variety of character within them, recognizing that this character is fundamental to local distinctiveness and pride of place, and is an asset in regeneration. It looks at how the history of a town is expressed in its plan and topography, in areas of archaeological potential, and in its architectural character. This survey is not just an audit of features, but a reconstruction of the themes and processes that have shaped the town.

The immediate context for this study is as a contribution from Cadw towards Flintshire County Council's Stage Two bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Townscape Heritage Initiative in Flint. It is anticipated that the Townscape Heritage Initiative will build on existing regeneration schemes, with the intention of physically enhancing the town, attracting visitors, and providing a stimulus for further investment and the creation of new jobs. As well as the physical restoration of buildings, this funding would also provide for a programme of exhibitions, talks and school projects designed to foster a sense of pride, belonging and involvement within the broader community. Although the Townscape Heritage Initiative is focused on the Flint Conservation Area, this characterization study examines the historic character of the whole of the built-up area of the town, setting the conservation area in a wider context, and providing a baseline for strategic planning as well as local management.



*Flint Castle and town.*



# Historical Development

## Early History

*'The origin of the town, though undoubtedly remote, is involved in the greatest obscurity. Although it cannot be identified with any Roman station mentioned in the Itineraries, it was nevertheless either of Roman or Roman-British origin, as is proved by the circumstance of its even now occupying a rectangular intrenched area, like that of a Roman place of defence, and the discovery, at various times, both here and in the neighbourhood, of a vast quantity of Roman coins, fibulae, etc.'*<sup>1</sup>

The history of both the town and the castle of Flint and their role in the Edwardian conquest of Wales is now well known, but until it was gradually pieced together by historians in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries it had faded from public consciousness. Instead, the regular layout of the town fostered a belief that it was of Roman origin.

There is evidence for Roman occupation in the area now occupied by its suburbs, but there are only uncertain finds from within the town of Flint itself. The presence of ancient lead processing works in the Pentre Ffwrndan area has been known since at least the late eighteenth century: In his *A Tour in Wales*, Thomas Pennant records the tradition 'that in very old times stood a large town at this place'. He noted the presence of 'great quantities of scoria [cinders/slag] of lead, bits of lead ore, and fragments of melted lead' that had recently been reworked for the recovery of lead.<sup>2</sup> The tradition of an earlier settlement in this area has a long pedigree. Writing of the Croes-ati area in 1574 the scholar John Dee noted that 'in ancient tyme stode a town... now utterly defaced, no ruyn thereof or monument appearing'.<sup>3</sup> Discoveries which have been made in the area in the course of industrial and housing developments from the 1840s up to the present day confirm the existence of a Roman industrial settlement to either side of Chester Street in the Pentre Bridge area, between St David's Church and The Yacht public house. Finds include traces of furnaces, stone and probably timber buildings as well as a number of human burials. The settlement was active from the mid-80s to the middle of the

third century AD. Very recently, the discovery of the remains of a Roman timber-revetted tidal channel east of The Yacht seems to confirm earlier suggestions that lead processed here was exported by sea from wharves along the Dee estuary.

Excavations opposite Pentre Farm in the late 1970s and early 1980s also brought to light a high-status building complex belonging to the period between the earlier second century and the mid-third century AD. The presence of stamped tiles of the Twentieth Legion, which replaced the Second Legion at Chester in about AD 90, suggests that it may have been the residence and administrative complex of a resident official with responsibility for overseeing the metalworking industry.

In the same area, recent excavations have also revealed a stretch of Roman road to the south of The Yacht at Pentre Ffwrndan with two mid-third-century coins on its metalled surface. At this point the road was perhaps as much as 39 feet (12m) wide and diverged from the course of the modern road, bisecting the industrial settlement at Pentre Ffwrndan. The next certain trace of the road is near Rhualt, about 9 miles (15km) to the west, and although traditionally thought to follow more or less the line of the present-day A485, its actual route below the area now occupied by the town of Flint has still to be discovered.

Little is so far known in detail about the history of the immediate environs of Flint in the period of almost 800 years between the later Roman period in the later third and fourth centuries and the Norman Conquest in the later eleventh century. Many of the major place names that evidently emerged during this period clearly indicate that the region formed a complex cultural and political border zone between the emerging Welsh and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms with some infiltration by sea-borne Viking settlers. The unstable and vulnerable political status of the region is hinted at in the name *Perfeddwlad* ('the middle country') by which it became known to the Welsh, a territory stretching for thirty miles along the north coast of

*Opposite: Flint Castle.*

*Flint Castle and town — the line of the medieval main street is visible in the background (Crown Copyright: RCAHMW).*

Wales between the present-day Llandudno and Hawarden. The *cantref* or administrative area in which Flint fell was known to the Welsh as Tegeingl and to the Anglo-Saxons as Englefield, echoing the pre-Roman tribal name of the *Deceangli*.

## Medieval Castle, Town and Countryside

The history of modern Flint may be said to begin with Edward I's creation of a castle and town here in 1277. They were established primarily to serve as a campaign base for the reconquest of *Perfeddwlad*, the king's privately owned territory along the north coast of Wales, which had been lost to the Welsh prince Llywelyn in 1256. The royal army advanced from Chester and had established a foothold at Flint by 21 July 1277. In November of that year, the war was finally brought to a close. Under the terms of a treaty then drawn up, Llywelyn continued to rule west of the river Conwy, but the lands to the east were ceded to the English Crown. The inland areas of *Perfeddwlad* were granted to Dafydd, Llywelyn's brother, in reward for his support during the war. The coastal areas, potentially of greater strategic and commercial significance, were retained by the English king, who for the next five years pressed on with the development of his reconquered territories, including the construction of castles at Flint and Rhuddlan.

*Flint Castle, sited so to be accessible from the sea.*



Both had been started by the autumn of 1277, and their associated fortified boroughs were already in existence by the spring of the following year when land was being allotted to the predominantly English incomers who were being encouraged to come and settle in the town. From the first, the strategy was to regain and hold the territory by means of castles with fortified market towns that could generate income through taxation. For the sake of security and the promotion of trade, these castles and towns were to be accessible from both land and sea.

Plans dramatically changed with the Welsh revolt which began with the attack on Hawarden Castle by Dafydd and Llywelyn on Palm Sunday in 1282. In consequence, Edward resolved to bring Welsh independence to an end and over the course of the next thirteen years, the focus of English military and administrative interests and expenditure in north Wales irrevocably shifted to the west, and both Flint and Rhuddlan lost their military significance.

The site chosen for the castle and town at Flint was an otherwise little inhabited stretch of land bordering the estuary in the ancient parish of Northop (Llaneurgain) and the ancient administrative district of Coleshill. The site seemed ideal: it stood midway between Chester and Rhuddlan and was no more than a day's journey from either, by land or by sea. An isolated rocky outcrop headland jutting out from the otherwise featureless southern shore of the Dee estuary provided a secure foundation for the castle. This rocky outcrop is the origin of the town's name, which first appears as *le Flynt* or *le Flynd*, probably from the English word 'flint', simply meaning hard stone or rock.

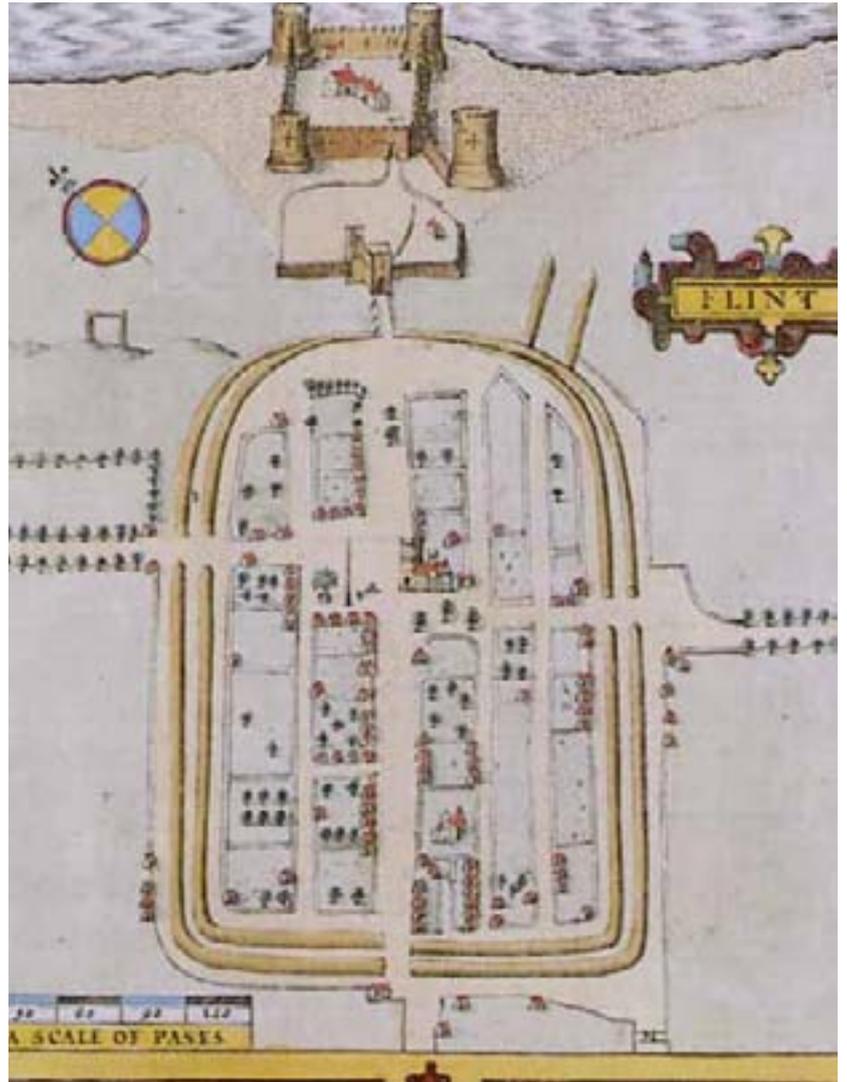
The integrated plan of the medieval castle and town is often held up as a classic example of medieval design. The relatively level and undeveloped site imposed few constraints and

consequently the scheme that emerged was both innovative and experimental, offering a fascinating insight into what was in the mind of the medieval military strategist and town planner responsible for the works.

The town of Flint was the most symmetrical of the new towns of medieval Britain. Recent survey work has revealed the extraordinary symbolic geometry inherent in the plan of the town and the castle. The Great Tower; the medieval market hall, and the church — representing in turn the Crown, the civic authorities, and the Church — all significantly lie precisely on a line which bisects the medieval town.

The layout of the medieval town is known partly from later plans and partly from a limited amount of archaeological excavation, but it is most clearly shown on John Speed's maps: a field drawing of 1607, preserved in Merton College, Oxford; a larger map accompanying his map of Flintshire which appeared in his *Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine* published in 1610/11; and a smaller one which appears as a cartouche bordering his map of Wales in that volume.<sup>4</sup> These maps show the main coastal road — corresponding to the modern Holywell Road and Chester Street — crossed at right angles by a grid of four parallel roads, two to either side of the medial line bisecting the Great Tower of the castle. One of the four parallel roads — corresponding to the modern Church Street — was aligned with the gatehouses of the inner and outer wards of the castle at one end and the main road south of the town at the other. Access to the castle was via the town, giving it an extra layer of defence. Speed's plan shows a number of other roads and lanes, notably running just inside the inner bank and just outside the outer bank. These probably partly overlay the medieval banks and were therefore later in date, but further excavation is needed to be certain of this.

Evidence still buried in the ground also has much to tell us about what the town was like, the kinds of buildings that existed, and the way of life of the inhabitants. The more certain elements of the medieval town are the town church dedicated to St Mary, the town hall, and the marketplace, where the town hall was later sited. The town was clearly up and running by early in 1278, when a weekly market and annual fair were proclaimed and when agents were appointed to rent out plots of land to



would-be inhabitants, even if the defences had still to be completed. The town received its first royal charter, which conferred full borough privileges and rights to land, in 1284.

The take-up of tenancies appears to have been slow, however, since in 1282 agents were authorized to rent out plots in the town free of charge for ten years and at a reduced rate thereafter. The extent to which Flint ever became built up during the medieval period is open to question. Speed's map of 1610 shows many vacant plots within the town, but whether this represents abandonment or failure to develop at all is uncertain.

Near disaster struck Flint in 1294, when the town was deliberately set on fire on the orders of the constable of the castle during the Welsh revolt in north Wales led by Madog ap Llywelyn. This desperate measure was designed to protect the

*The castle and town of Flint as mapped by John Speed in 1610 (By permission of The National Library of Wales).*

castle and hinder the Welsh from laying siege to it. It appears to have involved the destruction of seventy-three or more buildings: perhaps every building in the town, with the possible exception of the church. The townspeople were compensated for their losses and houses were rebuilt, though the episode can have done little to encourage newcomers to come and settle in the town.

The inhabitants of the new town needed land for agriculture, and within the boundaries of the medieval borough, land was systematically cleared to create open fields. The outlines of the resulting field pattern survived into the nineteenth century and were recorded on the tithe map of 1839. This shows Flint encircled on the landward side by a distinctive grid-like pattern of elongated fields mostly running up and down the slope of the hill and clearly laid out in relation to the medieval town. Much of this fieldscape was built over as the town developed as an industrial settlement during the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but some of the original field pattern survives to the south of the town. Occasional green spaces and the pattern of footpaths and roads such as Coed Onn Road/Alt Goch have fossilized the pattern within the modern settlement boundary.

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## The Town between 1500 and 1700

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*'The houses are thatched and have stone walls but so decayed that in many places ready to fall down'.<sup>5</sup>*

John Speed's field drawing of Flint in 1607 shows about one hundred buildings inside the defences, including the town hall and the church, as well as a number of buildings lying on subsidiary lanes immediately behind the inner rampart. The town was still largely contained by the medieval defences, but about fifteen other buildings are shown just outside them: some are on lanes which skirt the outer rampart but most are close to the three main entrances which lead out of the town. Commerce is symbolized by the market cross shown in the central square and justice by the stocks and the gallows to the north-west (probably close to the shoreline in the area now occupied by the Castle Park Industrial Estate). Another judicial association is the Sessions House on Church Street which was probably first built in the early

seventeenth century. The medieval church of St Mary survived until it was replaced on the same spot in the middle of the nineteenth century. The predecessor of the present town hall was probably a sixteenth-century building. Otherwise the town still had the appearance of a village, with few other prominent civic or industrial buildings, and about half of the potential building land apparently occupied by fields, gardens and orchards.

Within a few decades of this field drawing, Flint's fortunes had received a setback: both castle and town suffered many depredations during the course of the Civil War. In its aftermath in the early 1650s, John Taylor painted a bleak picture: 'Surely war hath made it miserable; the sometimes famous castle... is now almost buried in its own ruins, and the town so spoiled that it may truly be said of it, that they never had any market (in the memory of man). They have no sadler, taylor, weaver, brewer, baker, botcher, or button maker; they have not so much as a signe of an alehouse'.<sup>6</sup>

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## The Growth of the Town in the Modern Period

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Eighteenth-century descriptions suggest that Flint continued to be a small and insignificant place. To Defoe, it was 'so small that it has not a market, therefore little more than a village, with the trappings of a shire town'.<sup>7</sup> Thomas Pennant, whose local affiliations might have inclined him to sympathy, noted that it was 'a place laid out with great regularity, but the streets being far from completed'.<sup>8</sup> Henry Wyndham took the view that 'it is scarcely worth the travellers while to visit the poor town of Flint'.<sup>9</sup>

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### Tourism

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From the early nineteenth century, there were the first signs of revival. Between the 1780s and the 1840s Flint enjoyed a short-lived reputation as a fashionable seaside resort. According to *The Traveller's Companion through North Wales* of 1800, 'the town of Flint has been much frequented of late years in the bathing season'.<sup>10</sup> Samuel Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of Wales* published in 1833 mentions that in spite of being 'very inferior in appearance' and possessing 'few



*Flint in the early nineteenth century, as depicted by Henry Gastineau (By permission of The National Library of Wales).*

recommendations as a place of residence', it was nonetheless a 'convenient situation for sea-bathing, which attracts a considerable resort of company during the summer months... For the accommodation of persons who visit if for the benefit of the waters hot baths have been constructed on an extensive scale, and are provided with every requisite accommodation.'<sup>11</sup>

The baths, formerly at The Bardyn just to the south-east of the castle, are also mentioned in Edward Parry's *Cambrian Mirror, or A New Tourist Companion through North Wales* first published in 1843. He speaks of the town being 'a very pleasant sail' from Chester, and that a great number of people from Chester 'avail themselves of this opportunity, to take their families to Flint during the bathing season, where lodgings and every accommodation may be had at very reasonable rates... The air is salubrious and the surrounding scenery beautiful. The walks in the neighbourhood — particularly the one down the cop to meet the tide — are invigorating. A new and splendid Town Hall has lately been erected... and in one of the rooms there is a billiard table for the amusement of strangers'.<sup>12</sup>

But the mainspring of any prosperity really came from industry, ultimately at odds with tourism. 'Flint is a nauseous town with old houses and the noxious fumes of chemical works', according to a traveller in Wales in 1833.<sup>13</sup> A similar view

was expressed in the *Chester Chronicle* in 1879: 'At the best of times Flint does not wear a very attractive appearance, being generally enveloped in a halo of sulphurous smoke'.<sup>14</sup> The coming of the railway in 1848 also acted against the interests of tourism in Flint, bringing the beaches of Prestatyn, Rhyl and Llandudno within the reach of holidaymakers from Chester and the towns of the West Midlands.

## Industrialization

It was industrialization which really turned the fortunes of the town around, transforming what had become little more than a small village at the beginning of the eighteenth century into a modern industrial town by the middle of the twentieth century. The initial impetus for this growth came from the exploitation of local deposits of lead and coal, but a long process of diversification culminated in the large-scale chemical and textile industries based upon imported materials which were the mainstay of the town's economy in the twentieth century.

Many of the earlier industries were short-lived, and as each succeeding generation cleared away what was there before in order to start afresh, there are now few obvious signs of the rich industrial history buried below various parts of the town. Even coalmining, which had a long



*Industrial vernacular cottages at Mount Pleasant, probably associated with nearby collieries.*

history in the area, has left little direct trace, though former collieries in the Mount Pleasant area to the south of the town probably account for the groups of cottages there.

Similarly, there is no direct legacy of lead processing, but a line of descent can be traced from the smeltery that was first built next to the Swinchiard Brook on the shores of the estuary in 1699. It was eventually superseded by a factory producing alkali and chloride of lime that was said to be one of the most extensive works of the kind in the world. It became known as Castle Works, and lay within the area of the present-day Castle Park Industrial Estate.

There is also a clear lineage for the present-day Aber Park Industrial Estate. At the end of the nineteenth century, a paper mill was established here: it was the first substantial encroachment by industry onto the former medieval open fields of the town. It was converted into a textile factory by a German firm in the first decade of the twentieth century, which closed at the beginning of World War I. In 1917 the textile factory was taken over by Courtaulds and renamed Aber Works. The company subsequently expanded and took over the alkali works to the west of Flint Castle, where a new factory, Castle Works, was opened in 1920. Together with Aber Works it manufactured viscose rayon. In 1927, Courtaulds also took over Deeside Mill, a former experimental cotton spinning plant, for yarn processing.

At its height Courtaulds employed many thousands of workers, but increasing competition led to factory closures and job losses. Aber Works closed in the late 1950s, Castle Works in the 1970s and Deeside Works in the 1980s. With the aid of the Welsh Development Agency the Courtaulds' factories were pulled down and much smaller factory units built on the sites as Aber Park Industrial Estate and Castle Park Industrial Estate. Special terms attracted new industries into Flint, including healthcare and hygiene products in the 1980s and food processing in the 1990s. Flint Mill, Coleshill Mill and Delyn Mill were constructed on a greenfield site formerly occupied by Coleshill Farm to the north-west of the town. At the same time, there were increasing employment opportunities in the leisure, service and retail industries including the new Flintshire Retail Park on the edge of the town centre.

Other industries sprung up in the nineteenth century, either serving the major players, or taking advantage of the more reliable transport system afforded by the arrival of the railway in 1848. Amongst these was a large ironworks which partly overlay the castle moat and abutted the walls of the castle, but it too has long disappeared.

Although there are few extant features directly associated with this industrial history, the very rapid expansion of the town at the end of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century provides indirect testimony to it. Another industry which left its mark on the character of the town in the nineteenth century was the manufacture of building materials that were used in its development.

Lime for mortar came from kilns using local limestone and coal. These were in operation in the later nineteenth century along Old London Road, in an area of modern gardens near Kingsbury Close, and in an undeveloped strip adjacent to Halkyn Road opposite Tair Derwen.

There was a growing demand for bricks, both for houses and for factory building. Between the 1840s and the 1880s a number of relatively small brickyards with coal-fired brick kilns were in operation around the town, working from deposits of glacial till known as purple mottled marls. The earlier brickyards produced handmade bricks and tiles but later on some had introduced mechanization using steam engines. Some were

worked in conjunction with collieries, which provided both fuel and material. For example, Flint Brick and Tile Works on Halkyn Road operated between about 1840 and 1880, and incorporated weathered shale from spoil heaps of the adjacent Dee Green Colliery in its products. Another smaller brickyard associated with a colliery operated close to the junction of Northop Road and Coed Onn Road at about this period. The second largest brickworks in Flint, operating from the early 1870s to the early 1890s, was associated with clay pits in the area of the present-day allotments off Prince of Wales Avenue. Another brickyard on Chester Street, in the area of the present-day fire station and industrial units, was in operation between the 1850s and the 1880s on the site of the former Bath Colliery. There were other brickyards located south of Marsh Farm and at Pentre Ffwrndan, to the east of the town centre, and along Coed Onn Road/Allt Goch. With competition from larger brickworks further afield, none of the local works appear to have continued in operation after the end of the nineteenth century, but their contribution to the colour and texture of the town can still be traced.



### Building in the Town

The best evidence for a nineteenth-century upturn in the fortunes of the town lies in the building stock. There are very few surviving buildings with pre-1800 origins, but several dating from the first half of the nineteenth century, especially on the north-west side of Church Street. Some of them have the hallmarks of organized development, with terraces making their appearance in the town. There are buildings with their origins in this period on Chester Street also.

*A terrace on Church Street — its uniformity is masked by the variety of later detail.*

Nevertheless, urban revival seems to have been faltering at first. In 1831, it was observed that 'the town has now sunk into utter insignificance, except as a secondary bathing place. It however deserves a better fate, as its air is exceedingly salubrious, its surrounding scenery very beautiful, and its beach tolerably good. To its unfavourable situation as an assize and market town is alone to be attributed its present dearth of business and deserted appearance'.<sup>15</sup> Again in 1833, Samuel Lewis thought 'the buildings are, notwithstanding, very inferior in appearance to what might be expected from the regularity with which the streets are disposed'.<sup>16</sup> In 1836, 'The town of Flint... has all the appearance of a fallen and deserted capital, possessing evidence of its former extent and importance in long lines of broken streets and half-dilapidated edifices'.<sup>17</sup> Even in 1872, *Black's Picturesque Guide to North Wales* described the streets as 'so broken by dilapidated walls and partially removed old houses as to have a ragged

*By the end of the nineteenth century, Flint was resolutely a town of brick, its use fostered by native brickyards until their products were supplanted by imported materials.*



and repulsive aspect'.<sup>18</sup> But following the establishment of a corporation, the building of a new town hall in 1840 was a potent symbol of optimism.

Even in the late nineteenth century, there remained extensive open space within the confines of the medieval town. The south-east side of Church Street, for example, remained substantially undeveloped until the end of the century. By this time, however, the growth of industry was leading to a rapid influx of large numbers of workers into the town: the population more than quadrupled from a figure of just over a thousand in 1801 to just under five thousand in 1891.

Until the 1870s and 1880s, a clear distinction between town and country was keenly observed: housing for this rising population was still largely confined to the core of the medieval town and the lanes that had sprung up above and just outside the medieval defences. Despite its continuing status as a county town, Flint developed almost exclusively as a settlement for working families, dominated by often poor-quality cottages laid out in terraces along the streets and lanes of the medieval town. These were all swept away in twentieth-century improvement programmes. There were few larger town houses and few, if any, fashionable stores.

## Urban Expansion: 1900 and After

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*'A town designed, redesigned and developed for people to live in'.<sup>19</sup>*

During the last decade of the nineteenth century and the period up to World War I the town expanded beyond its historical limits for the first time. Blocks of terraced houses were built along the principal roads into the town. Terraces and small estates of workers' cottages were also built in the Knights Green and Park Avenue areas south of Chester Street just outside the medieval town centre. These were the first significant encroachments on the town's former medieval open fields.

Despite later clearance (for example, along Holywell Road), this expansion is still clearly evident, with characteristic terraces of red-brick houses whose similarity of detail suggests the rapidity of the building process around 1900. It is also clear that there was considerable reconstruction in this period: The Dee Inn and other buildings in the town were rebuilt, whilst others were refronted.

The rate of housing development gathered pace between the wars, continuing the process of encroachment onto the medieval open fields



*At the end of the nineteenth century, Flint began to expand, initially along the main roads that led into the town.*

south and south-west of the town centre. This development was probably stimulated by the rapid growth of the chemical industry, and especially by the arrival of Courtaulds in 1917. The company was directly responsible for some house building: the planned development on Thomas Street survives from this period (about 1920), along with the houses on Henry Taylor Street, and the tightly grouped Dee Cottages. Elsewhere within the town, surviving buildings also show that the 1920s and 1930s were a period of enormous activity. Sizeable local authority housing estates were laid out in the angle between Northop Road and Coed Onn Road and between Chester Street and Pen Goch Hill. There was also extensive speculative building, as well as a few commissioned houses, especially in the Northop Road area. Other building projects also suggest a coherent phase of investment in the town: several public houses were reconstructed in the 1920s and 1930s, and the job centre, cinema and post office all date from this period.

The period since World War II has seen continued expansion of both local authority and private housing estates: to the south-west as far as Pentre Ffwrndan; to the south of Coed Onn Road to the south-east of the town; and in the angle between Halkyn Road and the Old London Road to the south-west. This has taken in a further substantial slice of the town's medieval open fields. In this period, too, extensive clearance and redevelopment took place within the medieval town and just outside it. The tower blocks and concrete flats disrupted the early town plan for the first time, but were taken by the council of the day as potent symbols of 'an old town becoming new'.<sup>20</sup> Other indications of investment from the immediate post-war period included the parade of shops on Chester Street, the Courthouse, and the Guildhall — 'a splendid and imposing building' according to a council publication of 1968 — which was demolished in the summer of 2008.<sup>21</sup>

In this period, Flint was promoted as an example of progressive planning and pragmatic modernity. The Traveller's Companion of 1968 described the town first and foremost as a town to live in: 'Ten years ago Flint gave the impression of a town trying to struggle out of its rather nondescript dress, a bright new town striving to be born. Today that town is emerging, like a bright butterfly from its chrysalis, with splendid new buildings rising from the sites



*Above: The Dee Inn — rebuilt in the later nineteenth century, it is a testimony to the growing prosperity of the town in this period.*



*Left: Henry Taylor Street. The arrival of Courtaulds gave rise to new investment in housing in about 1920.*



*Below left: Dee Cottages, a planned housing development associated with the arrival of Courtaulds.*

where old properties which were no longer sound have been taken down'. It also referred to Flint's 'most sensational development project, the two white skyscrapers which dominate the town and stand out above every other landmark'.<sup>22</sup>

# Historical Topography

## The Medieval Town Plan

The medieval town plan can still be traced in the structure of Flint, which retains a strong geometry, despite some damage. Church Street, Sydney Street, and most of the line of Feathers Street (continued north-east of the railway as Salisbury Street) survive as three of the principal streets of the medieval town, but the fourth, Mumforth Street, was obliterated by mid-twentieth-century housing development. To walk along Chapel Street, Coleshill Street, Earl Street, Evans Street, Castle Street and Duke Street is to follow the perimeter of the medieval town, whilst the axis of Church Street represents its original main street (wider than the other parallel streets). The original marketplace is marked by the site of the present town hall. Chester Street and Holywell Road follow the line of the original through street, albeit with some changes of alignment and widening.

It is however difficult to appreciate the essential containment of the medieval town, especially to the north-west, where the wide road at Raven Square and the empty space immediately south-east of it have damaged any sense of a boundary.

Medieval Flint may never have been fully built up, and the town certainly remained small. Although it is not clear to what extent present property boundaries reflect medieval burgages, the historical core of the town is still distinguished by a strong plot structure, which has been the framework for development in the backlands. Virtually all of this development relates to the frontage properties, and whilst some is twentieth-century extension, there are surviving examples of nineteenth-century ancillary buildings and yards, notably at The Dee Inn, The Swan Hotel, The Royal Oak, and Nos 36–38 Church Street.

*Right: Nineteenth-century service buildings preserved in a yard behind Church Street.*

*Below right: Late nineteenth-century outbuildings in the yard to the rear of The Swan Hotel.*

*Below: The site of an entrance to the town through its medieval defences (Crown Copyright: RCAHMW).*



## Roads and the Railway

The arrival of the railway in 1848 marked a most radical intervention in the original geometry of the town, cutting a swathe right through its centre. The town council greeted its arrival with reluctance, recognizing that it would sever the town in two. The railway company refused their request for a viaduct, promising instead 'a first-class station'.<sup>23</sup> The station is indeed first class, but the line of the railway, with the stone walls that defend it, cut off the castle and the north-east sector of the town, effectively creating a suburb, with the railway acting as a new boundary for the core of the town. The town persuaded the railway company to create a new street parallel to the tracks to the north-east (the name, Corporation Street, commemorated civic pride), and the area, being closest to the expanding chemical works, developed with many small artisans' houses. Even here, however, considerable open space remained.

Notwithstanding the addition of Corporation Street, the medieval street pattern in this area continued to contain urban development in the later nineteenth century. However, it was disrupted in the early and mid-twentieth century by redevelopment, when New Roskell Square obliterated the two south-eastern streets, retaining just a short length of the former Farmers Lane. Now, Salusbury Street and Castle Street mark the lines of medieval streets, and Evans Street and Castle Road mark the perimeter of the medieval town. Already, by the later nineteenth century, the rigid geometry of the medieval plan was disturbed by building on different alignments: Roskell Square established rows of building at right angles to the main axis of the town. In the early twentieth century, development between Evans Street and Salusbury Street also established a series of parallel rows, and later development continued to follow this alternative alignment. This area now has its own geometry, and its own character:

If the medieval town plan contained much of Flint's urban development until the late nineteenth century, routes into the town provided a limited axis for growth outside it. The small clusters of probably early nineteenth-century cottages on Northop Road (built with some coal-measure sandstone) were probably associated with collieries, and remained quite separate from the town until the early twentieth century, when



*Above: Twentieth-century housing layouts characterize the area north-east of the railway (Crown Copyright: RCAHMW).*

*Left: Early expansion along Chester Street.*

*Below: Park Avenue, one of the first new streets to be laid out as Flint out-grew its medieval limits at the end of the nineteenth century.*

piecemeal ribbon development along the line of the road gradually established a near continuous building line. Chester Street also provided a strong focus for development, as small terraces were built piecemeal along its line as far as Pentre Ffwrndan. It was in the Chester Street area, too, that the first systematic new development took place, as new streets were established to the south-west of the road. The first of these (Princes Street and Queen Street) were demolished in mid-twentieth-century redevelopment, but Park Avenue survives, its boundaries apparently determined by the medieval field pattern.

## The Expanding Town: Twentieth-Century Development Patterns

*Right: Mid-twentieth century housing developments disturbed the medieval geometry with bold new layouts (Crown Copyright: RCAHMMW).*

*Below: Large-scale housing projects of the twentieth century set out new patterns of development (Crown Copyright: RCAHMMW).*

Twentieth-century development often abandoned any clear relationship with underlying historical topography. The scale of speculative and local authority house-building programmes enabled whole new street patterns to be laid down. Within the medieval town, the big housing developments flouted the original geometry, with tower blocks aligned diagonally to the main axis (and in opposed alignment to the diagonally positioned church). The Mumforth Walk area has a geometry all of its own. Layout planning was an important aspect of post-war public housing development, and the Knights Green area is another example of this.

Further away from the town centre, housing estates, whether public or private, established new forms of planning overlaid on the earlier field

patterns. Street layouts were not often constrained by existing features, though Coed Onn Road and Allt Goch follow earlier boundaries and tracks, and the line of another old field boundary is loosely represented by the rear boundary of properties on the north-east side of Prince of Wales Avenue. Layouts varied from street grids to the crescents and circles favoured in the interwar period, and the more fragmented layouts of the later twentieth century.



# The Character of Building

## The Chronology of Building

With the exception of the castle, no early buildings survive within the town. It is likely that early generations of building were timber framed, before the use of stone became commonplace in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. One of the last timbered buildings to survive was probably the town hall or market hall, a fairly low half-timbered building possibly of late sixteenth-century date, lost when its successor was built in 1840.

Similarly, almost none of the early stone buildings survive within the town, though two buildings on Church Street have gables facing the street, which may be indicative of pre-eighteenth-century origins. There are some traces of stone walling elsewhere, in the rear walls of properties on Church Street (nos 22–28) and Chester Street (nos 17–19), for example, and in some of the boundaries that run back from Church Street. There are scant other clues to the vernacular character of the town, but there are stray references to the use of thatch for roofing. For example, the first meeting place of the Welsh Wesleyan Methodists was a house in Swan Lane: 'this small thatched house is one of the few relics of the old town left', according to Henry Taylor in 1883.<sup>24</sup> A view of the town from Allt Goch of about 1840 also shows a thatched cottage at the foot of the lane.

Periods of building indicate periods of investment linked to economic growth, and show Flint's emergence to economic prominence from slow beginnings in the early to mid-nineteenth century, to a more decisive prosperity at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Surviving buildings from the early nineteenth century are concentrated on Church Street, though there are other traces from this period in property on Chester Street.

Amongst the earliest surviving buildings are The Royal Oak and The George and Dragon on

Church Street (and perhaps Bar Lloyd on Holywell Road, just outside the town). These have a vernacular character: they are long and low in plan in contrast to the taller buildings which became more characteristic later. By about 1840, a notably urban style of building had been introduced. One characteristic of this lay in the organization of development and there are several blocks of



*Stonework in the rear of a property on Church Street provides a clue to its origins.*



*A thatched cottage recorded in the early nineteenth century, a vernacular building tradition now lost from the urban area (by H. Gastineau, © CPAT).*



*The Royal Oak public house — its long, low proportions suggest a relatively early date.*

buildings which comprise more than one property, though built as a single development. One example of this is the neo-Tudor terrace adjacent to the churchyard (nos 33–35), which has a symmetrical composition. Nos 22–28 and 36–46 Church Street were also both clearly built as short terraces (though possibly incorporating pre-existing buildings, as suggested by the patchy stonework visible in the rear elevation of nos 22–28). On Trelawney Square, another short terrace may originate in this period (nos 4–6), albeit remodelled more recently. No. 16 Church Street

is a single building of this period, distinguished by its scale and the quality of its detail, with its high parapet and stone cornice.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century have left a rather more decisive stamp on the built character of the town, both in the development of housing — the expansion of the town beyond its medieval limits, characteristically with brick terraces of workers' housing — and in commercial building in the town centre, including the south-west side of Church Street.

*A distinctive urban building suggesting the beginnings of revival in about 1800.*



Two phases of development during the twentieth century have contributed to the character of Flint: the process of clearing and redevelopment during the two decades that followed World War II, which took place within the medieval limits; and the expansion beyond those limits with the mixture of public and private housing that now rings the town.

## Patterns of Development

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Within the core of the town, units of development remained small until the twentieth century, giving the characteristic pattern of irregular, informal terraces. This was the case even on the south-east side of Church Street, which was largely undeveloped until the later nineteenth century. This development pattern perhaps reflects

*Nos 33–35 Church Street — the original unity of design is still apparent despite piecemeal change.*



fragmented landownership within the town. Outside its limits, where development did not really get under way until the end of the nineteenth century, units of development tended to be somewhat larger, with building organized in a series of short terraces — for example, on Halkyn Street, Park Avenue, and Chester Street.

Another shift in the building process is illustrated on Earl Street. Here, there is a contrast in scale between the two short terraces built at the south-west end of the street in the late nineteenth century, and the fourteen houses at the north-east end which date to about 1920 and are in the style of Courtauld company housing.

The Courtauld company housing development on Thomas Street, and the Dee Cottages and Henry Taylor Street housing are early examples of corporate involvement in the building process, introducing a unity of planning on a new scale.

There are certain characteristics of twentieth-century developments: they are on a greater scale; more attention is given to composition; a single building type is repeated — examples include pairs of houses on local authority developments and the limited number of house types on speculative estates; and individual blocks of building tend to be larger, like the tower blocks and flats that lie to either side of Church Street.



*Left and below: Distinctive styles of building mark different phases of development along Earl Street.*

*Bottom right: Planned housing of the early twentieth century on Salusbury Street.*

*Bottom left: Symmetrical planning was a hallmark of early local authority housing schemes.*





*Above: Stonework and sash windows show the early origins of this building on Chester Street.*

*Right: Early nineteenth-century brickwork on Church Street.*



*Later nineteenth-century render on Forrester's Hall.*



## Building Materials

The early to mid-nineteenth-century buildings are generally rendered over brick or stone. Scribed render survives in several buildings, including No. 16 Church Street, Nos 36–44 Church Street, and The George and Dragon. Traces of early stonework are exposed in the rear of properties on Church Street and Chester Street that predate the widespread use of brick. Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, exposed brickwork started coming into favour, and parts of Nos 22–28 Church Street are brick with render detail. However, even as late as about 1870 (the date of Forrester's Hall), render remained the common finish.

Outside the town itself, stone was the common vernacular building material. Early nineteenth-century cottages on Northop Road, for example, are stone (though most are now rendered) and other examples survive at No. 71 Church Street, by Swinchiard Brook, and at No. 196 Chester Street. It is likely that much of this vernacular stonework was originally limewashed.

In the late nineteenth-century phase of building, exposed brickwork was consistently celebrated in the architecture of the town, with a vocabulary of detail typical of a town with a local brick industry. Characteristic of this was the use of a glossy facing brick for principal elevations, and moulded terracotta for cornices and other detail. Brickwork was also widely used for garden walls.

In the twentieth century, brick remained in common use, often associated with rendered panels used in upper floors; render was also used as the finish for some of the interwar housing, giving a mix of styles and finishes.

Thatch may once have been the traditional roofing material in the town, but it had been superseded by slate by the time most surviving buildings were built. Generally it is the even, machine-cut slate of the later nineteenth century that dominates the town, but some examples of a quirkier usage survive: for example, Nos 7–9 Church Street and the cottages on Northop Road have very large slates. Some twentieth-century interwar developments used red roofing tiles in preference to slate. This variation in colour helps to differentiate individual estates.



*Far left: The vernacular stonework of a cottage on Church Street.*



*Left: A distinctive bright red facing brick characterizes building in Flint from the late nineteenth century.*

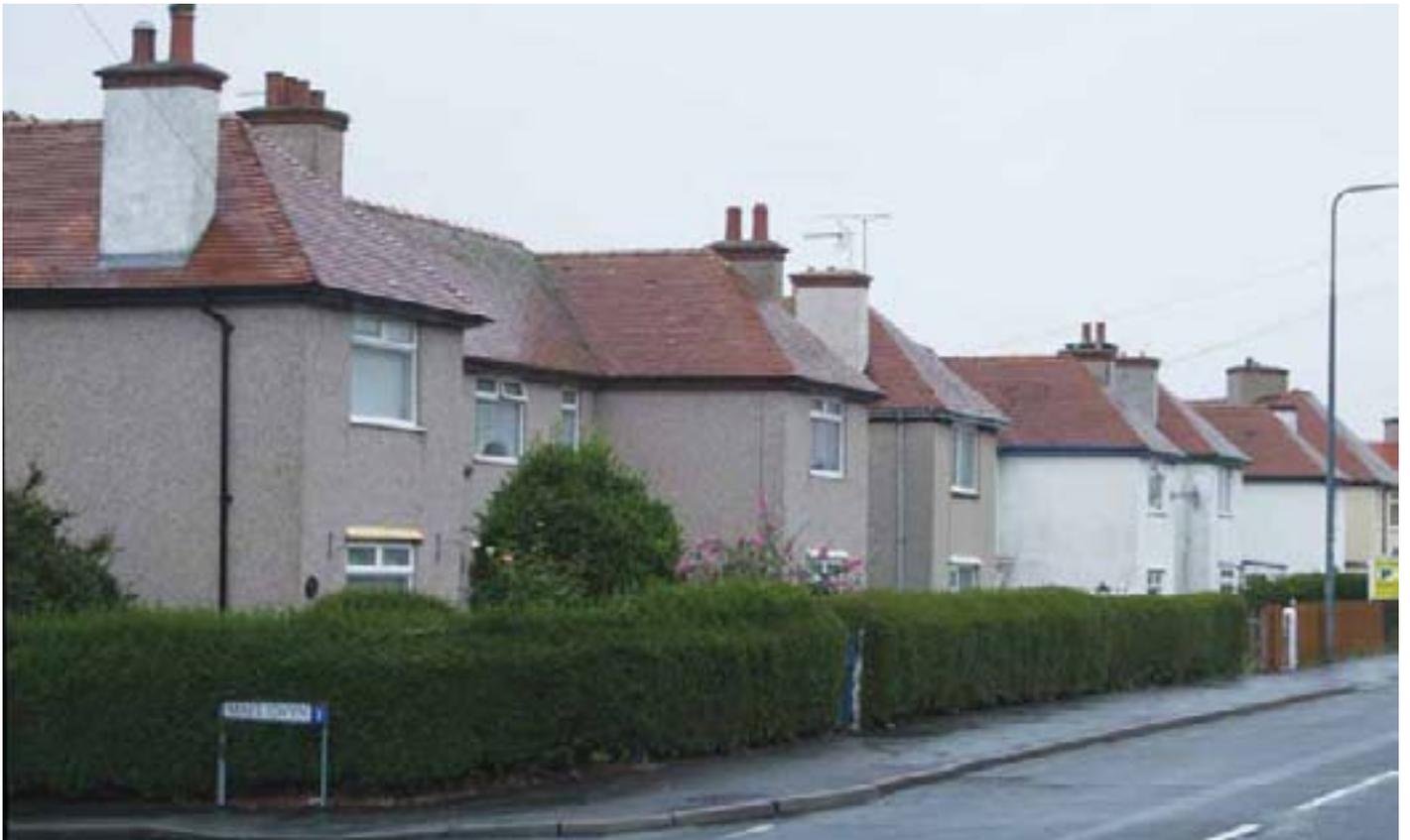


*Far left: Brickwork combined with rendered panels is a distinctive feature of some early twentieth-century building in the town.*



*Left: Unusual large slates on a cottage roof, Northop Road.*

*Below: Red tiled roofs characterize some twentieth-century housing developments.*



## Building Types and Styles

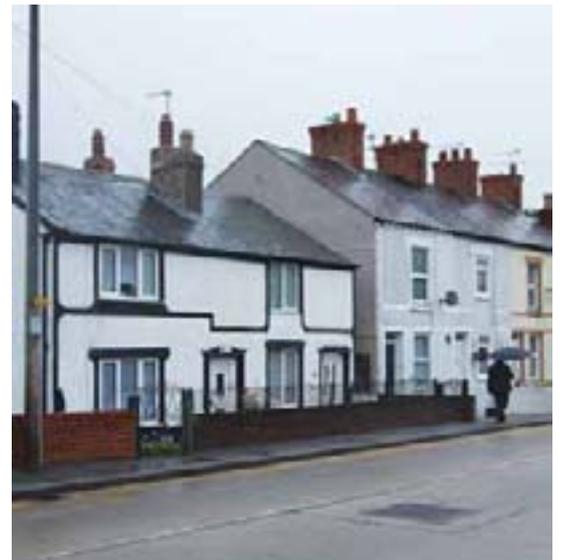


The surviving early to mid-nineteenth-century development on Church Street is now almost all in commercial use. Commerce may always have dominated, as this was the main thoroughfare of Flint. The town contained several inns and shops as listed in trade directories throughout the nineteenth century. Shop fronts are largely twentieth-century, including some good examples of about 1900, so little architectural evidence for earlier usage survives (though historic photographs record a mix of uses). It is only after about 1900 that a specific commercial architecture emerged. Flint has good examples of purpose-built public houses of about 1880 (The Dee Inn) and 1920–30 (The Ship, The Raven, and The Swan on Chester Street). Other good examples of twentieth-

*Above: Commercial style — a good example of early twentieth-century public house architecture.*

*Right: Corporate style — National Westminster Bank.*

*Far right: Contrasting scales in housing of different periods, Chester Street.*



*Right: Longer rows and taller houses were typical of later nineteenth-century developments.*

*Far right: Larger houses at the end of Halkyn Street.*



century commercial building include the banks: National Westminster (English Baroque), Lloyds TSB (European Modern), and HSBC (neo-classical). There is also a short row of shops (nos 48–54) of about 1920 on Chester Street which retain elements of art deco in the shop fronts; the 1950s parade (Nos 2–22 Chester Street) has recently been restored and retains good modern character:

It has been observed already that most of the later nineteenth-century housing in Flint comprised smaller houses for working families. Virtually all of them were cleared in twentieth-century redevelopment programmes (Mount Street, Mumforth Street, Swan Lane, Castle Street, Roskell Square), but typical of surviving houses from the later nineteenth and early twentieth century are small terraced houses. They contrast with the few surviving industrial vernacular terraces (at Mount Pleasant and on Chester Street) by their greater height, larger window areas, and decoration applied to the main façade. There are very few detached or larger houses from this period, with the exception of a few at the lower end of Halkyn Street. Greater differentiation of house types came in the interwar period, mainly in the speculative estates that sprang up, but also in a small number of apparently individually commissioned houses. There are good examples of these at Pentre Ffwrndan (in the vicinity of St David's Church). Even so, there is a strong degree of conformity in these developments, as indeed there is in local authority housing of this period. More recent housing development is also rather uniform.

In the twentieth century, different estates were developed with different styles. Neo-Georgian vernacular was favoured in interwar council housing, and there are some good examples in the Borough Grove and Prince of Wales Avenue areas, for instance. Most houses have since had new windows, and piecemeal change has marred the intended uniformity of these estates, but occasional unaltered examples have survived. Speculative building proceeded on similar lines in the interwar period, where private estates attained a uniformity born of repetition. There are however also some notable examples of individually designed houses including good neo-Georgian, and art deco. In post-war council developments, styles varied from 'Festival of Britain' modern (Knights Green), to brutalist modernism in the 1960s.



*Larger detached houses at Pentre Ffwrndan.*



*Left and below: A neo-Georgian style was characteristic of interwar housing developments in Flint, but surviving original detail is now rare.*



*High-quality detailing in a privately built house.*



# Character Areas

## 1. Flint Marsh Area

### Historical Background

The area contains part of the buried ancient shoreline of the Dee estuary, superimposed by industrial deposits, reservoirs and lagoons created from the end of the seventeenth century onwards. Modern land use is largely for wildlife and recreation.

### Archaeological Potential

Evidence for the early palaeoenvironmental history of the region and the ancient buried shoreline may be preserved in buried deposits. There may also be buried structures and significant deposits associated with the early industrial history of the region.

## 2. Aber Park Area

### Historical Background

The supposed site of the Battle of Coleshill in 1157 falls within the area. From the later thirteenth century the western part of the area formed part of the medieval open fields associated with the newly created town of Flint, small residual areas of which form a buffer along the western boundary of the area. The eastern part of the area possibly formed open common land at this period. Several farms became established in the area on the margins of the medieval open fields in the later medieval

period. There were coal mines and associated tramway systems at Marsh Pit and Flint Marsh Pit in the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. Processing industries developed in the area from the end of the nineteenth century. A paper mill built in the 1890s was converted into a textile factory by a German company (The British Glanzstoff Company) in the first decade of the twentieth century, but it closed at the beginning of World War I. The factory was taken over by Courtaulds and renamed Aber Works in 1917. Rayon was made there until 1957, after which time the works bleached pulp and paper. The Courtaulds' empire expanded to include Deeside Factory, which they purchased in 1927, and which had begun as a textile factory in the late nineteenth century. In the second half of the twentieth century the area was extensively redeveloped for modern industrial, retail and leisure uses with the creation of Aber Industrial Park and Flintshire Retail Park.

### Archaeological Potential

There may be buried structures and significant deposits associated with the early industrial history of the region.

### The Character of Building

Generally late twentieth-century industrial, retail and leisure units, but a fine Renaissance Revival office building (probably associated with the German textile factory which opened here in the early years of the twentieth century) survives, together with its lodge.

*Right: This fine Renaissance Revival building is a survival from the early twentieth century industrial developments at Aber Park.*



*Far right: Early twentieth-century housing on Swinchiard Walk.*



The area also includes a small quantity of early twentieth-century housing, notably on Swinchiard Walk, displaying a uniformity of planning and a quality of detail which suggests company involvement.

### 3. Cornist Park Area

#### Historical Background

The area was open farmland until the second half of the twentieth century. From the later thirteenth century the western part of the area formed part of the open fields belonging to the newly created medieval town of Flint, of which a number of small residual areas remain undeveloped. Agricultural improvements during the post-medieval period are represented by a number of marl pits that were dug in the fields throughout the area in an endeavour to improve the fertility of the soil and also by the construction of a number of limekilns. The area abutted the parkland associated with Cornist Hall, further to the west, whose driveway crossed the area, ending in a lodge along Old London Road. Small-scale industrial activities developed in the area during the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries including a number of relatively small-scale sand and gravel quarries. Various civic amenities also developed along Old London Road during this period including the waterworks and a second town cemetery. The area was developed for extensive housing estates during the second half of the twentieth century, both by the local authority and by speculative builders.

#### Archaeological Potential

There may be buried structures and deposits of significance to the early agricultural and industrial history of the region.

#### The character of building

There are two areas of interwar council-house building which retain a unified character: a small development to the north of Cornist Lane and a larger development between Maes Afon and Cornist Drive. The latter includes a good sheltered housing development (Gilfan), built in the manner of almshouses around a courtyard. The Royal Drive area is speculative building of 1970 and later.



### 4. Castle Park Area

#### Historical Background

The area covers part of the buried ancient shoreline of the Dee estuary. Onto this are superimposed industrial structures and deposits which have been built out into the estuary since the end of the seventeenth century, associated with wharves and with the coalmining, lead smelting, shipbuilding, ironworking, chemical and artificial textile industries. Courtaulds' Castle Works — established in 1920 — were located here, and some buildings from this period have survived redevelopment. The area today is now largely occupied by modern light industrial units built in the last few decades of the twentieth century. The south-eastern part of the area includes part of the broad moat of the outer bailey of Flint Castle on which are superimposed later industrial workings.

#### Archaeological Potential

Evidence for the early palaeoenvironmental history of the region and the ancient buried shoreline may be preserved in buried deposits. Structures and deposits associated with the moat of the outer bailey of Flint Castle should be conserved, along with any buried structures and deposits relating to the early industrial and transport history of the area.

*Gilfan: An unusual and distinctive sheltered housing development.*

*One of the few buildings surviving from the Courtaulds' Castle Works.*



*The boundary to the former Castle Works.*



*Below: Flint Castle.*



## The Character of Building.

Two office or welfare buildings associated with Courtaulds' Castle Works survive, flanking the driveway which is now the main entrance to the industrial estate. They are single storey brick buildings in a neo-Georgian idiom. Contemporary with them or slightly earlier is the brick-panelled boundary wall with gate piers and railings on Evans Street. Most of the industrial buildings are modern, but at least one weaving shed survives to the rear. There is an important historical and visual connection between this and the adjacent housing in the Castle Dyke Street–Corporation Street character area.

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## 5. Flint Castle Area

### Historical Background

The area includes the inner bailey of the royal stone castle built in the late thirteenth century together with most of the outer bailey, its defences and wharves. Part of the outer bailey was occupied by the now demolished gaol of the later eighteenth century.

### Archaeological Potential

Management of the visible remains of the castle and its setting, and the conservation of buried structures and deposits inside the castle and within its outer moat are priorities.

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## 6. Castle Dyke Street – Corporation Street Area

### Historical Background

The area comprises the north-eastern segment of the new town and its defences created in the later thirteenth century, lying to the east of the railway built in 1848. The area may also include the site of an original gate giving access to a bridge leading towards the castle and, towards the east, part of the wharves belonging to the medieval town. The linear street pattern of the medieval town survived intact (albeit apparently only partially developed) until the coming of the railway in 1848 effectively cut this area off from the rest of the town. The

Corporation negotiated with the railway company for a new street, Corporation Street, which helped to lay down an independent grid pattern for this area. Some medieval streets (Castle Street, Evans Street, and Duck Lane) survived into the twentieth century, but the continuation of Sydney Street, Mumforth Street and Duke Street had been lost by about 1870. The area developed sporadically in the later nineteenth century with very small terraced housing, concentrated along Castle Street to begin with, and then on Salusbury Street (the renamed Duck Lane), with a secondary area, Roskell Square, to the south-east. Irregular building on Salusbury Street was redeveloped in the 1920s when the Courtaulds company built housing on Thomas Street and Salusbury Street, linked to its new factory at Castle Works. This redevelopment work was extended in the 1950s by council housing focussed on Castle Street, Corporation Street and New Roskell Square. There are important connections between this area and Henry Taylor Street/Dee Cottages, which form part of the Chester Street character area, as also to the remains of the Courtaulds' Castle Works in the Castle Park character area.

### Archaeological Potential

There may be buried structures and deposits associated with the medieval town and its defences and wharves.

### The Character of Building

Courtaulds' company housing survives as a small development amongst the 1950s public housing which dominates this area. The company housing is tightly designed with good brickwork detail: the Evans Street frontage adjacent to the factory gates has hipped roof blocks at the end of the two rows, and diaper work in gables. The terraces retain much of their detail: brick pilasters, herringbone tile over windows, chimneys, overhanging eaves and generally well-articulated façades using roughcast render with brickwork. Post-war council developments have a consistent character, as a series of low terraced brickwork rows.

Small fragments of development of about 1900 also survives in this area on Castle Dyke Street. Dee Villa is a good example of late nineteenth-century housing, retaining original detail.



*Above and below: Company housing adjacent to the former Castle Works — a distinctive development with unusual detail.*

## 7. Town Centre Area

### Historical Background

The area comprises the greater part of the new town and its defences created in the later thirteenth century, to the west of the railway built in 1848, and includes the site of the original medieval church and churchyard and the three principal gateways to the medieval town. During the course of the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries the town gradually expanded over the medieval town defences and beyond the town gate to the south-east. In the later nineteenth century it became dominated by terraced workers' housing and by shops and commercial premises along the principal street frontages, preserving the gridded medieval street plan. In the second half of the twentieth century the areas of nineteenth-century workers' housing were redeveloped for low-rise and high-rise local authority housing, civic buildings, and offices, partly obscuring the street plan of the medieval town and its defences.

The medieval plan contained and shaped development in the town centre and is still discernible, though post-war redevelopment obliterated some of the parallel streets. Church Street and Chester Street therefore mark the principal surviving streets of the town. A distinctive plot structure which may be a clue to their early origins survives on the north-east side of Chester Street, and on the north-west side of Church Street. Elsewhere any earlier plot structure has been lost in comprehensive post-war development, including the south-west end of Church Street (for the library), and the south-west side of Chester Street (for the formation of a parade of shops in the 1950s — a good example of development of this period). The relatively small scale of units of development also points to the early origins of development here. Very short terraces or single buildings linked to form informal terraces are characteristic.

By contrast, no plot structure was shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map for land on the south-west side of Church Street. The fact that this side of the street was slow to develop is shown clearly in the character of its buildings which are of about 1900, many in brick and terracotta.

Limited building around the edges of the historic

core was shown by Speed in 1610. There are no early buildings on these edges now, with the possible exception of Bar Lloyd, Holywell Road, which may be eighteenth-century in origin. Sporadic development of about 1900 has survived, for example on Halkyn Street, Coleshill Street and Earl Street. The latter was undeveloped garden land until about 1898 and building continued slowly thereafter. Terraces at the north-east end of the street are of about 1920 and were possibly built by Courtaulds. The formalized planning of its stepped pairs, the terracotta detail and the pebble-dash in the upper storey are similar to company housing in the Castle Dyke Street–Corporation Street area.

Post-war redevelopment remodelled the historical town and in some important respects established its own geometry. Within the town, Mumforth Street, Swan Lane, and Mount Street were lost in comprehensive redevelopment, whilst on its edge, Knights Green was built on former fields.

### Archaeological Potential

There may be important evidence for the medieval town and its defences conserved in buried structures and deposits.

### The Character of Building

Building in the historical core is generally no earlier than about 1820, and much of it is later nineteenth century or of about 1930. The two exceptions are buildings that have gables facing onto the street. This is often taken as indicative of early origins. One has a lateral chimney, but both appear to be extensively rebuilt. Detailed investigation may however still reveal traces of early fabric. Of the early nineteenth-century building phase, there is an apparent shift from a vernacular form of building in which buildings are characteristically long in plan and low in height (The George and Dragon and The Royal Oak), to a more urban form, in which buildings are more compact in plan, and taller (No. 16 Church Street). Also characteristic of this early urban phase of building is the short terrace — Nos 22–28, 33–35, and 36–46 Church Street.

With some exceptions, lined-out render was the most common finish for the early to mid-nineteenth-century building work. By the end of the nineteenth century, exposed brickwork, often with a contrasting facing brick, had become

common. This is characteristic of the south-west side of Church Street, and especially in the surviving developments of about 1900 which fringe the core of the town.

Church Street and Chester Street are dominated by commercial buildings. Pressure for change during the twentieth century is demonstrated by the differing fortunes of buildings within the same terrace, but different periods of investment have contributed some interesting detail, including good examples of shop fronts, and the art deco frontage of Glasgow House. Even where modern shop fronts have been inserted, upper floor detail often survives from earlier periods, as for example at No. 16 Church Street, which is early nineteenth century, and Forresters Hall, of 1870. There are also good examples of purpose-designed commercial buildings from the late nineteenth century onwards: especially public houses (The Swan Hotel for example) and banks (National Westminster and HSBC), but also the neo-Georgian post office. Nos 2–22 Chester Street comprise a very good example of a 1950s shopping parade, and it is pleasing to see its recent renovation.



*Above: The George and Dragon public house probably dates from the early nineteenth century, when Flint's fortunes were beginning to revive.*



*Left: The art deco frontage added to Glasgow House is an indication of early twentieth-century prosperity in the town.*



*Far left: A pre-nineteenth-century building on Church Street.*



*Left: The former post office is a good example of twentieth-century civic and commercial building.*



*Far left: Rear view of an early nineteenth-century terrace on Church Street.*

## 8. Pen-Goch Area

### Historical Background

Much of the eastern part of the area was open farmland until the second half of the twentieth century. The course of the Roman road along the estuary running west from Chester probably crosses the area. From the later thirteenth century this formed part of the open fields belonging to the newly created medieval town of Flint, the orientation of which is still reflected in the

*Below: Paired neo-Georgian houses with generous gardens, characteristic of interwar public housing schemes.*

*Bottom: Higher density composition characteristic of post-war housing development.*



alignment of a number of roads, lanes and property boundaries. Agricultural improvements here during the post-medieval period are represented by a number of marl pits which were dug in the fields throughout the area in an endeavour to improve soil fertility. During the medieval period the western side of the area along Swinchiard Brook and notably between Halkyn Road and Northop Road appears to have formed a belt of unenclosed common land, allowing the movement of animals on to the higher land to the south of the town.

Early industrial activity in this area included Flint Mill, based upon the use of water power. There was some informal settlement in the valley. Relics of this survive, albeit generally heavily altered. Industrial activity which developed especially in the western part of the area during the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries included coalmining, and brick and tile manufacture; both of these industries formed a focus for several small clusters of workers' housing in the Mount Pleasant area. Various civic amenities were developed along Northop Road during the second half of the nineteenth century, including the town cemetery and the National School.

The area was developed for extensive public and private housing estates and schools during the twentieth century. A number of small residual areas of medieval open field remain undeveloped, notably in the school playing fields and the Pen-Goch Hill open space.

### Archaeological Potential

There may be buried structures and deposits relating to the Roman road running west from Chester; and to the early agricultural and industrial history of the area.

### The Character of Building

The area represents the major expansion of Flint outside its medieval limits. The first phase of this growth in the late nineteenth century is represented mainly by terraces of workers' housing in the distinctive bright facing brick with terracotta detail. There are also a few larger paired villas at the end of Halkyn Road. Early twentieth-century development took a similar form and it was only in the interwar period that expansion gathered pace in a series of housing estates, both public and

private, each with its own character: 'quiet residential roads of trim little houses, each with its tidy garden' according to an official guidebook published in 1968.<sup>25</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s both drew on a neo-Georgian idiom with generous layouts including front gardens. The local authority estates are characterized by wide streets, and a level of composition which marks them out from the neighbouring speculative estates. See, for example, the Borough Grove/Trelawney Avenue estate, and the private development immediately to its east. The 1950s development at Maes Gwyn is another typical local authority estate, but it is surrounded by interwar housing. One of the largest speculative developments of the interwar period is the area of First Avenue. Smaller scale private developments included a greater variety of house styles, good examples of which are No. 1 Coed Onn Road, and Brentwood and the Vicarage on Allt Goch.



There are also pockets of earlier development. At Mount Pleasant, a series of rows of early nineteenth-century cottages retain elements of vernacular character, whilst in The Bryn/Halkyn Street area there are other scattered buildings with origins in this period. Most have been radically altered, but a pair of stone-built cottages survives on The Bryn.



## 9. Flint Sands Area

### Historical Background

The area contains part of the buried ancient shoreline of the Dee estuary, parts of which were reclaimed initially for agricultural use probably in the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries. It seems a possibility that wharves were in the south-eastern part of the area during the Roman period, serving the lead-working industry which developed in the adjacent Pentre Ffwrndan area. The south-eastern end of the area was occupied by a chemical factory and areas of waste during the later nineteenth century, and by a shooting range. Part of the central part of the area was developed as a brickworks during the later nineteenth century, and by a sewage works in the twentieth century. During the later nineteenth century baths were built at the western end of the area and in the twentieth century a lifeboat station, football ground and car parks were built here.

### Archaeological Potential

There may be buried deposits of significance to the early palaeoenvironmental history of the region, as well as possible buried deposits and structures relating to Roman wharves and shipping. There may also be evidence for the ancient shoreline buried below later industrial deposits, and possible buried structures and deposits relating to the early industrial history of the area.

*Top: An unusual example of art deco detail on an interwar speculative development.*

*Above: Informal development on Halkyn Street may have early nineteenth-century origins.*



*Top: Terraced housing on Chester Street with the bright red facing brick with applied decoration, typical of the late nineteenth century.*

*Right: Decorative brickwork, Dee Cottages.*



*Dee Cottages, laid out with striking uniformity.*



## 10. Chester Street Area

### Historical Background

The area spans the main road east of the town. This probably follows the course of the original medieval road that ran between open fields east of the town and was improved as a turnpike road during the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries. Early housing and other buildings began to appear along the road just outside the town probably by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but nothing from this period apparently survives. Development rapidly continued westwards with terraces of workers' housing from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Industrial activity in the area in the later nineteenth century included coalmining and then brickworks in the area of the garage, telephone exchange and fire station at the western end of Chester Street.

### Archaeological Potential

There may be buried structures and deposits of significance to the early industrial, agricultural and transport history of the region.

### The Character of Building

There is a strong linear development pattern along the length of the road, which is quite mixed in character, including some terraces of mid- to late

nineteenth-century cottages, some of which are quite small scale and with an industrial vernacular character. Others are built with the bright facing brick characteristic of about 1900.

On the north-east side of the railway, Henry Taylor Street and Dee Cottages form a distinctive enclave of their own. This development is historically linked to the Thomas Street/Salusbury Street housing (Castle Dyke Street–Corporation Street character area), and has stylistic similarities with it. The single storey Dee Cottages form a remarkable small planned housing development.

## 11. Pentre Ffwrndan Area

### Historical Background

The area spans the course of the Roman road along the estuary to the west of Chester: Lead smelting developed in the area during the Roman period, represented by traces of furnaces, houses and other buildings of a small industrial settlement, human burials, a high-status building complex and the possible remains of a Roman wharf which have been found during the course of housing development. The site of the early medieval cross, Atiscros, fell within the area and has now been built over. During the medieval period the area spanned the road which ran through the former open fields east of the town of Flint. Corn milling based on water power probably developed in the area during this period and later gave rise to a nucleus of settlement around Pentre Mill which grew following the improvement of the turnpike road during the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries. Roman lead ore waste heaps were reworked during the later eighteenth century, probably with the use of water power.

### Archaeological Potential

There may be buried structures and deposits relating to Roman settlement, industrial activity, shipping and road transport, as well as to medieval agriculture and the use of water power for lead processing and milling from the medieval period to the early twentieth century.

## The Character of Building

Probably the earliest surviving building is No. 196 Chester Street, which is stone-built with vernacular character. Its farm buildings have also survived. In the later nineteenth century, the area developed with short terraces of housing, most of which is parallel to the road. Two terraces at right angles to it may have represented a more ambitious attempt at development, but they remain stranded in open countryside on the edge of the town. In the area of St David's Church is a series of larger detached private houses from the interwar period.

## 12. Maes y Dre Area

### Historical Background

From the later thirteenth century the western part of the area formed part of the open fields belonging to the newly created medieval town of Flint and it largely survives as undeveloped farmland to the present day. Agricultural improvements during the post-medieval period are represented by a number of marl pits dug in the fields throughout the area in an endeavour to improve soil fertility. Corn milling based on water power had developed in the area of Croes-ati Mill during the medieval period and continued up until the early twentieth century.

### Archaeological Potential

There may be buried structures and deposits of significance to the early agricultural history of the region, and to the use of water power for milling between the medieval period and the early twentieth century.



*A rare example of a vernacular building, Chester Street.*



# Statement of Significance

Flint is a modern town with a remarkable past. It was the first of the new castle towns to be created by King Edward I in the late thirteenth century, chosen as a strategic site in the conquest of the north. Much later, the location proved strategic in other ways, and the town developed as an industrial centre served by major transport routes of river, road and rail. Industrialization ushered in sweeping change and rapid growth. Despite this, the outlines of the medieval borough have proved remarkably enduring, its rigid geometry resilient to all but the most radical aspects of subsequent development. Amongst these are the railway which bisected it, mid-twentieth-century housing developments that flouted its geometry, and road improvements and other development that ignored its definition and boundaries. The medieval framework of the town remains vulnerable. It should be rigorously protected and enhanced, and even, where possible, reinstated.

If the topography of the town records its origins, the building stock picks up the later story. Rescued from apparent decline by industrialization, the town was gradually transformed. Rebuilding and growth

within the medieval town was followed by steady expansion outside it from the end of the nineteenth century. Distinctive episodes in the development of the town are signalled by the buildings within it, with good examples from the early 1800s to the mid-twentieth century. Outside the town, patterns of development trace a history of change as sporadic growth gave way to systematic planning. Many of these developments retain the distinctive character of their period and ethos and deserve sympathetic management.

Change and development have lain at the heart of this more recent history, bringing losses as well as gains. The original industries have been replaced by others, and the houses which once crowded the back lanes of the town have gone. There are therefore aspects of the modern history of Flint which are elusive in the physical fabric of the town, but which may survive in archives and testimony.

From its origins as a planned medieval castle town, to its subsequent growth as an industrial centre, Flint exhibits a long and dynamic history. It is this which provides the town with its distinctive character.

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The following maps have been consulted as part of this study:

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 Map of Flint, about 1799 (D/DM/50/1)  
 Flint Castle, 1818 (D/GW/439)  
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### Aerial photography

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### Websites

The detailed historical report prepared by Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust as part of this study is available on the Trust's website: [www.cpat.org.uk](http://www.cpat.org.uk)

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Flint Through The Ages: [www.fflint.co.uk](http://www.fflint.co.uk)

Flintshire Record Office: [www.flintshire.gov.uk](http://www.flintshire.gov.uk)

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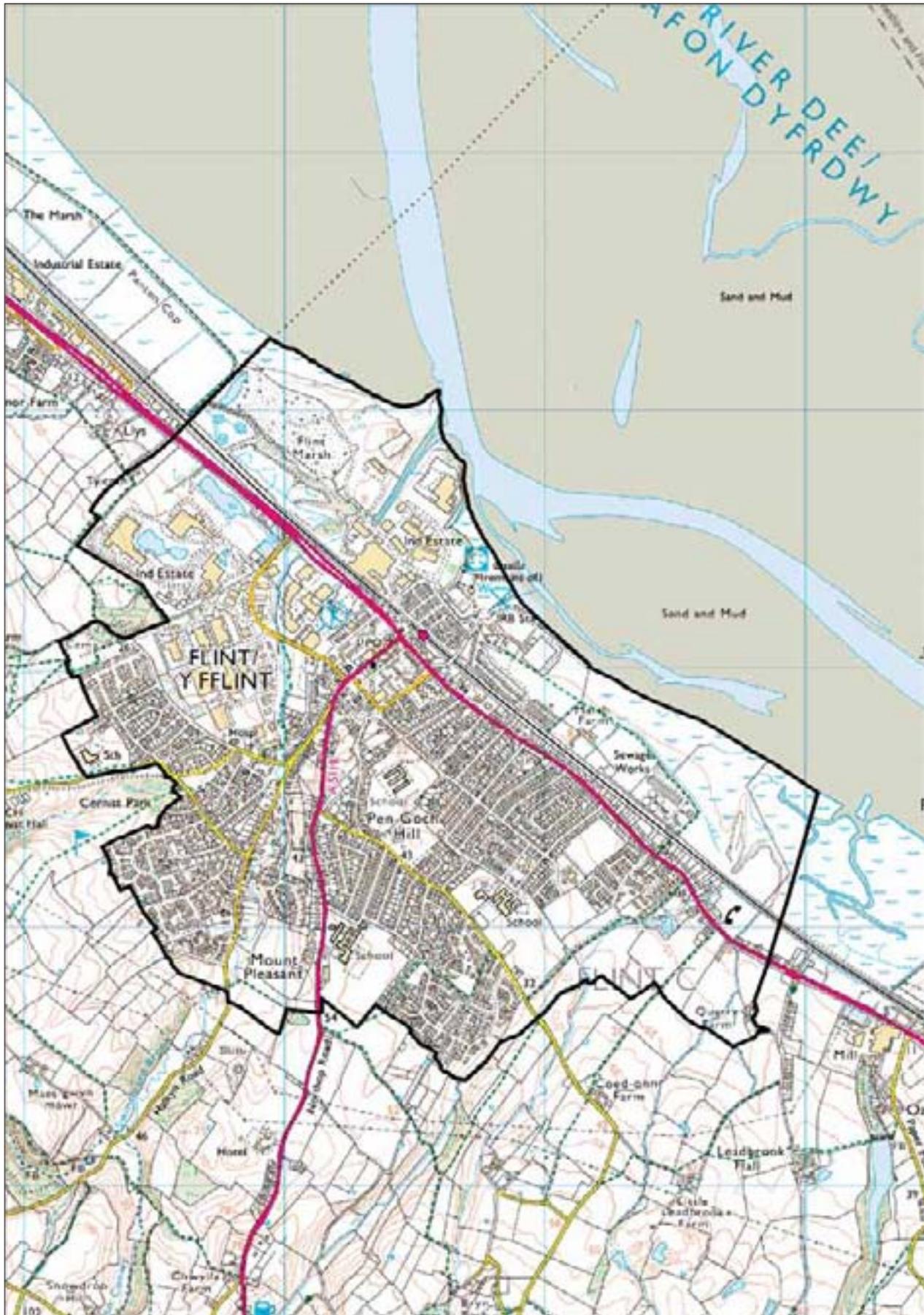
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### Footnotes

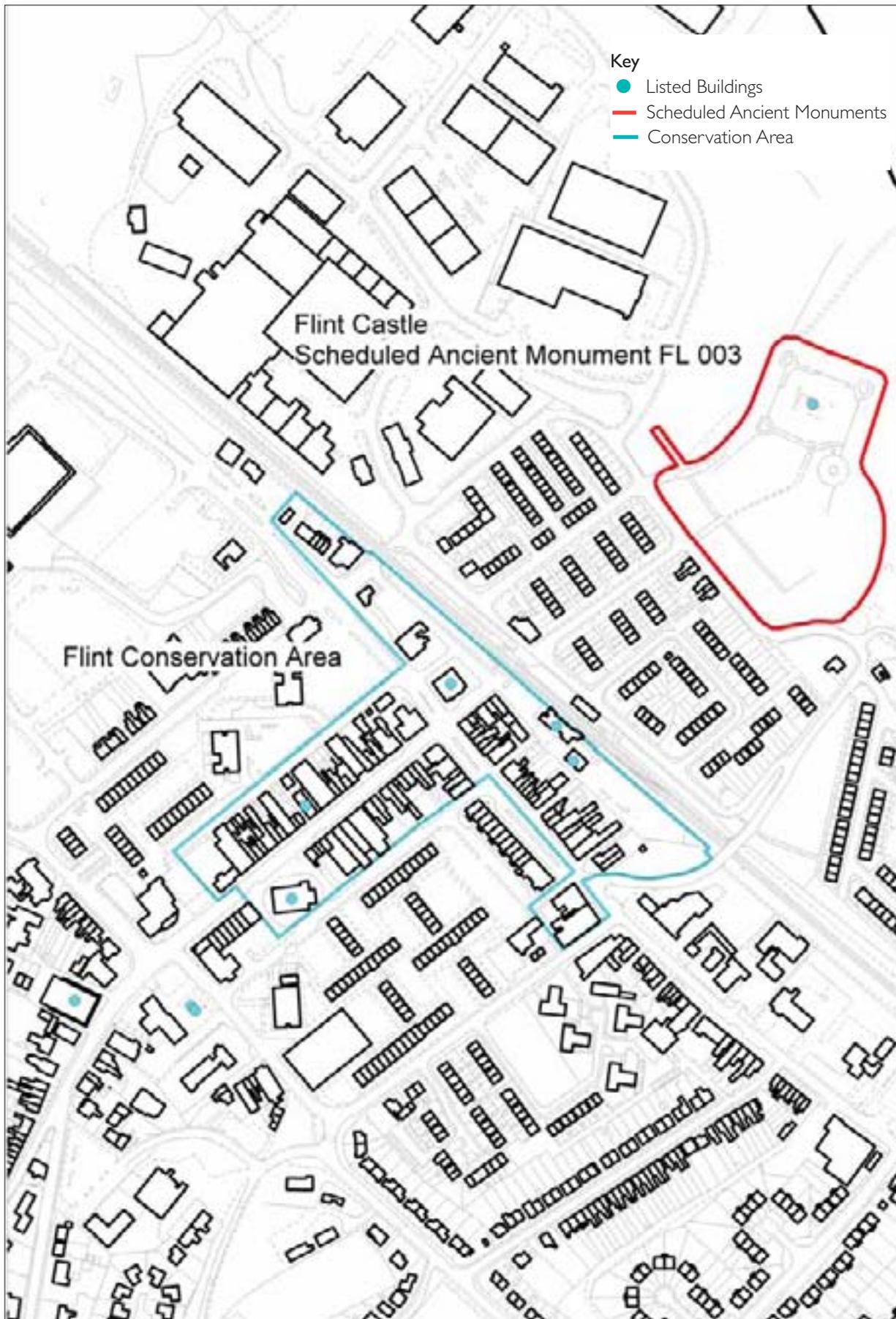
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1 Study Area



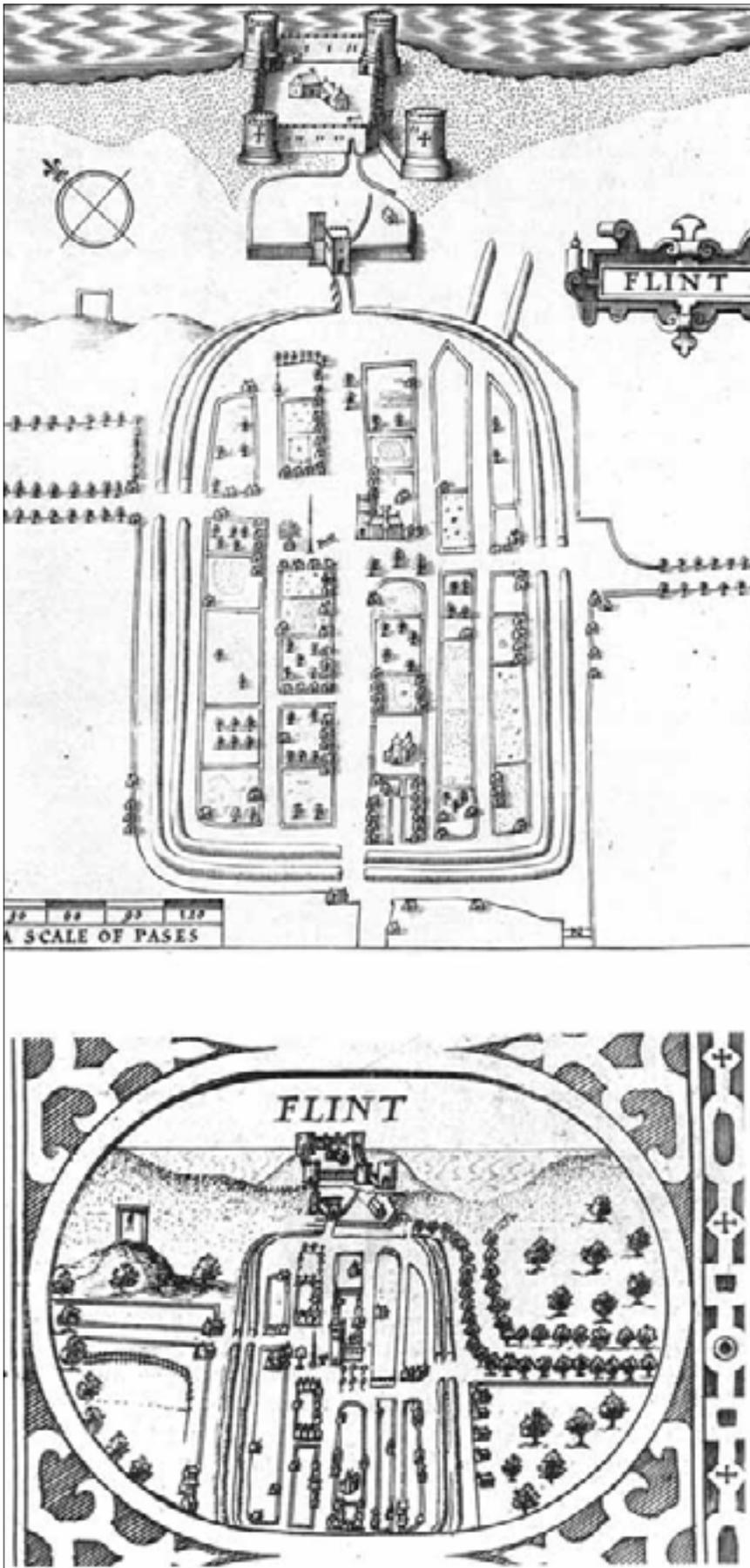
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## 2 Historic Environment Designations



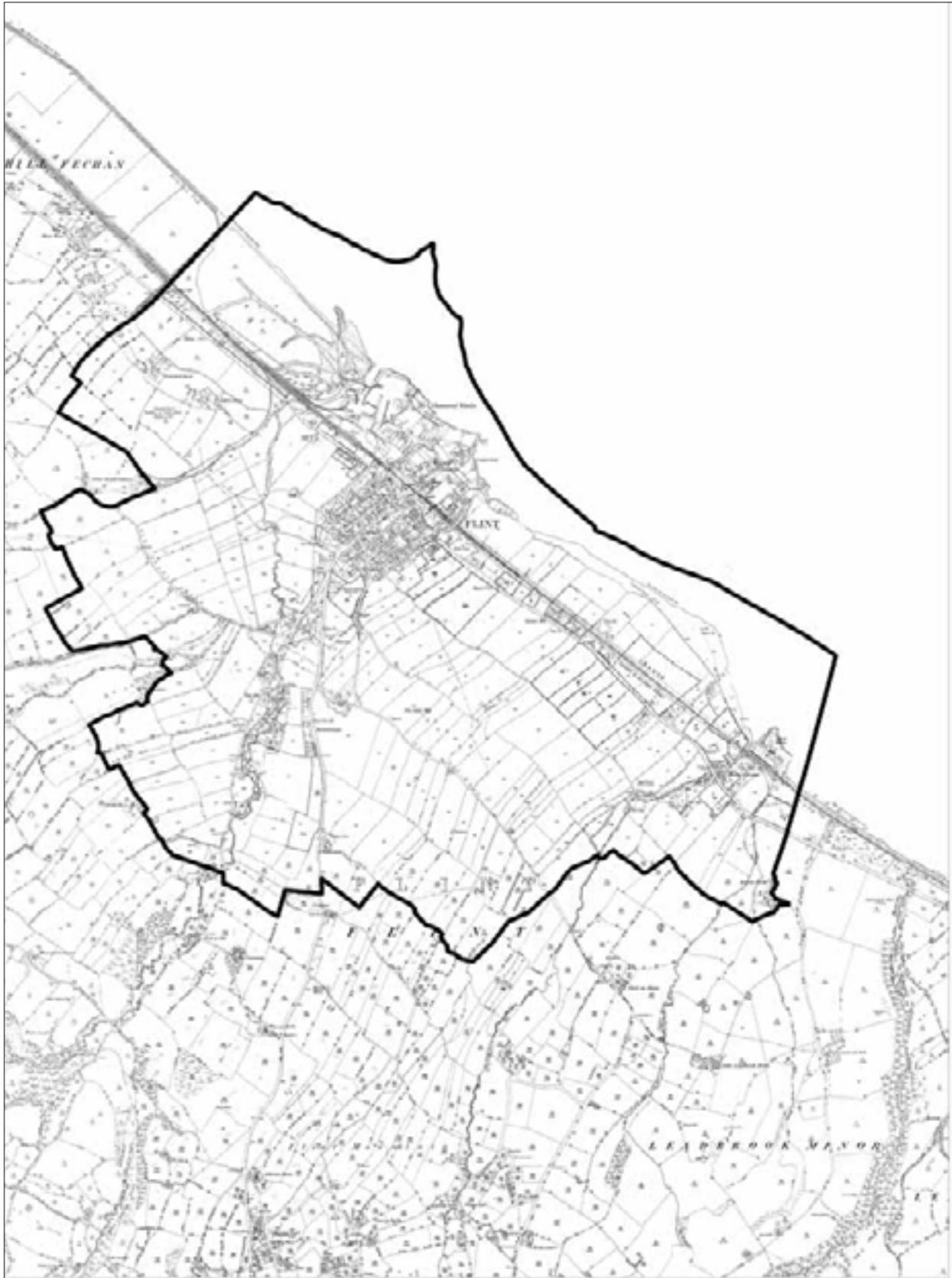
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3 Flint in 1610: John Speed (By permission of The National Library of Wales)



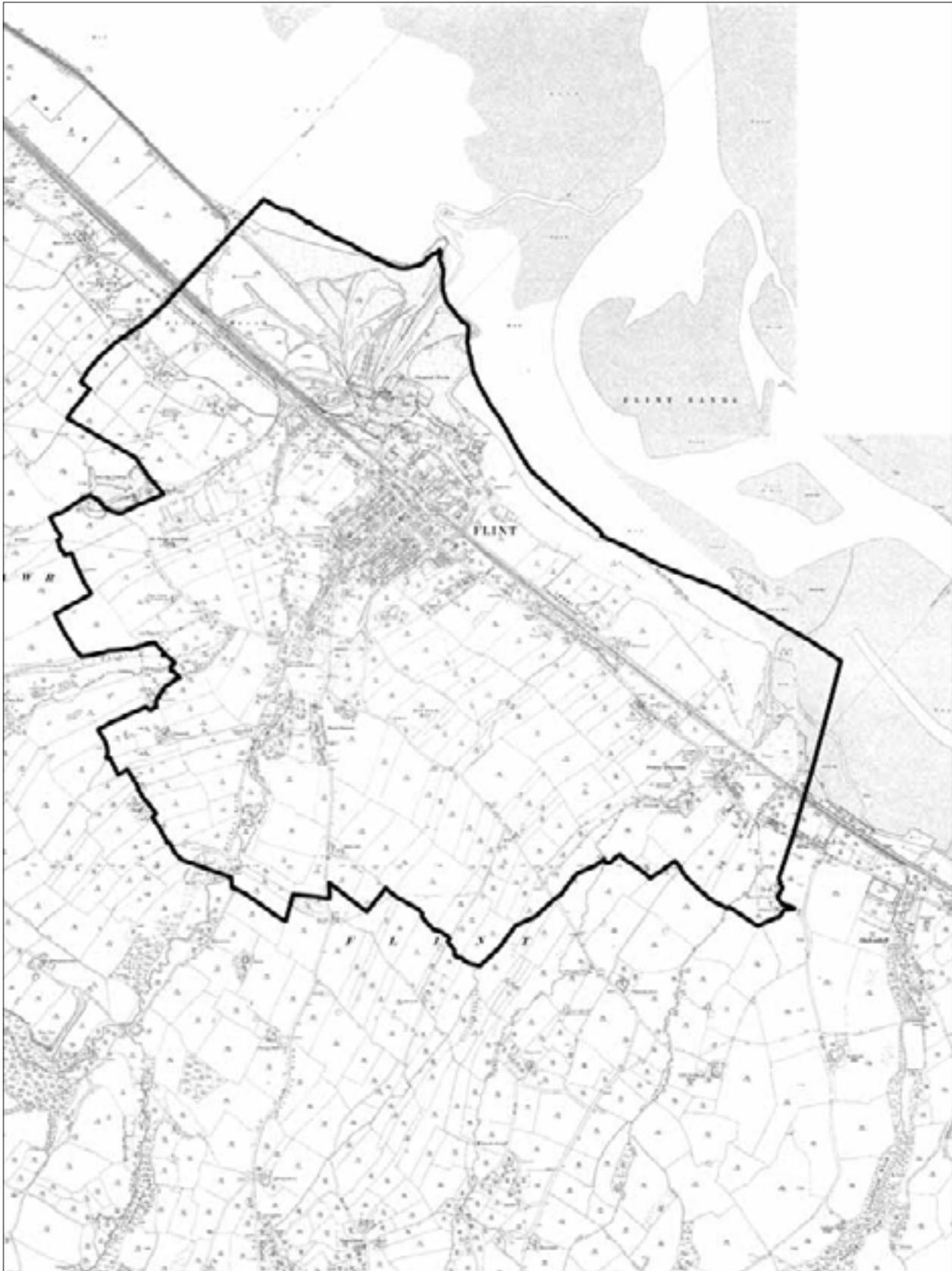
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## 5 Flint in 1912: Third Edition of the Ordnance Survey (25-inch)

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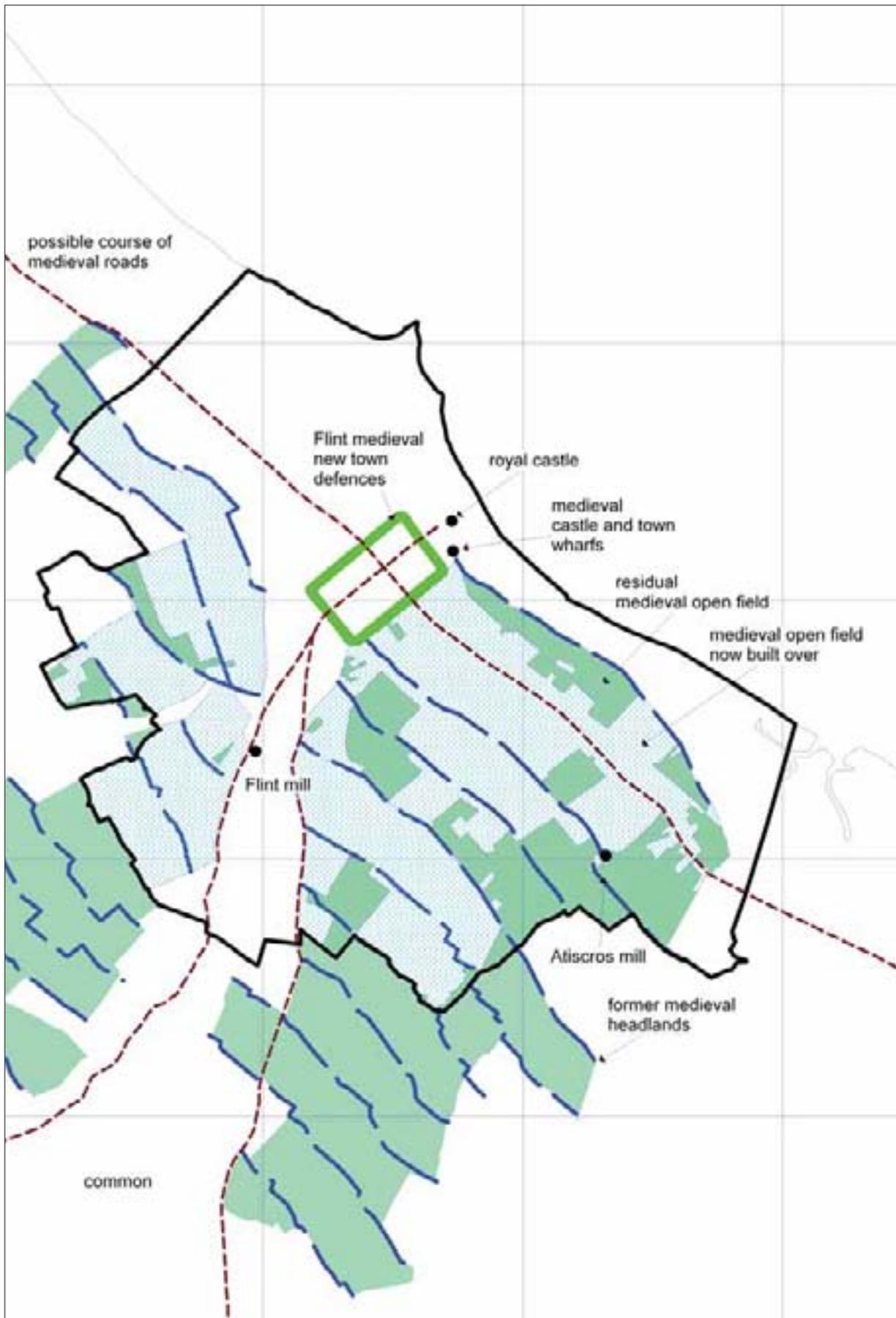
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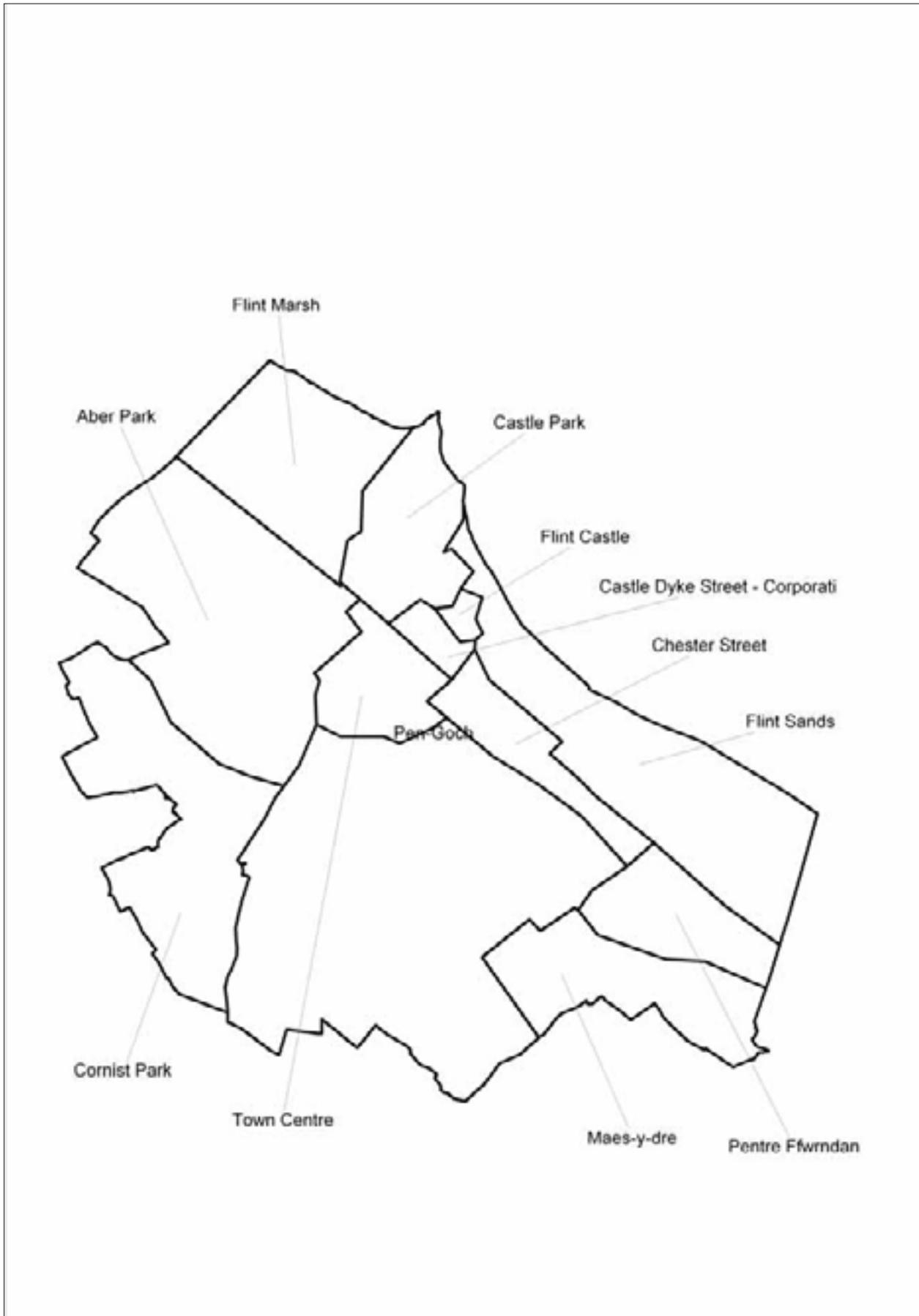
## 8 Medieval Sites in Flint



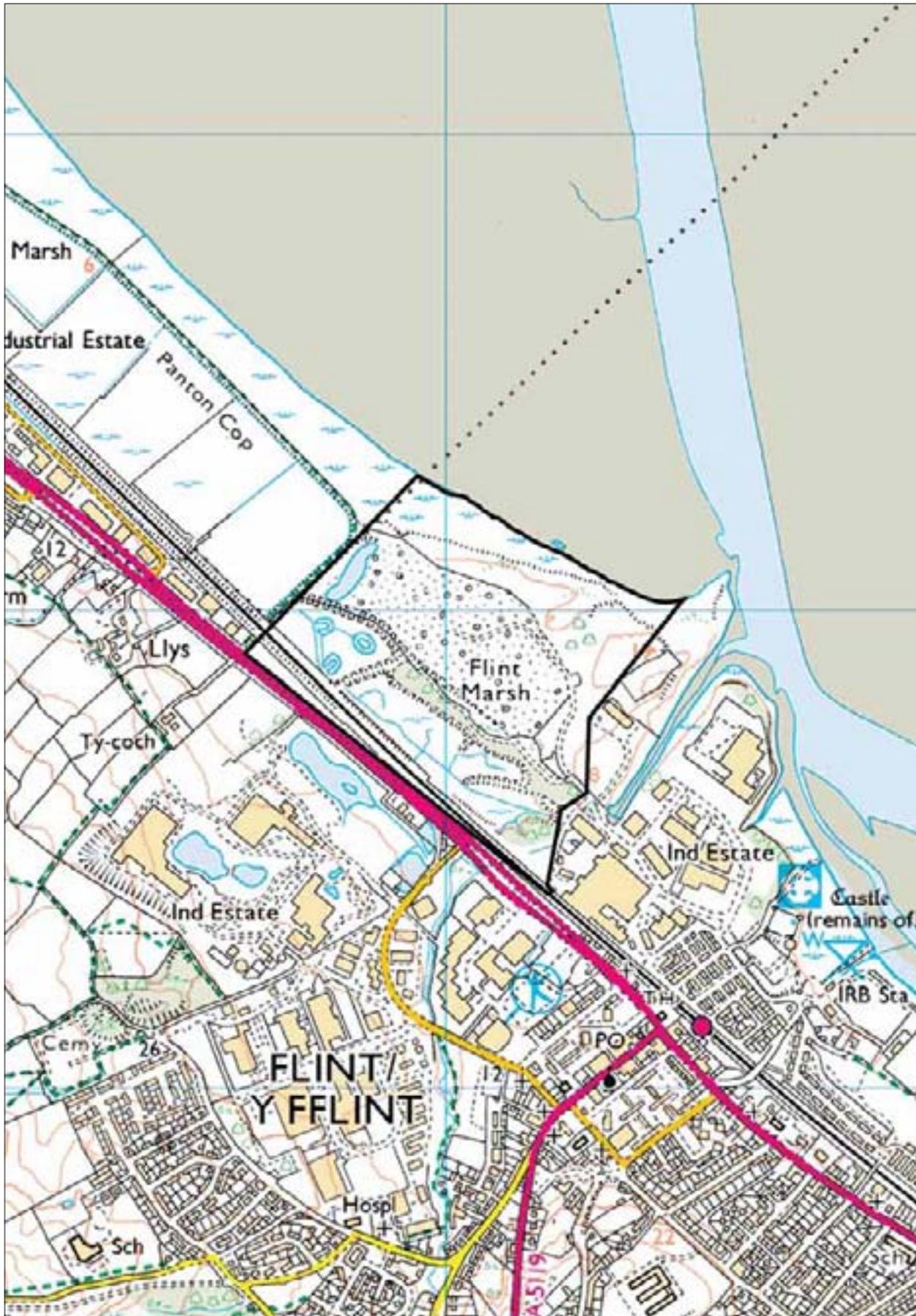
9 Industrial Sites in Flint



## 10 All Character Areas

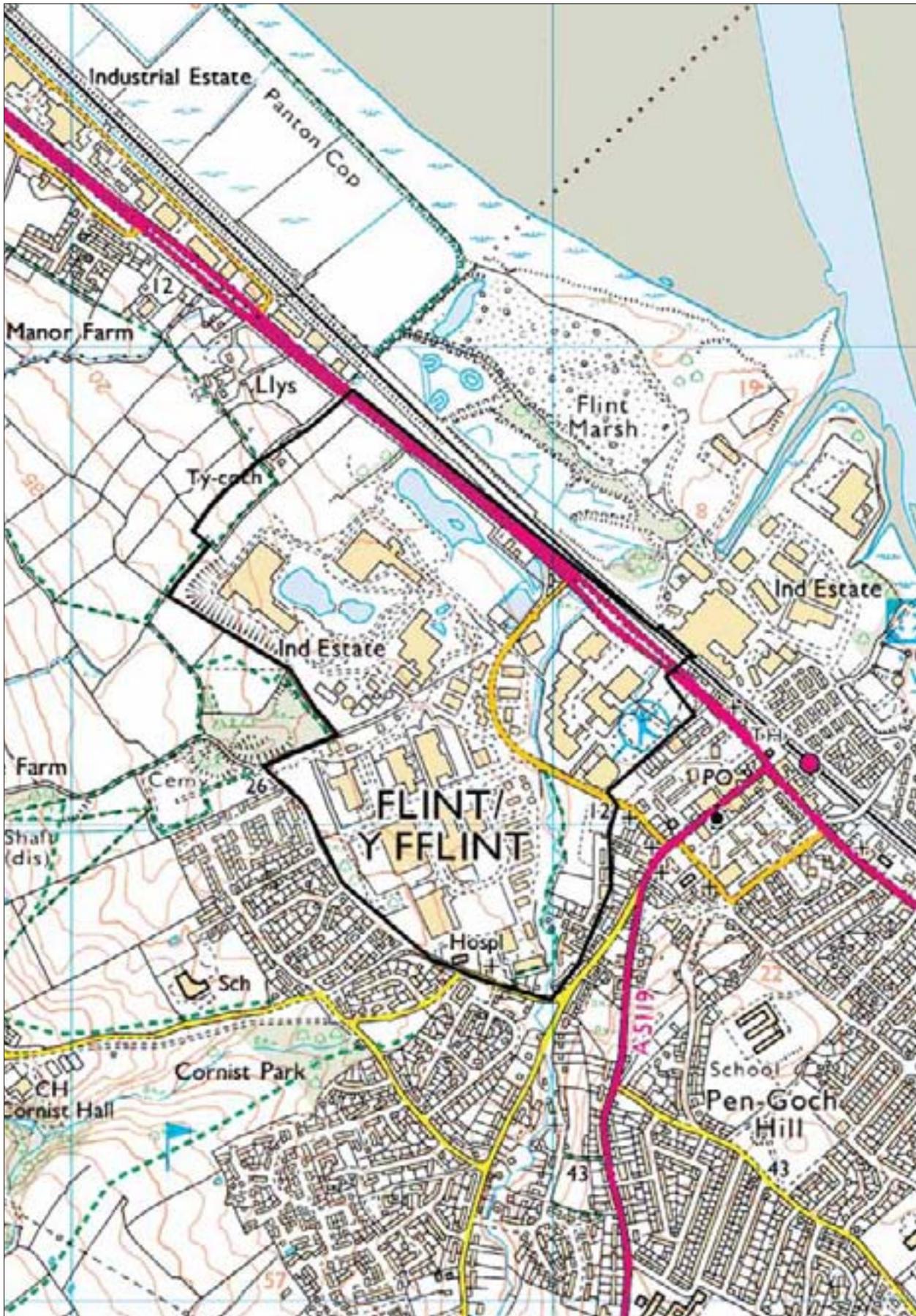


11 Flint Marsh Character Area



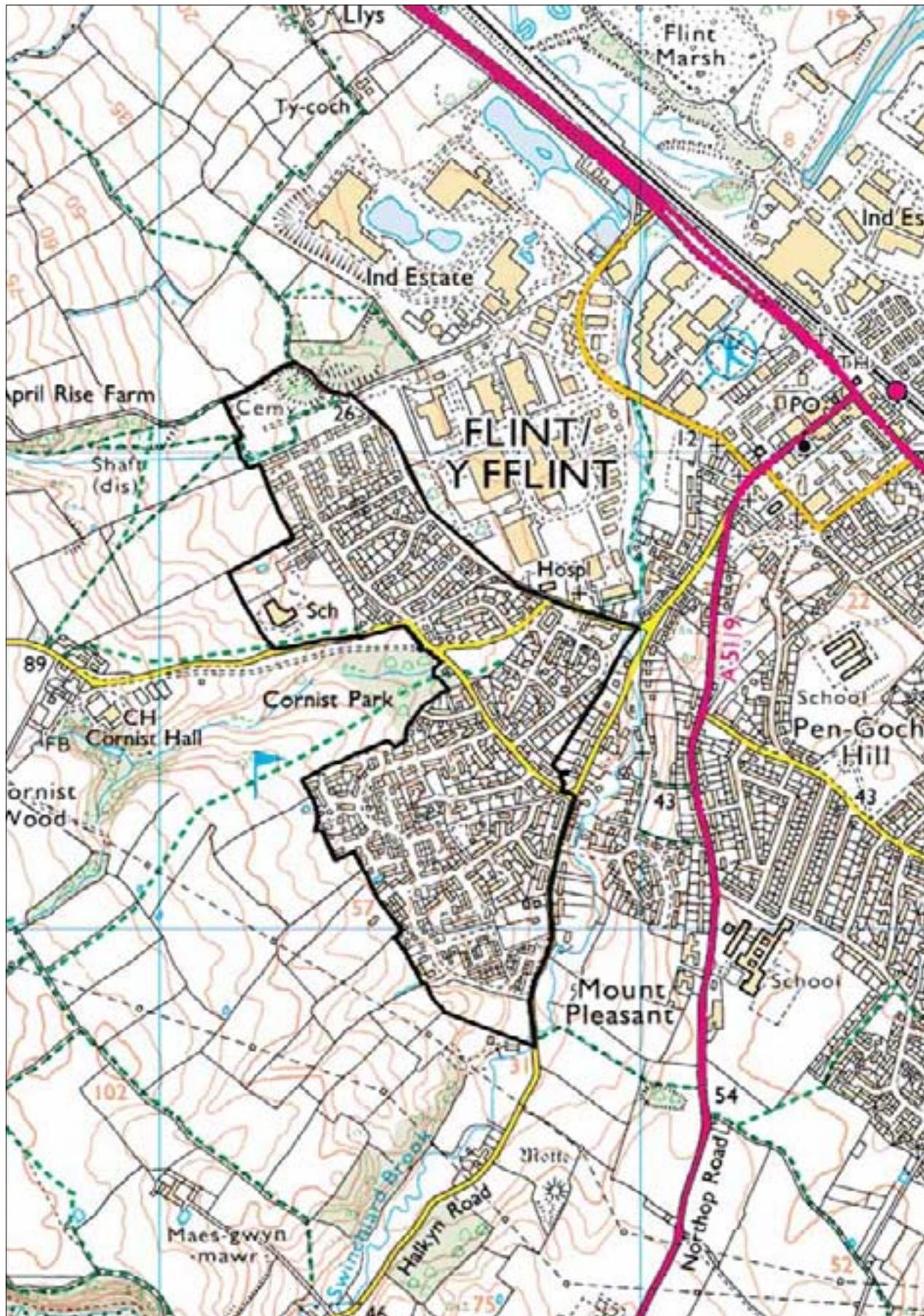
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## 12 Aber Park Character Area



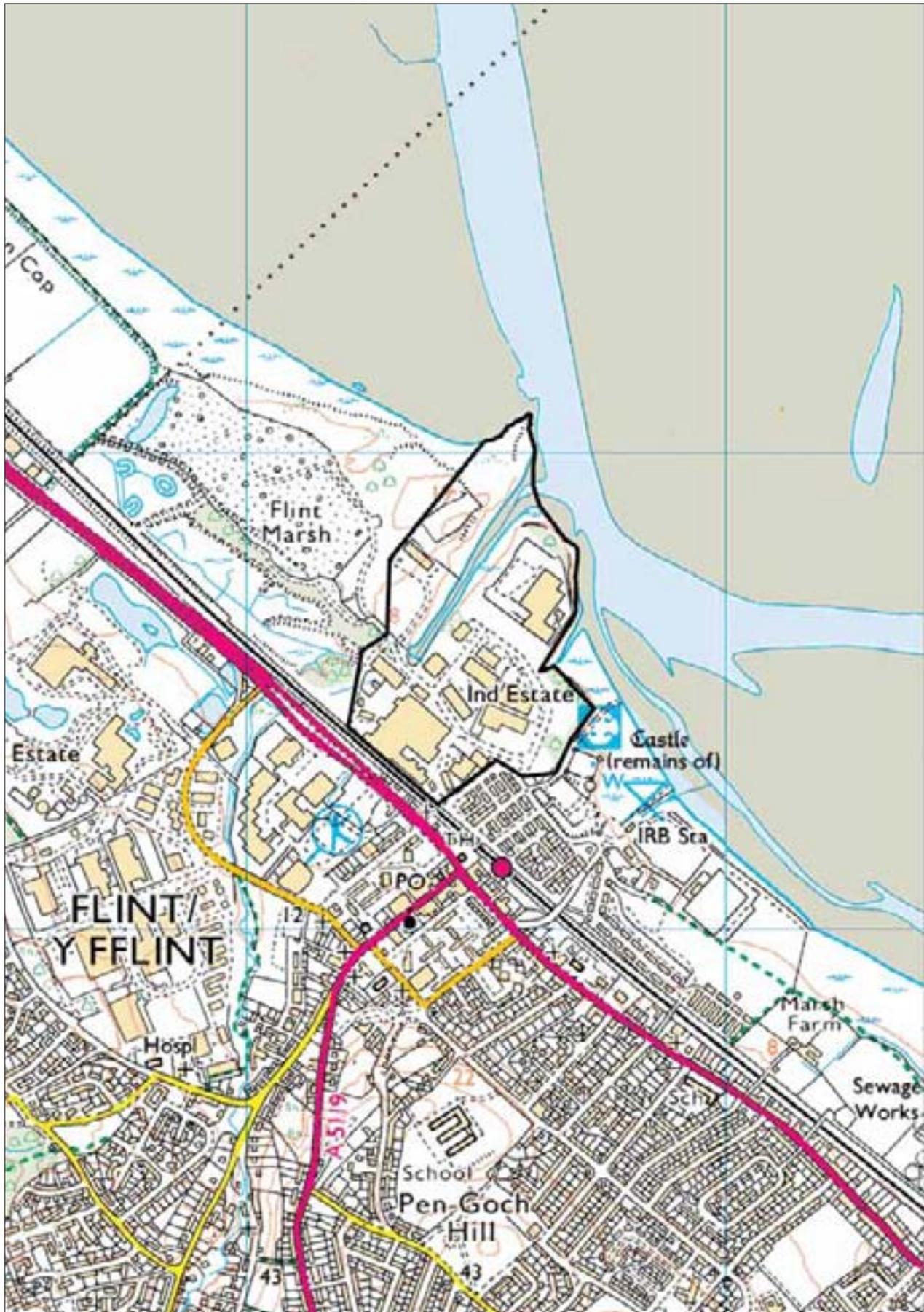
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13 Cornist Park Character Area



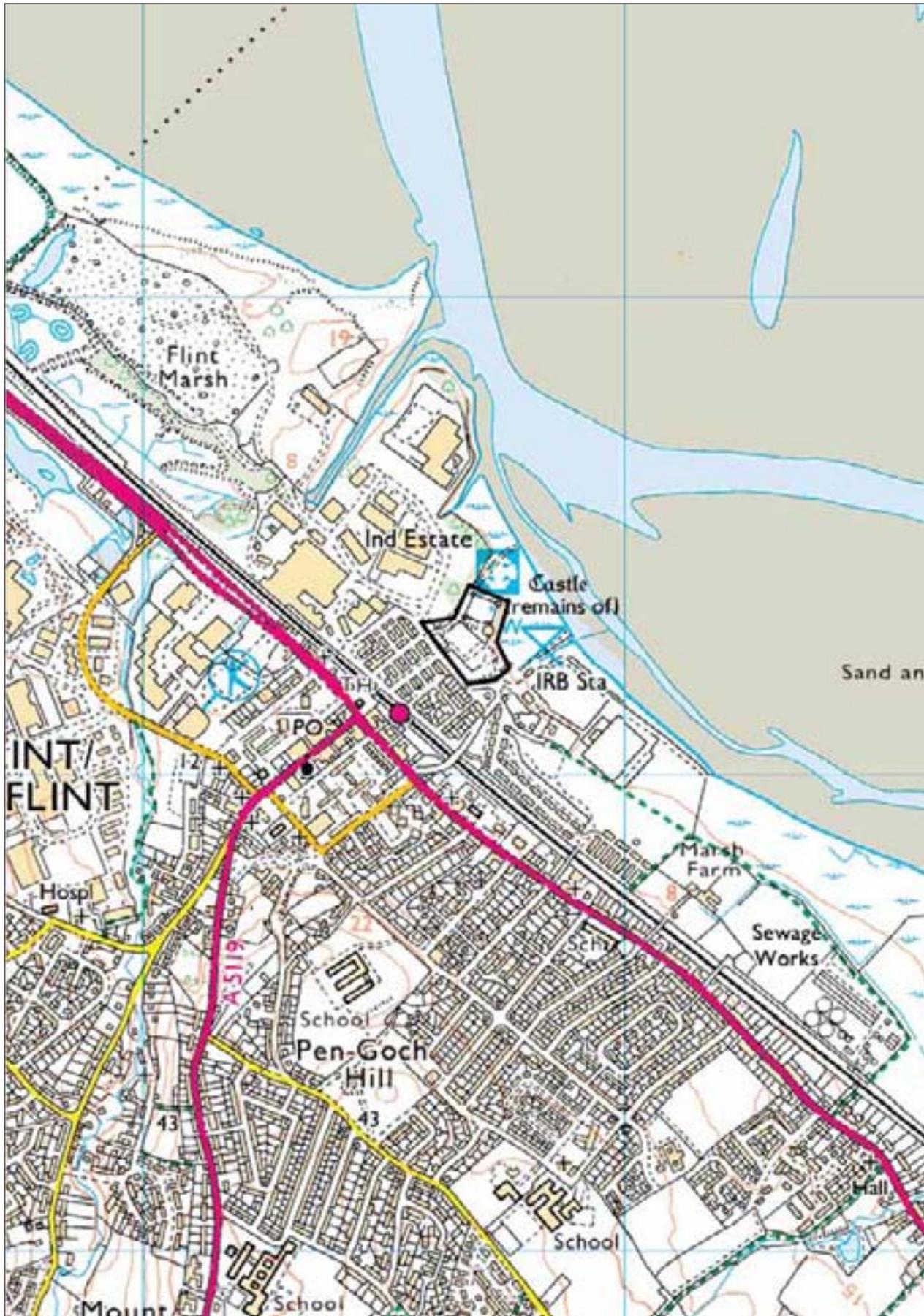
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14 Castle Park Character Area



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15 Flint Castle Character Area



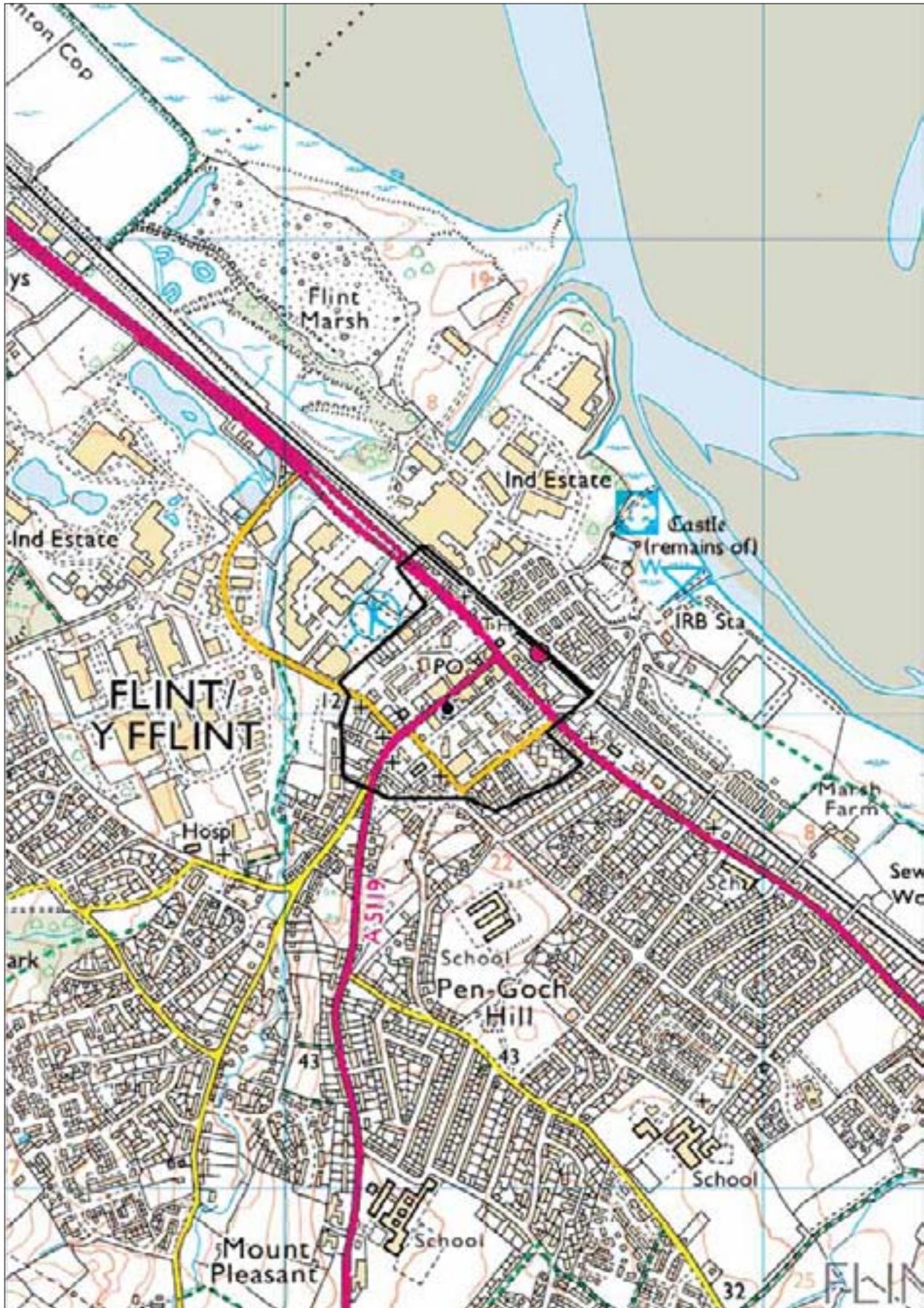
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16 Castle Dyke Street–Corporation Street Character Area



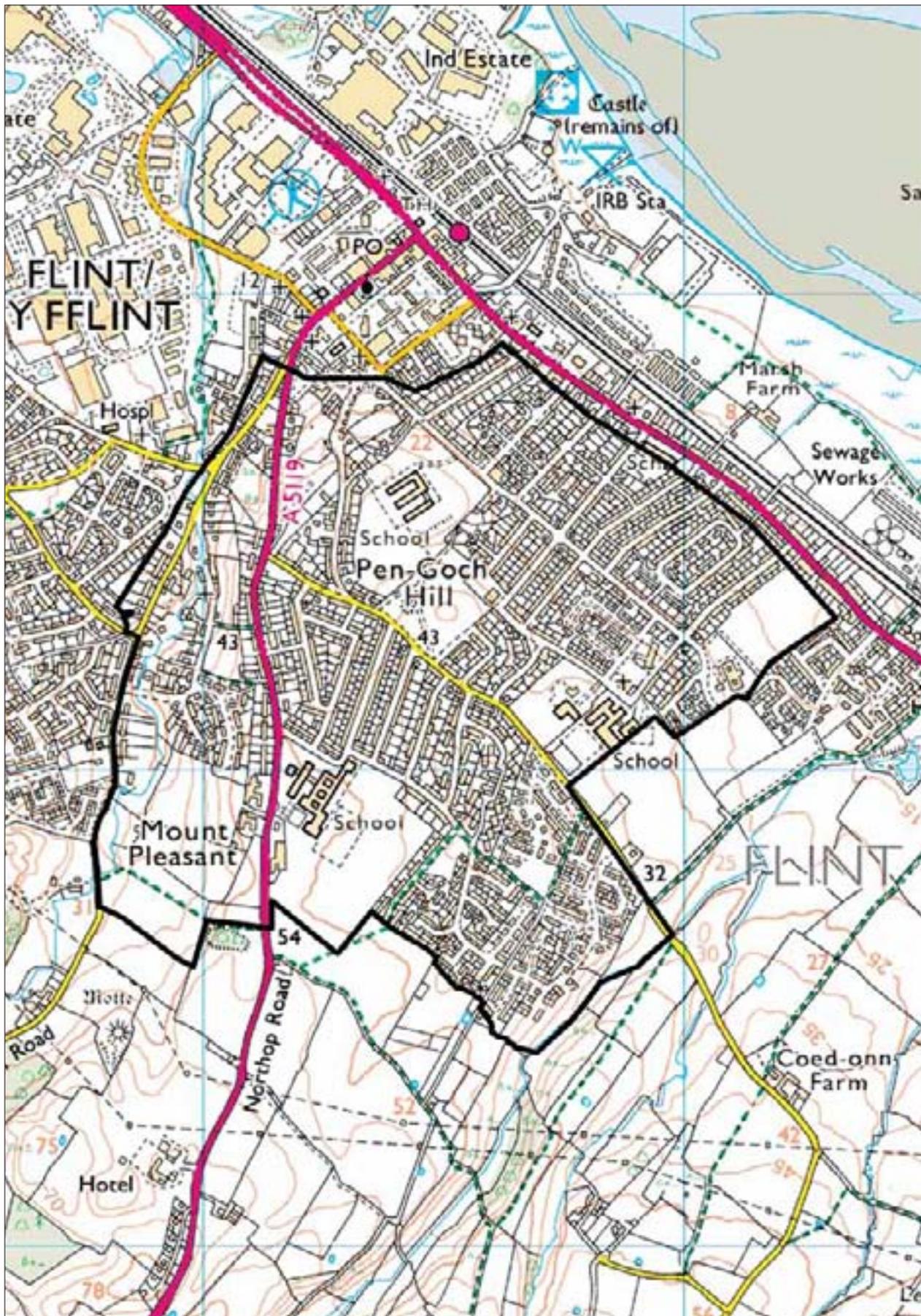
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17 Town Centre Character Area



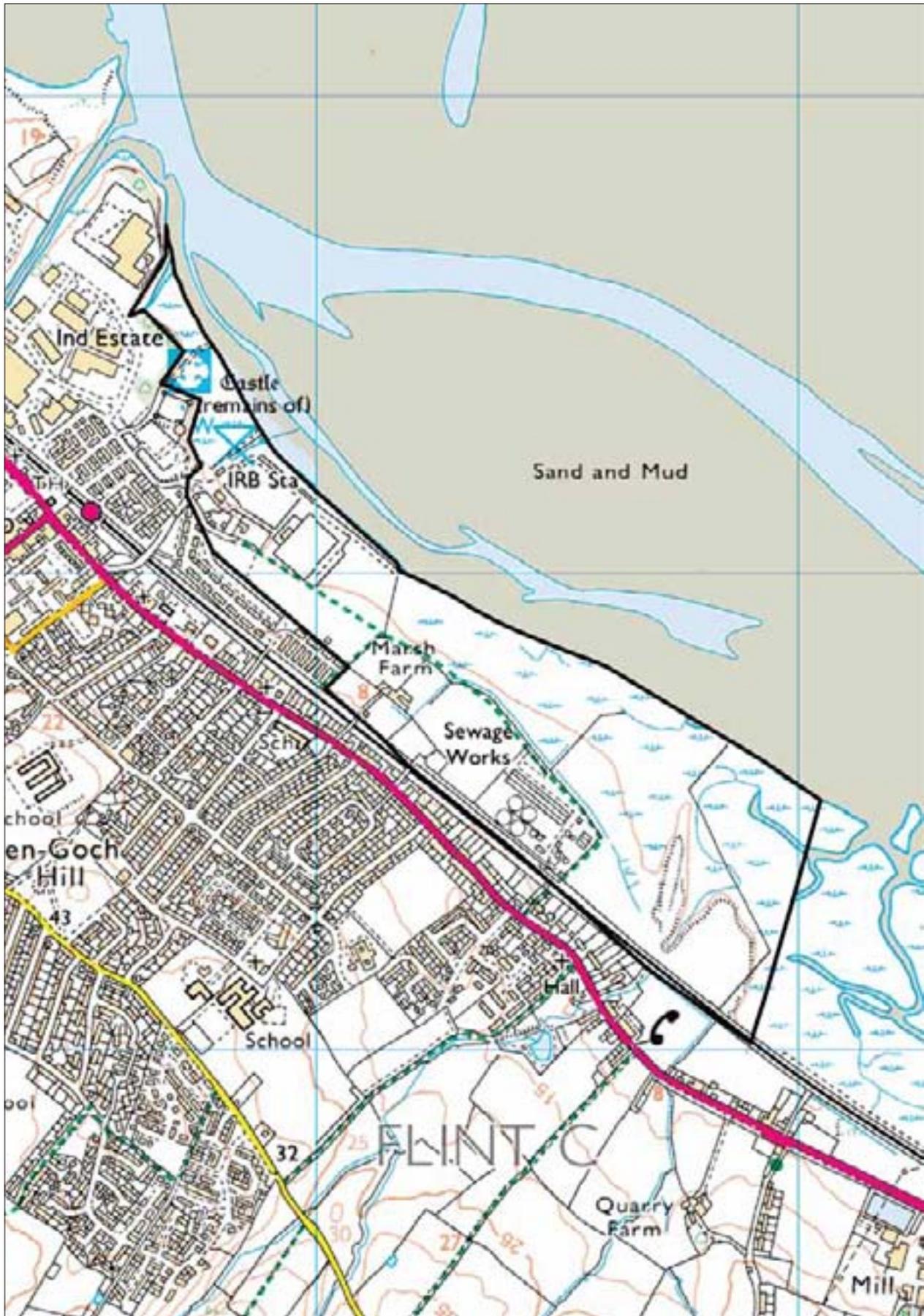
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18 Pen-Goch Character Area



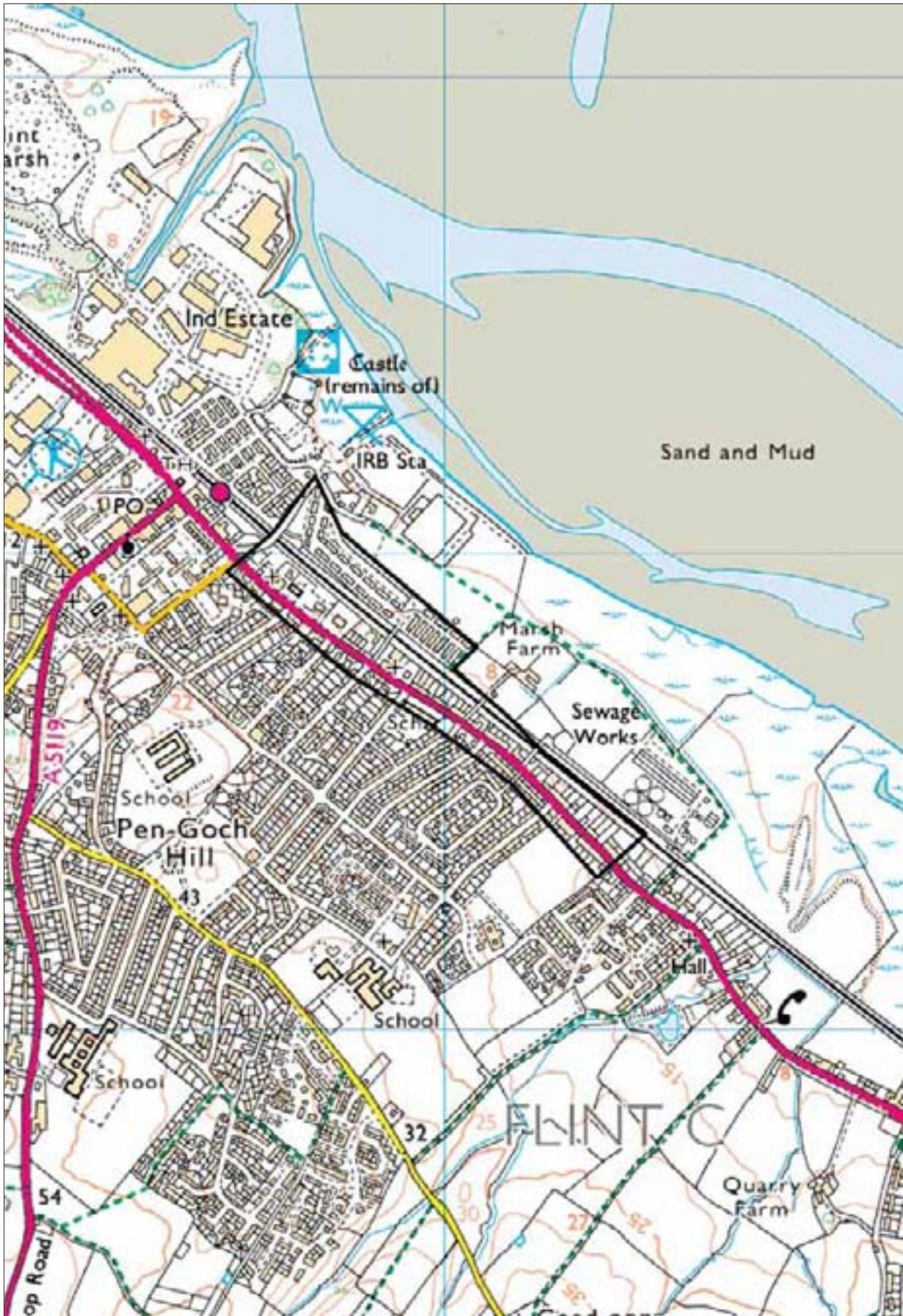
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19 Flint Sands Character Area



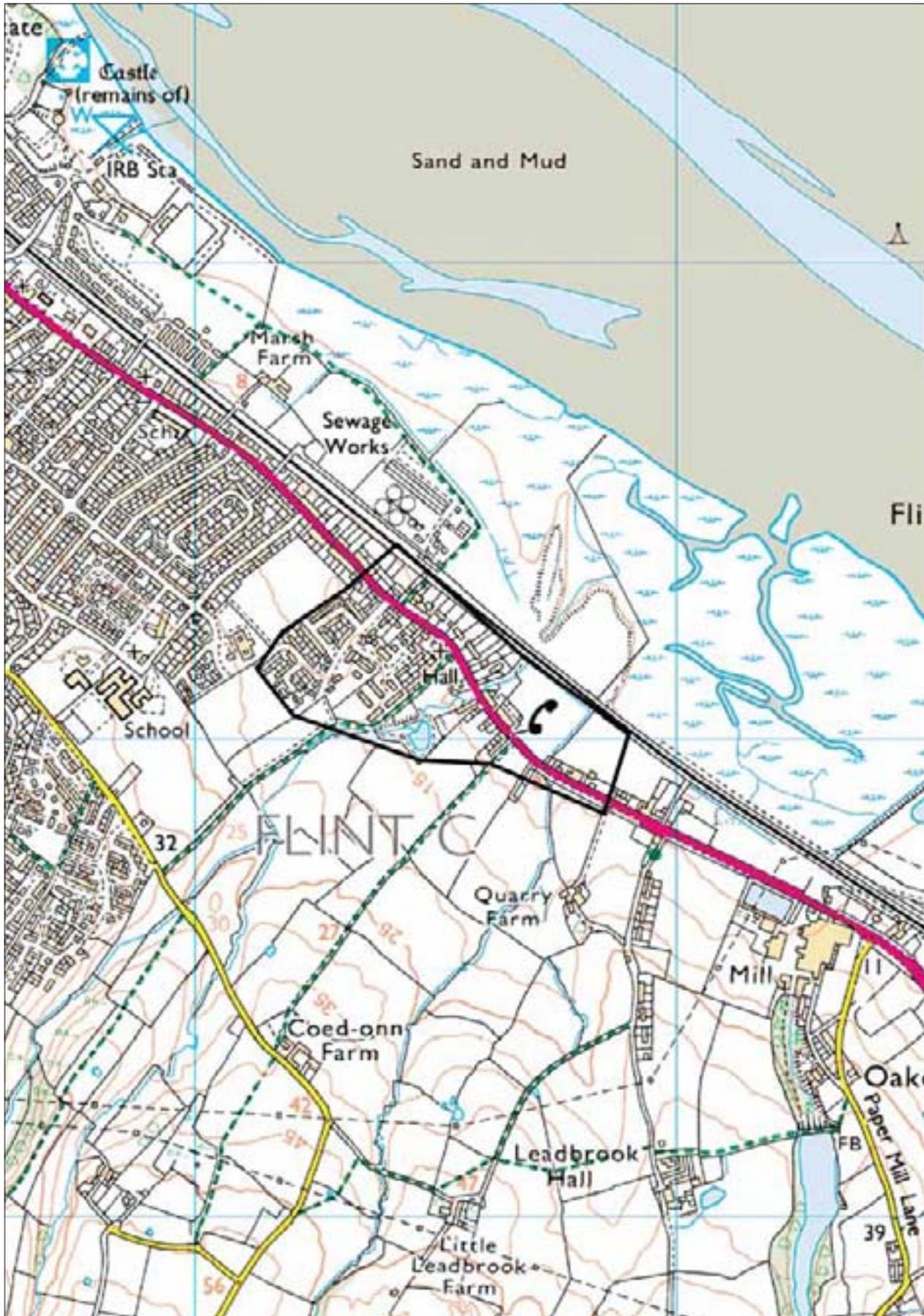
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20 Chester Street Character Area



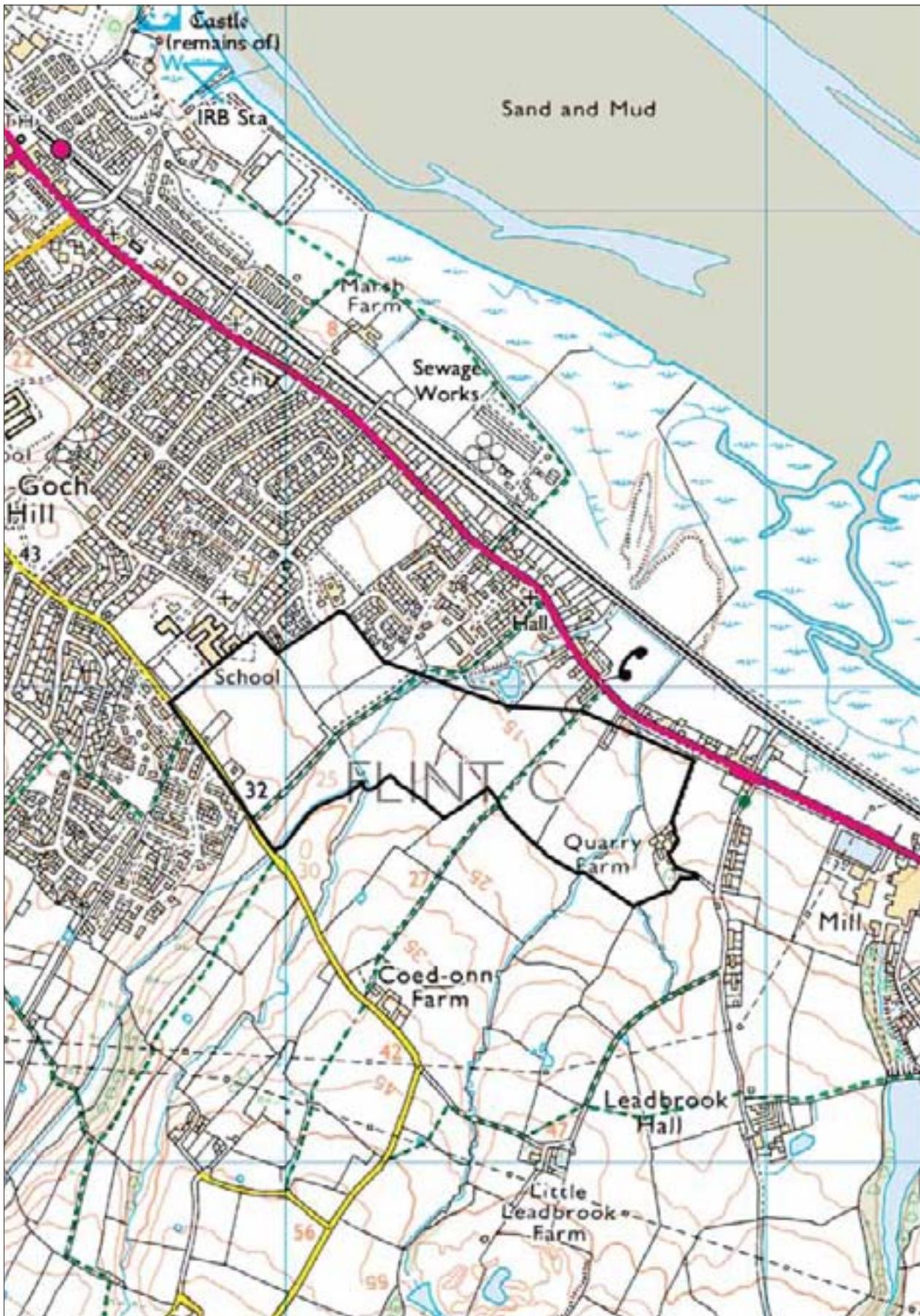
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21 Pentre Ffwrndan Character Area



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## 22 Maes y Dre Character Area



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