

**Sturminster Newton
Town Design Statement**

Supplementary
Planning Document

July 2008

Prepared for

SturQuest

by
Matrix Partnership



Foreword by **SturQuest**

Sturminster Newton has a proud track record of community led involvement in the planning of changes and developments within the town. The concept of being able to have some influence over what happens to our town in the future is keenly encouraged and the outstanding success of the redevelopment of the former livestock market site is a visible sign of the benefits of partnership working between the community and the local authorities.

We are delighted to have been able to work with North Dorset District Council and Matrix Partnership on this Town Design Statement and we are grateful to the South West Regional Development Agency for their funding support for the project. This Town Design Statement will act as a benchmark for all future developments within the town and we also hope that it will act as an encouragement for other communities to take up the challenge of leading and not following the planning process.

Jackie Upton, **SturQuest**

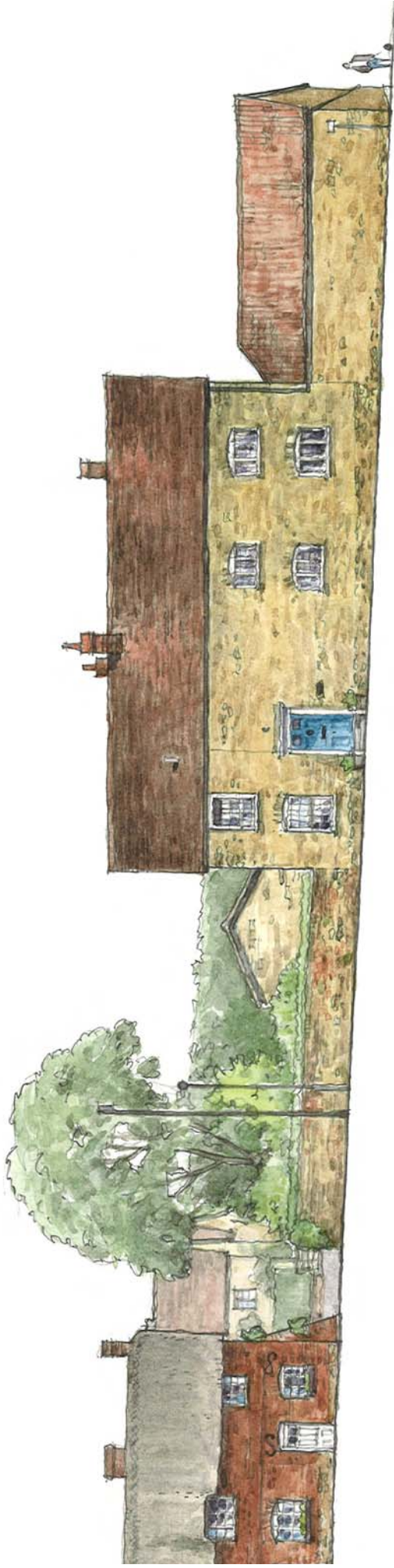
This document was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by North Dorset District Council on 25 July 2008.

The Ordnance Survey mapping included within this publication is provided by North Dorset District Council under licence from the Ordnance Survey in order to fulfil its public function to act as a planning authority. Persons viewing the mapping should contact Ordnance Survey Copyright for advice when they wish to licence Ordnance Survey mapping for their own use. The maps in this document are reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. North Dorset District Council Licence No: LA 100018415.

Contents

Part	01 Introduction	Part	03 Map-based analysis	Part	05 Character areas
	01.01 Background	5	03.01 Listed buildings etc.	19	05.01 Character Unit studies
	01.02 Purpose	6	03.02 Land use	20	05.02 Character Area study
	01.03 Terminology	6	03.03 Building heights	21	05.03 Synopsis of Character Areas
	01.04 Report Structure	6	03.04 Building ages	22	
	01.05 Methodology	7	03.05 Urban grain	23	Part
			03.06 Trees and open spaces	24	06 Design Guidelines
Part	02 Context		03.07 Town analysis	25	06.01 Discussion of issues
	02.01 Geographical context	10			06.02 Introduction to Design Guidelines
	02.02 Landscape setting	12	Part		06.03 Design Guidelines
	02.03 Historic background	14	04 Elevation and section studies		Development-related Guidelines
			04.01 Market Place	28	Landscape-related Guidelines
			04.02 Church Street	29	Transport-related Guidelines
			04.03 Ricketts Lane	30	06.04 Conclusion
			04.04 Manston Road/Green Close	31	
			04.05 Station Road (North)	32	
			04.06 Station Road (South)	33	
					APPENDIX
					Relevant Local Plan Policies

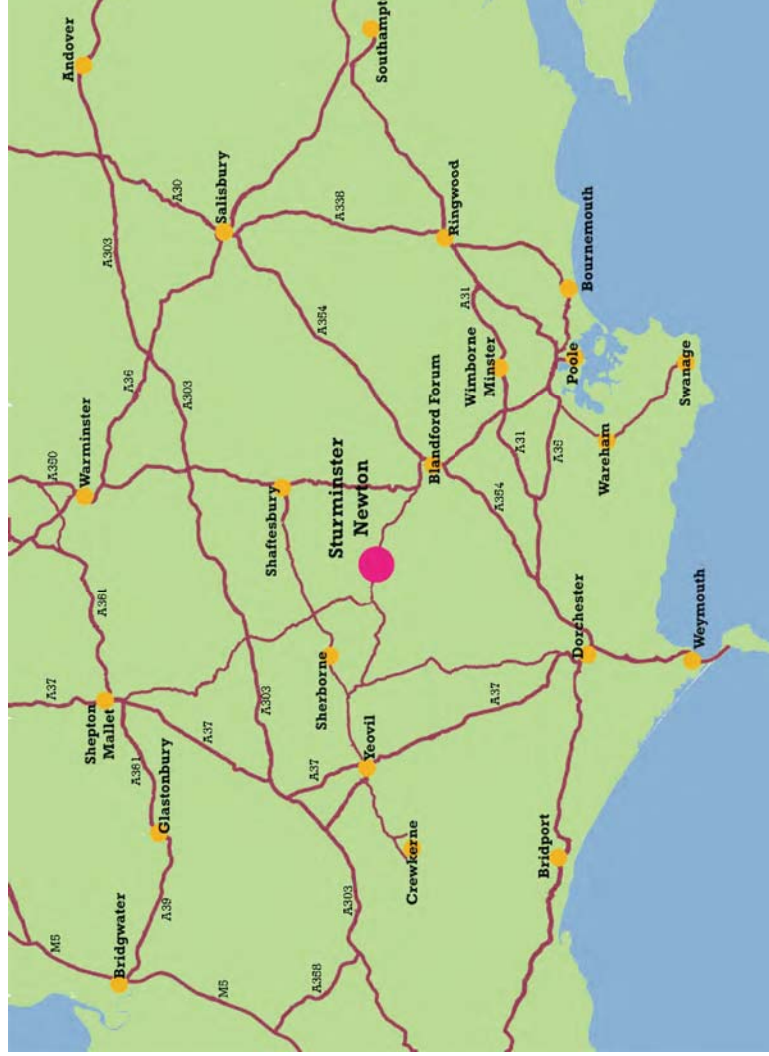
01 Introduction



Introduction

01.01

Background



Location Plan

Sturminster Newton (population 3,520 in mid-2004) is situated in the heart of rural Dorset, midway between Yeovil and Blandford Forum.

Historically the town has been the social and economic focus for the local rural community and economy, but the massive technological and social changes of the 20th Century, and indeed of the 21st Century, have had a radical effect on rural communities such as Sturminster Newton. Amongst the most obvious recent changes has been the loss of local agricultural services, such as the closure of Sturminster Newton's renowned cattle market in 1997 and the closure of the creamery in 2000, together with a substantial increase in the physical extent of the town to the north. Also noteworthy has been the rise of commercial and private mobility, which has led to the erosion of local industries through wider competition and which has allowed local people and incomers to work much further afield in regional centres such as Poole and Bournemouth.

All these and other trends have resulted in some considerable changes in the physical form and character of the town. Although the old town retains much of its original character (no doubt substantially protected through its Conservation Area status), the later 20th Century enlargements to the town generally demonstrate a marked departure in form and character from its earlier, more traditional, part. In these areas, the constraints of pre-industrial economics that were responsible for giving the old town so much of its character have no longer applied, whereas new factors, such as the predominance of the motor car with its various demands and associated regulations, have prevailed. The result has been a marked break in the town's connection with its rural roots and the loss of local distinctiveness and character.

The effects of such substantial change have resulted in an increased national awareness of the damaging effects that such a radical break with tradition can have on the form and appearance of settlements, and although the negative effects of change are not so profound in Sturminster Newton as in many other places, there is nonetheless a marked division in character between the older southern part of the town and the newer northern part.

Currently, at the time of writing, the redevelopment on the former cattle market site is nearing completion, but the future of the now derelict creamery site has yet to be defined. Elsewhere other recent developments have raised issues of form, height, scale, massing, style etc., and with an

increasing awareness of the importance and value of quality urban environments, and with the pressures for change likely to continue, both within the town and around its edges, the debate remains highly relevant.

In response to these concerns, the study and application of what makes quality, enjoyable and sustainable urban environments has grown significantly in recent years. There is a new appreciation that an understanding of what makes each place unique and distinctive is fundamental to the process of creating quality urban environments. This is clearly the case in Sturminster Newton that demonstrates quite starkly a distinction between a characterful and attractive old town and a somewhat bland recent extension and other recent infilling that is largely lacking in quality and any obvious sense of place or local distinctiveness.

Whilst it must be acknowledged that some recent developments in Sturminster Newton have shown a marked improvement in their response to issues of local character and distinctiveness, there is nonetheless continued concern on this issue, particularly with further change inevitable.

In order to achieve a more sensitive and responsive approach to future development, it is important to look anew at Sturminster Newton, to identify its different features and character areas, and to look particularly at the old town, to identify just what qualities and features make this part of the town unique and attractive. It is through an understanding of these issues, but not necessarily through slavishly emulating them, that successful and appropriate change can take place in the town. This is what the Town Design Statement seeks to achieve.

Introduction

01.02

Purpose -

What is a Town Design Statement?

A Town Design Statement is a document that identifies what makes the town special and distinctive. It is produced in consultation with local people.

Its purpose is to safeguard local character and to encourage sensitive, high quality design where new development occurs.

It does this through guidance on such matters as scale of development, building lines, building frontage and development density. As such, it will provide a tool for development guidance and control.

It does not determine whether or where new development takes place, but it will influence specific design proposals.

The Town Design Statement, which has been commissioned by Sturminster Newton Community Company, will form part of the Sturminster Newton Action Plan regeneration strategy, and has been adopted by North Dorset District Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. Anyone applying for planning permission will be obliged to give it due consideration.

The overall aim of the Town Design Statement is to achieve a coherent and consulted approach to future design and planning to enhance the townscape and to encourage further regeneration of the town and surrounding area as a local centre for employment, retail and service activities.

By enhancing and encouraging sensitive development it will:

- Add value to the building stock
- Add value to the quality of the environment
- Add value to the experience of living in, working in, or visiting Sturminster Newton.

01.03

Terminology

A very obvious feature of Sturminster Newton is the division of the main town into two largely distinct and clearly defined parts.

The southern part of the town contains, almost exclusively all development up to WWI. Although there is a degree of later development, the character of this part of the town is substantially defined by its historic layout and buildings.

In marked contrast, the northern part of the town contains almost exclusively development undertaken since WWI and very few older buildings.

In essence, the division between the two parts of the town lies in the difference between the vernacular and local traditions that formed the old town, and the external influences of the post-industrial age (apparent in such matters as planning and estate development, standard methodologies, mass-produced materials, the requirements of the motor car and the like) that define the new part of town. It is the influences of these two very different worlds that give rise to the fundamental differences of form and character that distinguish the old and new parts of the town.

Although old and new town features can be identified across most of the town, the general distinction is clear, and therefore for ease of reference in this study the southern part of the town is loosely referred to as the 'old town' and the northern part of the town is referred to as the 'new town'.

As will be noted in this study, the division between the 'old town' and the 'new town' is clearly demarcated by the course of the former railway.

01.04

Report Structure

The report is divided into six principal parts, namely:

Part 01, Introduction

This explains the background and context to the study, the report structure and methodology.

Part 02, Context

This examines the context of the town in terms of its geography, landscape setting and historic growth and background.

Part 03, Map-based analysis

This part presents a series of plans that analyses the town under several different topics that influence its overall character including features such as building height, urban grain and trees and open spaces.

Part 04, Elevation and section studies contrasts with the map-based nature of the preceding part by examining several road frontages as a series of short elevations and sections that typify different areas of the town.

Part 05, Character Areas draws on the preceding drawings and other studies to identify a number of different Character Areas around the town. The features that give each area a local distinctiveness are listed in a brief summary.

Part 06, Design Guidelines, discusses some of the important issues that were raised during the analysis of the town, and it sets out a range of guidelines that will inform future change. The Design Guidelines are linked to existing national Planning Policy Statements, Local Plan policies, and the Character Area descriptions that will help to direct new development and other change towards the creation, conservation and protection of a high quality urban environment within the town.

Introduction

01.05

Methodology

The methodology used for the Town Design Statement is divided into four clearly defined parts as follows:

A desk study
On-site survey
Public consultation
Design guidance

Desk study

The Desk study sought to gather as much relevant information as possible from previous recorded work. This included:

North Dorset District Council's digital layered mapping (including items such as an up-to-date base map of the town, contours, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas).

Reports such as the Sturminster Newton Community profile 2003.

The book *Stur: The Story of Sturminster Newton* published by the Sturminster Newton Museum Society, 2006 (including information on the history of the town, key industries, buildings etc.)

On-site survey

The on-site survey involved gathering fundamentally original information on those features not readily found in available sources that contribute to the make-up and character of Sturminster Newton. The study of the old town and walks to the river was undertaken exclusively on foot, such is the variety and richness of the area, whilst the new town was studied substantially by car, with periodic stops, which reflects the generally more homogeneous character of this part of the town.

In addition to a photographic record, information on topics such as land use, building height and building age was recorded onto base plans during visits and subsequently digitally mapped back in the office.

The on-site survey work considered both the broader, more strategic, aspects of the town, such as Character Areas, as well as more detailed aspects such as building form and architectural detail.

During the survey work, care was taken to give proper consideration to all parts of the town. There was clearly a danger in concentrating the study exclusively on the old town, perhaps understandably so, with its rich character, and unique local features that would rightly inform the Design Guidelines. However, the larger part of Sturminster Newton is now situated north of the former railway and it is important that this should be given due consideration, even though it subsequently provided little contribution to the Design Guidelines. Nonetheless its inclusion in the study is relevant, not least because it demonstrates some of the failings of modern development, as well as recent attempts to create more sensitive and higher density development, and because most future development is likely to take place in this area. There is therefore the important issue of context to consider, even though the context may be rather weak in design terms.

Features of particular concern in the on-site survey included edge of town centre areas that are subject to rapid change, town edges where development adjoins open countryside and the linking of spaces and routes in terms of transition from one Character Area to another.

At a more detailed level, building form, architectural and townscape details and the quality of modern recreations or interpretations of traditional materials and forms were also considered.

Public consultation

Another important aspect of information gathering that has informed this report was a consultation event with local residents. This was held at the newly opened Exchange Building on 17th July 2007, and covered both the Town Design Statement and the Development and Design Brief for the former creamery and other adjacent sites.

The first part of the event consisted of a presentation by Matrix Partnership that showed much of the desk study and on-site survey work and subsequent analysis that is incorporated into this report. (Another short presentation by Matrix also examined some of the issues affecting the creamery site and possible development options.) The second part of the evening event involved a number of workshops of about 5-10 people led by a facilitator. A range of issues and concerns was raised for discussion, and response forms were also issued for further written comment. Comments received were addressed more towards opinion about existing development, issues, such as car parking and preferences for future development, rather than towards providing information about existing character features.

It was found that the workshops and response forms threw up relatively few comments on the subject of the Town Design Statement, most being directed towards the Development and Design Brief for the creamery site. The key issues raised during this consultation event and at other informal consultation events are detailed in the separate 'Consultation Statement' that accompanies this document. A summary of the main issues raised during formal consultation on the draft Town Design Statement has also been produced.

The general consensus from this is that most of the features relevant to the Town Design Statement were covered in the Matrix presentation and that there was little additional relevant information to add, although some interesting background information was noted.

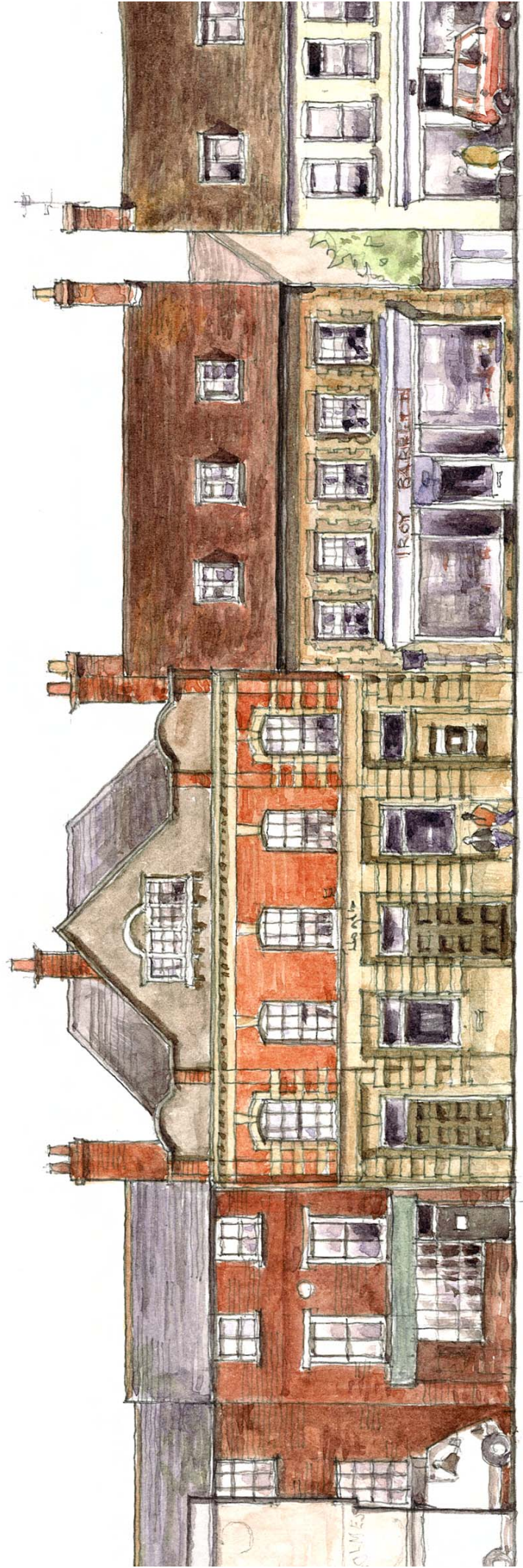
Design Guidelines

The final part of the study provides specific design guidance that identifies key issues relevant to the Town Design Statement, and is intended as a useful tool in controlling and directing future development in the town. The guidelines are identified in a clear and easily referenced layout with accompanying references to the relevant Local Plan policies and Character Area descriptions (in Part 05) that support them.

Newton village

Although Newton village has, historically, a long and close association with Sturminster Newton itself, it is well removed from the town on the south bank of the River Stour, it is not within the defined settlement boundary of Sturminster Newton and it was not therefore included within the Town Design Statement brief. The village could be subject to its own Village Design Statement if that should be considered appropriate.

02 Context



Context

02.01

Geographical context

Sturminster Newton is situated in a broad undulating area of rich, quintessentially English countryside, loosely known as the Blackmore Vale. The eastern edge of the vale is clearly defined by the broad uplands of Cranborne Chase, the scarp of which overlooks the vale and which is a feature of regular reference from within the vale itself. Notable is the high broad summit of Hambleton Hill that rises quite dramatically above the gentle features of the Blackmore Vale near Child Okeford, and which features prominently in views from Sturminster Newton itself, some 6 kilometers distant. Continuing north towards Shaftesbury, the chalk scarp continues to dominate the vale to the west, offering extensive views over the rolling countryside.

About 10km to the west, just before Sherborne is reached, there is another minor wooded scarp that effectively defines the western geographical extremity of the vale.

The principal feature of the vale however is the River Stour that rises north of Gillingham and which flows southwards in a broad valley that is the Blackmore Vale proper. Between Shillingstone and Blandford Forum the river takes a more easterly course cutting through the chalk upland between Shillingstone and Blandford Forum and eventually reaching the sea at Christchurch east of Bournemouth.

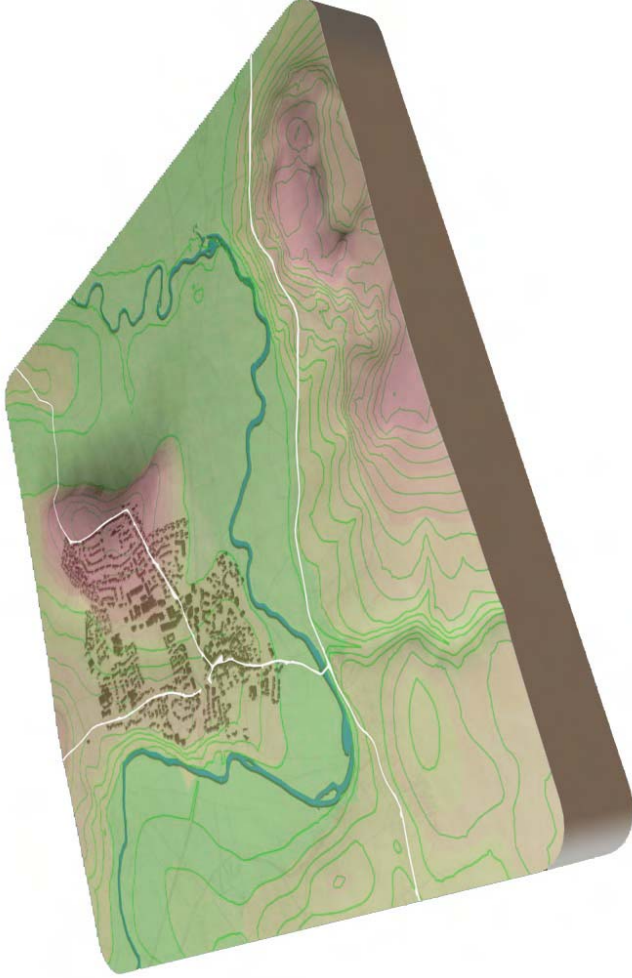
Although the Blackmore Vale appears quite flat in views from the chalk scarp, there are some quite pronounced undulations including a minor west-facing limestone scarp that runs north to south from east of Wincanton and which defines the immediate valley of the River Stour. This scarp is most pronounced towards the north, being about 80 metres high, but it gradually diminishes southwards. Several villages are situated along the scarp including Cucklington, Buckhorn Weston, and Marnhull. This scarp effectively restrains the River Stour on a southerly course, but where it eventually diminishes at Sturminster Newton the river turns suddenly west. It is at this point at the southern extremity of the ridge that Sturminster Newton is situated. To the south the land becomes more irregular and broken, but at Sturminster Newton there is an obvious crossing point of the river that gives rise to the town's historic location.

Immediately to the south, overlooking the crossing itself at Newton village, is an Iron Age hill fort but clearly the present location of the town offered more extensive flatter land for development.

The topographical model opposite provides a good understanding of the landform in and around Sturminster Newton today.

The southern extremity of the long, diminishing ridge, already referred to extends down the model to where it is breached by the river where it turns suddenly eastwards.

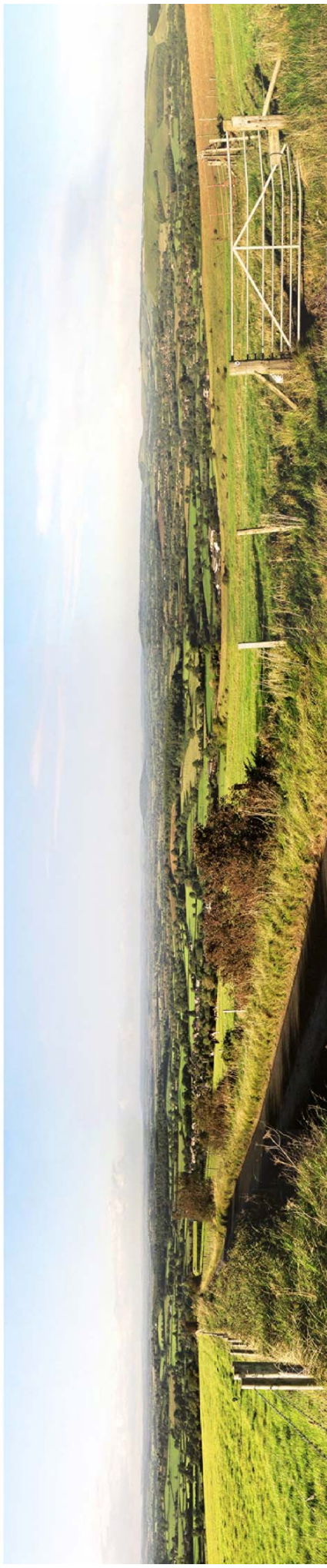
The old town is situated in the bend of the river where the land rises above the river floodplain, and the market place is situated immediately south of where the two principal roads divide. The town extends along the river to the north above a relatively small but steep rise in the land and north-eastwards along higher ground at Rixon Hill. It should be noted that the new part of the town is separated by a shallow depression (the Butts Pond Industrial Estate and Meadows area) that runs south towards the river and in which the former creamery site is also situated.



Context 02.01

Geographical context

Blackmore Vale Mendip Hills **Sturminster Newton**
(behind Piddles Wood) Okeford Fitzpaine Dunctiffe Hill Shaftesbury Melbury Hill Child Okeford Hambleton Hill



To the south of Okeford Fitzpaine on the Winterborne Whitechurch road, there are extensive views northwards towards Sturminster Newton and across the Blackmore Vale. Although Sturminster Newton itself is hidden behind intervening higher ground in this view, the panorama gives an excellent impression of the town in relationship to the wider topography as well as its delightful rural setting. Of particular note, is the long chalk scarp on the right of the picture that dominates the lower countryside to the west and which features prominently in many views from and around Sturminster Newton.



Context

02.02 Landscape setting

The location of Sturminster Newton within an arc of the River Stour at a natural crossing point gives the town a close relationship, both physical and visual, to its wider landscape setting. The close relationship to the river and various adjacent walks is certainly a great asset for local residents to enjoy.

In the North Dorset Landscape Character Assessment, the landscape character of the Stour valley at Sturminster Newton is defined as The Upper Stour Valley, Area Three. This sub-division of the wider landscape type identifies the point where the river flows into a confined valley which slopes up to the limestone ridge areas to the north. In places the valley slopes are well wooded and create a distinctive contained landscape. The riverside meadows are identified as being very distinctive, an important recreational resource for the town, and key features of an historic and culturally significant landscape.

To the west, there is a local and pronounced bluff where the river cuts in close to the town. This creates a fine outlook, as enjoyed from Thomas Hardy's villa near the recreation ground, and there are delightful riverside walks along the foot of the bluff as well as wider connection to north and south by the Stour Valley Way footpath and also across the river by the ancient and charming Colber footbridge. The riverside walks are readily accessed from the old town by three paths, and to the north there is an additional connection from the new part of the town to the river. This latter connection is important insofar that access to open country from the northern part of town is quite limited.

During the 20th Century houses have been built along the top of the bluff to enjoy views across the river, but their rather unprepossessing design and monotonous arrangement contributes little to the wider setting of the town, unlike the elegant Victorian villa in which Thomas Hardy resided that is such an attractive focus in local views.

To the south, there is a broad and open sweep of land that extends down to the river, and the ancient and renowned Town Bridge and mill. The setting, seen from the town is very attractive, with a fine backdrop beyond the river of generally wooded appearance and houses partly visible amongst the trees, including a somewhat controversial contemporary house near the mill.

Looking towards the town from the south, the restrained height of development results in rooflines being subservient to a generally higher skyline created by larger trees in and around the town. Houses are seen blending into a well-treed framework with no particular building appearing to be particularly prominent. The only marked exception to this is some glimpsed passing views from the A357 to the south-east where St Mary's Church is more prominently seen in relation to the rest of the town. Unfortunately there are no public footpaths in the area south of the river, so otherwise the view goes largely unappreciated.

To the east of the town, the land falls gently away towards the river and an extensive area of water meadows and hedges. Three footpaths give access east of the town including the Stour Valley Way close to the river, and the recently established North Dorset Trailway that follows the course of the former Somerset & Dorset Railway. Another footpath leaves the town on the corner of Rixon Hill and Manston Road giving access to the east, although the quality of the walk does not match those closer to the river.

To the north and north-east of the town, development ends abruptly along the B3091 Manston Road and directly against agricultural land to the north. The sensitivity of the town edge around this part of the town contrasts unfavourably with the rich and subtle manner of the old town. To the south, development blends gradually into the countryside through a gradual decrease in density, and a margin of small fields and generous countryside. In direct contrast, development to the north generally ends in a hard and artificial edge, either along a principal road or as an abrupt edge against open fields. The relatively high density of recent development in the Honeymead Lane area exacerbates the effect.

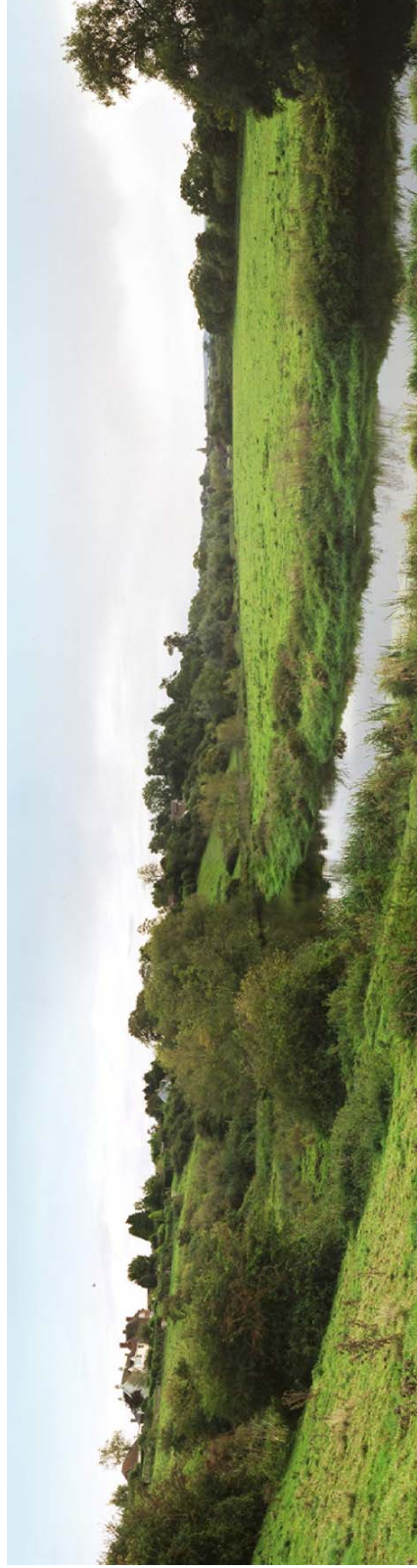
Context

02.02

Landscape setting



Sturminster Newton seen from the A357 south of the River Stour. Towards the left of the view, St. Mary's Church can be identified, but the most prominent feature is the large Wellingtonia in the churchyard that is some 112 ft. high. The small woodland on the skyline at centre left is Yewstock Plantation that dominates the northern exit of the town along Bath Road. It should be noted in this view how the old town on the left of the photograph is well assimilated into its setting, whilst more recent development, that generally lacks sensitive edge treatment, is rather more prominent, although fortunately not particularly intrusive when seen from this location.

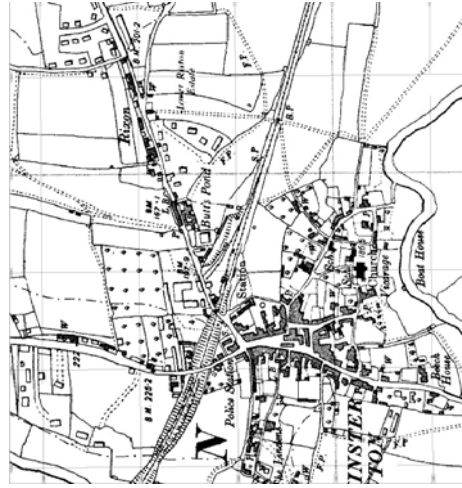


This panorama of the western edge of Sturminster Newton demonstrates well the generally successful relationship between this part of the town and its surrounding countryside, including the river. Whilst houses are certainly apparent, and are even situated on the skyline, their form, scale, massing, density and materials, as well as their assimilation into adjacent vegetation, are all vital features in making this a generally appropriate edge.

Context 02.03 Historic background



1891



1938



1982

The first identifiable, if oblique, reference to Sturminster Newton dates from 968 AD, when land was given by King Edgar to Glastonbury Abbey. Although little is known about the early history of the town, it is situated in a productive agricultural area and the town's market was clearly a vital factor in its growth, sheep and cattle being the basis for the area's prosperity. The mill was also an important feature that happily survives to this day in much rebuilt form.

By the 19th Century cloth spinning and weaving had become a major source of employment in the town although there was by this time considerable poverty exacerbated it seems by a significant growth in population. However a well-established trade, with Newfoundland that was based upon cod fishing had developed through the port of Poole, and many local men were engaged in this, with a proportion settling permanently in America.

Perhaps the greatest single influence on the development of Sturminster Newton was the arrival of the railway in 1863, and this led in particular to the rapid expansion of the livestock market which latterly moved out of the market square to a new site north of the railway that has been recently redeveloped. Whilst the cloth industry disappeared, no doubt as a result of competition from north of England weavers who were able to compete more successfully through the benefits of cheap railway transport, the cattle rearing and creamery businesses flourished.

The cattle market eventually closed in 1997, and this was a considerable commercial, social and emotional blow to the town, but the site has recently been redeveloped for social, retail, office and mostly residential uses. Similarly, another major employer in the town, the Milk and Cheese Factory, and from which the town derived much of its identity through its national and even international reputation, closed abruptly in 2000. This was another hard blow for the town that further weakened its sense of identity and connection with its surrounding rural community.

Even a brief summary of Sturminster Newton would be incomplete without a reference to Sturminster's strong literary connections. Robert Young (1811-1908), William Barnes (1801-1866) and Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) are all closely associated with the town. During his short sojourn in Sturminster, Hardy and his first wife lived in one of a pair of attractive Victorian villas on the south-west edge of the town that enjoy attractive views over the river and surrounding countryside.

The four maps are illustrated here show the progressive growth of the town from 1891, to the present.

1891 map

Looking at this map of the town, the tight frontage of buildings onto the principal roads and Market Place is immediately apparent, contrasting markedly with the lack of secondary development beyond. Behind the closely-packed frontages there is a rapid transition from market gardens, small fields and a number of orchards to open countryside, although there is some more scattered development along Penny Street. Some larger houses with quite extensive grounds can be identified at The Lindens, Beech House and the Vicarage.

Rather unusually, it will be noted that St Mary's Church is situated away from the main hub of activity in the town centre, and the rather reclusive nature of the church remains a feature of the town to this day.

It will also be noted that there is a good network of lanes and footpaths linking the town with the surrounding countryside.

It will also be seen that the railway defines the northern edge of the town beyond which there is a large orchard, and the dwellings that do exist along both Bath Road and Manston Road appears from their narrow linear plots tight against the roads to be squatters' cottages that remain quite a common feature in the Blackmore Vale, even today.

1938 map

A surprising feature of this map, compared with that of 1891 is how little the town has grown. The railway is known to have brought some significant changes to the town, but surprisingly there has been little increase in its overall extent. This is particularly notable when one considers how substantially many towns expanded with the coming of the railways.

The old town, south of the railway, remains remarkably unchanged, and such change that has occurred has taken place north of the railway. The cattle market, formerly held in the Market Place, has moved to its new permanent site immediately north of the station, and the Milk Factory has been established at Butt's Pond.

Context 02.03 Historic background

However the beginnings of new urban expansion are also to be seen in this area. In addition to the earlier intermittent roadside development, and in marked contrast to it, new development is seen emerging in new plots off both the Bath Road and off Manston Road at Flixton. Unlike the earlier development that fronts directly onto the main roads with linear plots running parallel to the road, the new development either faces onto the road with plots running back at right-angles to it, or it is largely situated within plots with their own access road in the manner of small housing estates. Development at Buffets Close in the top right corner of the plan is clearly orientated to enjoy views over the river to the west.

1982 map

Moving on 44 years, it is clear that there has been a sudden expansion of the town in the post-war period. Whilst the old town retains its original buildings and road network, much infilling has taken place, but within the existing framework. Although new development has been quite significant, it will be noticed from the later parts of this study how this additional development has not seriously eroded the essential features and character of the old town. In some ways it has supplemented and enriched it.

However most new development has been directed northwards, no doubt because of the constraints imposed by the river and its floodplain to the south and west of the town. To the north, new development has been extensive with much ribbon and estate development as well as an enlargement of the Cattle Market and the emergence of the Butti's Pond Industrial Estate. In addition to its size, the new development north of the railway contrasts markedly in form and pattern with the old town, and this underlies a marked change in townscape character, as will be seen from the subsequent studies in this report.

Although the railway had been closed for some years by 1982, its course is still a prominent feature, defined substantially by a deep cutting through the town. The course of the railway through the town is also significant because it broadly defines the boundary between the old and new parts of the town, and as such it has become a line of division, marking a significant break in townscape character, physically, psychologically (and even socially, according to some comments received at the public consultation) dividing the town in two.

Current map
Reference to the current map of the town shows the full extent of development north, with the latest estates extending away to the north-east at Honeymead Lane. Recent changes in policy on residential form and density show a marked change in the layout and massing of development, as well as the nature of urban/rural edges, which subjects are studied in more detail later in this Statement.

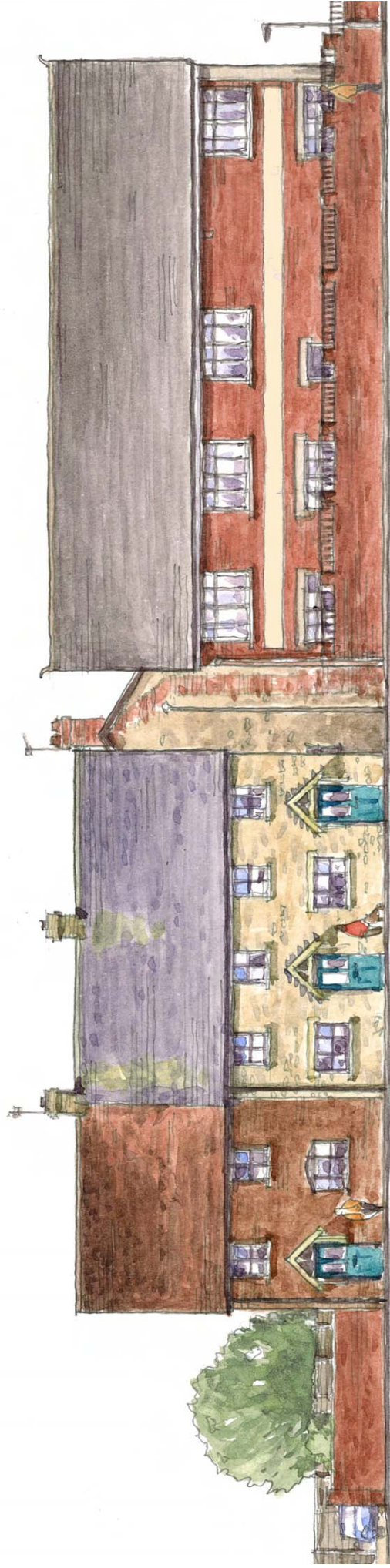
The current map shows the on-going redevelopment of the former Cattle market site, and whilst the course of the railway remains apparent, the filling in of the cutting to create a new park helps to reconnect the two parts of the town. Nonetheless, the scars remain apparent, and the redevelopment of the former creamery site and other adjacent land will have an additional importance in helping to stitch the two parts of the town together.

In discussing the issue of division within the town, it is appropriate to note here that the construction of the Exchange Building with its various social functions in this key location has the potential for having a most important role, both practical and symbolic, in reuniting the town.



Current town map

03 Map-based analysis



Map-based analysis 03.01 Listed buildings, Conservation Area etc.

This drawing emphasises well the marked distinction between the old, southern part of Sturminster Newton and the northern part.

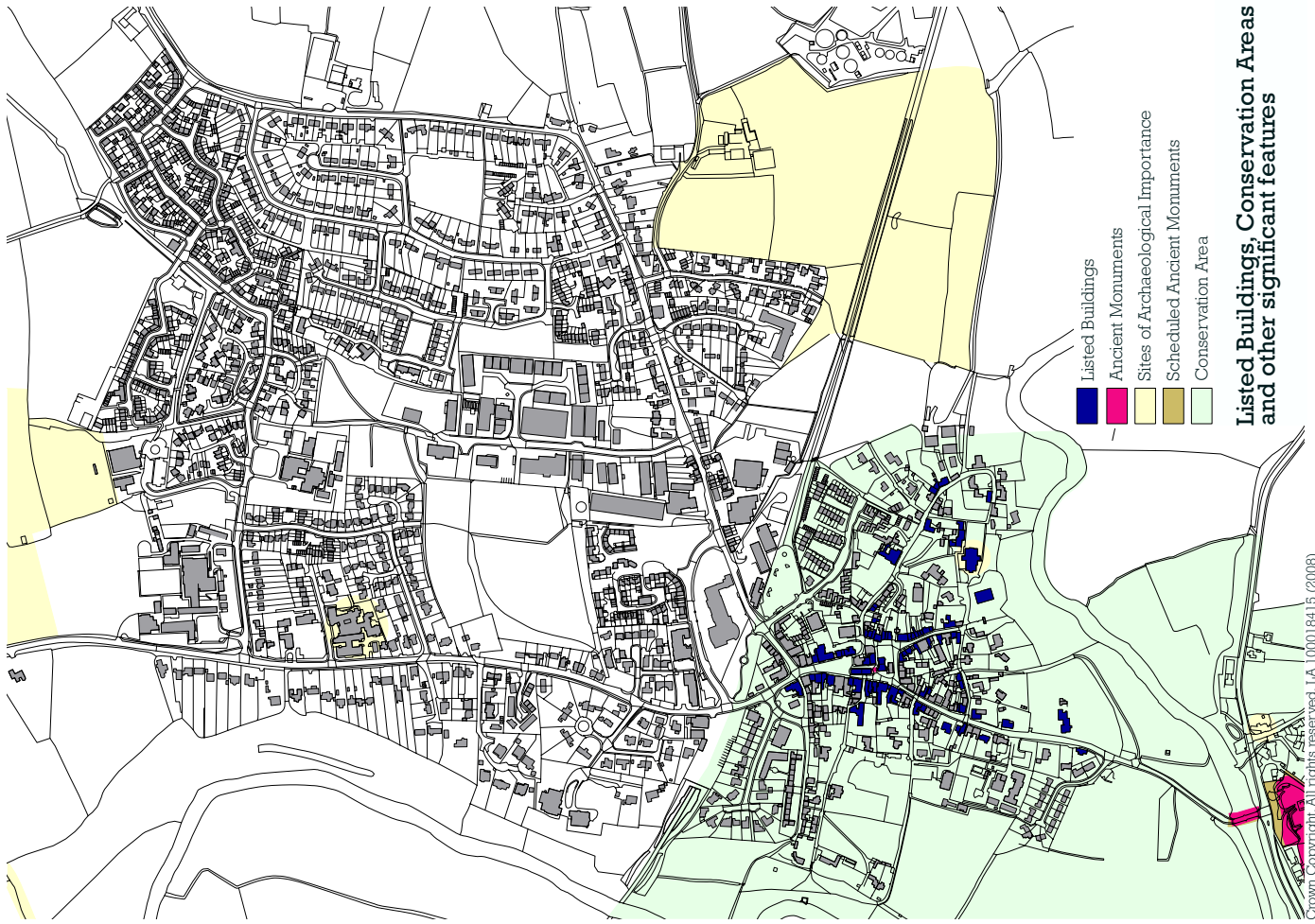
All the town's listed buildings are situated in the southern part of the town, substantially around the Market Place, but also extending south along Bridge Street and down Church Street and Penny Street.

There are no listed buildings in the northern part of town.

Ancient Monuments are identified in the Market Cross, the historic bridge over the River Stour and in the Iron Age hill fort at Newton to the south.

The Conservation Area covers the whole of the old town including all the area between the town and the river which rightly acknowledges its fundamental contribution to the setting of the town.

It will be noted that the Conservation Area ends abruptly along the line of the former railway. This distinction effectively confirms the marked change in the quality of the urban environment north and south of this line. To the south, the town retains significant historic local interest and quality in its urban environment, whereas to the north the character is ubiquitous and often monotonous, generally lacking in urban quality.



Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and other significant features

Map-based analysis

03.02

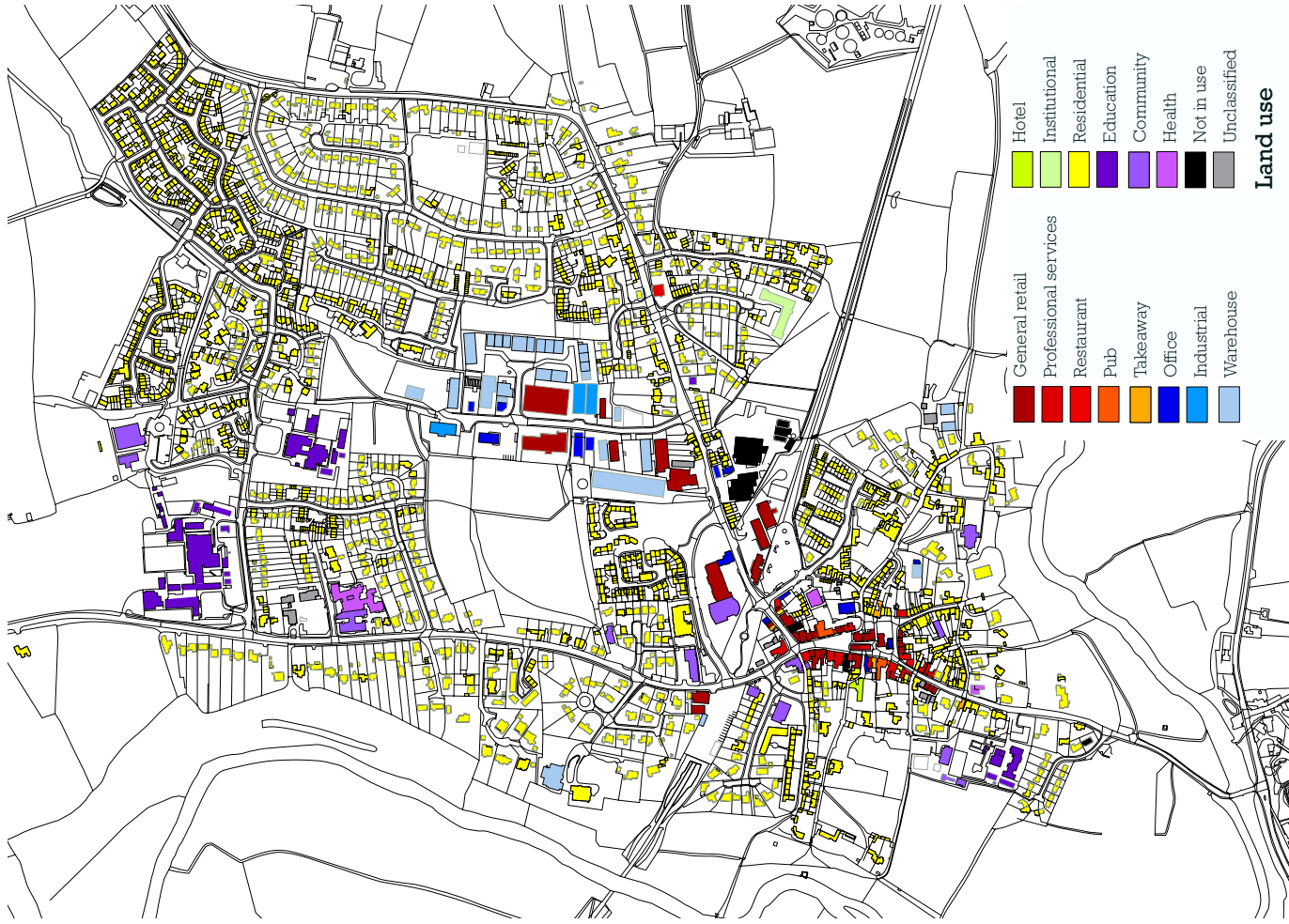
Land use

The land use drawing shows a clear disposition of general retail, professional services and food-associated uses grouped tightly around the Market Place. There is little spread of these uses along secondary frontages adjacent to the Market Place and little or no depth of these uses behind the main retail facade.

Beyond the Market Place in the old town the buildings are almost exclusively in residential use with few other uses of which these are mostly in some kind of community use such as the church or scouts.

In the northern part of the town, residential uses again predominate. However, in the area around the former station subsequent redevelopment has given rise to a greater range of uses in this vicinity including community uses (the new Exchange building), general retail (Co-op supermarket and other retail uses on former railway land) and a derelict site (former creamery) as well as new residential development.

In addition to some large educational establishments and a new sports centre towards the northern edge of town, there is a relatively large block of warehouse, office, industrial and large retail uses in the centre of the northern area at the Butts Pond Industrial Estate.



Map-based analysis

03.03 Building heights

The study of building height across Sturminster Newton shows an interesting pattern. (The heights shown on the drawing give a good overall impression and may not necessarily be correct for each individual property)

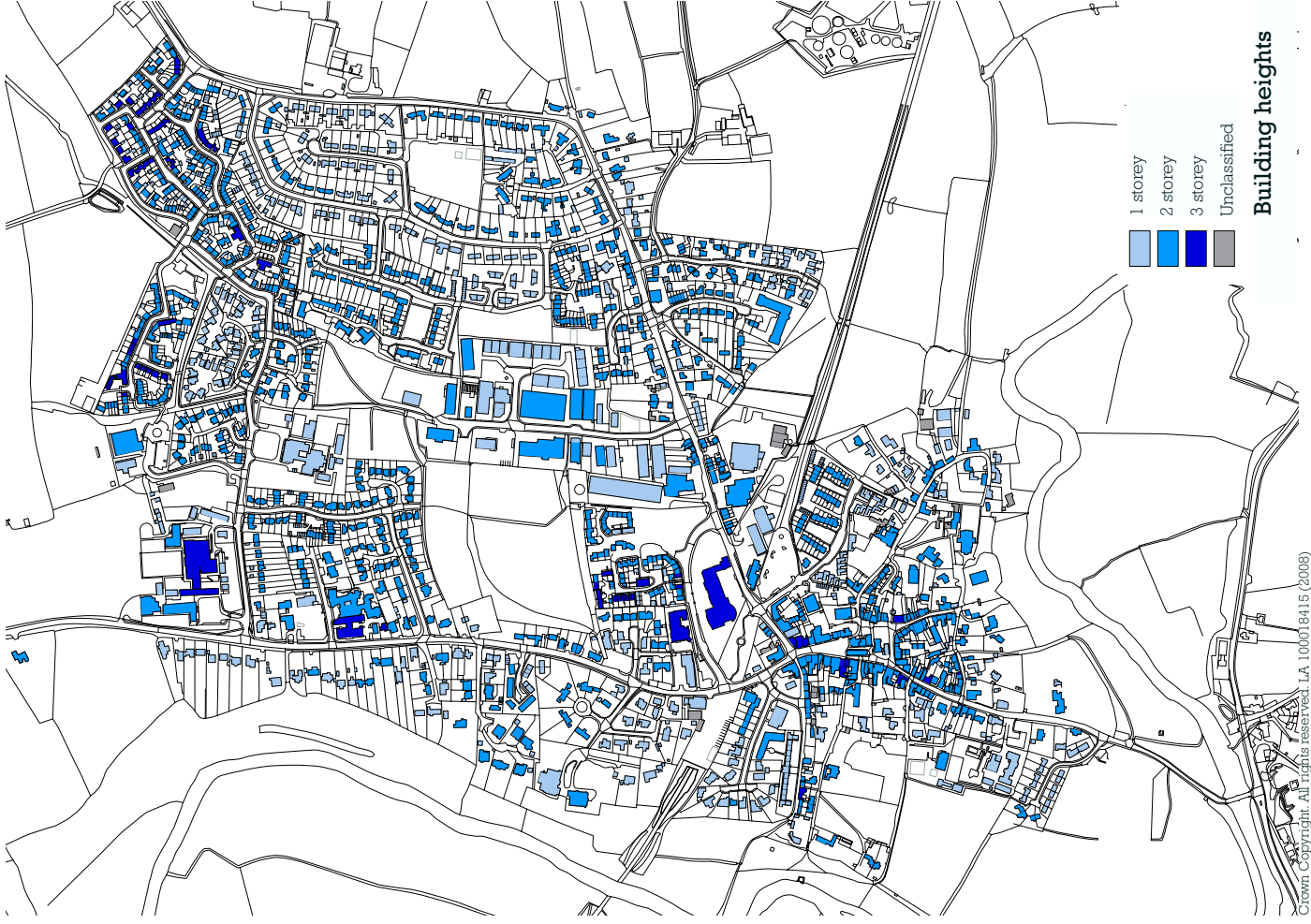
The historic centre can be identified as a tight development of 2 storey buildings facing onto the Market Place and other historic town centre roads and lanes such as Bridge Street. Occasionally buildings rise to 3 storeys.

Elsewhere in the old town comparatively recent infilling has been mostly of 2 storeys although there is a clear pattern of bungalow development to the west of Market Place and Bridge Street in the area immediately behind the historic frontage. This consists substantially of inter-war bungalow development infilling former market gardens, orchards and the like. A scattering of other single storey development can be seen near the eastern end of Penny Street.

Looking at the northern part of the town, other inter-war development consists of a mixture of 1 and 2 storey development. Here the creation of small estates can be identified through the mostly exclusive construction of rows or groups of the same building heights, such as along Green Close.

A marked change in building height can however be identified in the most recent development in the Honeymead Lane and former Cattle Market areas where recent policies that encourage the development of higher densities have resulted in a scattering of 3 storey houses. Many also include rooms in roof spaces which, although not recorded here as an additional storey, often result in buildings that are slightly taller than a conventional 2 storey house.

Taller development on the former Cattle Market site appears appropriate to its edge-of-town centre location, whereas the rise in building height (together with greater building density) does not follow the general historic trend of building height reducing away from town centres.



Map-based analysis 03.04 Building ages

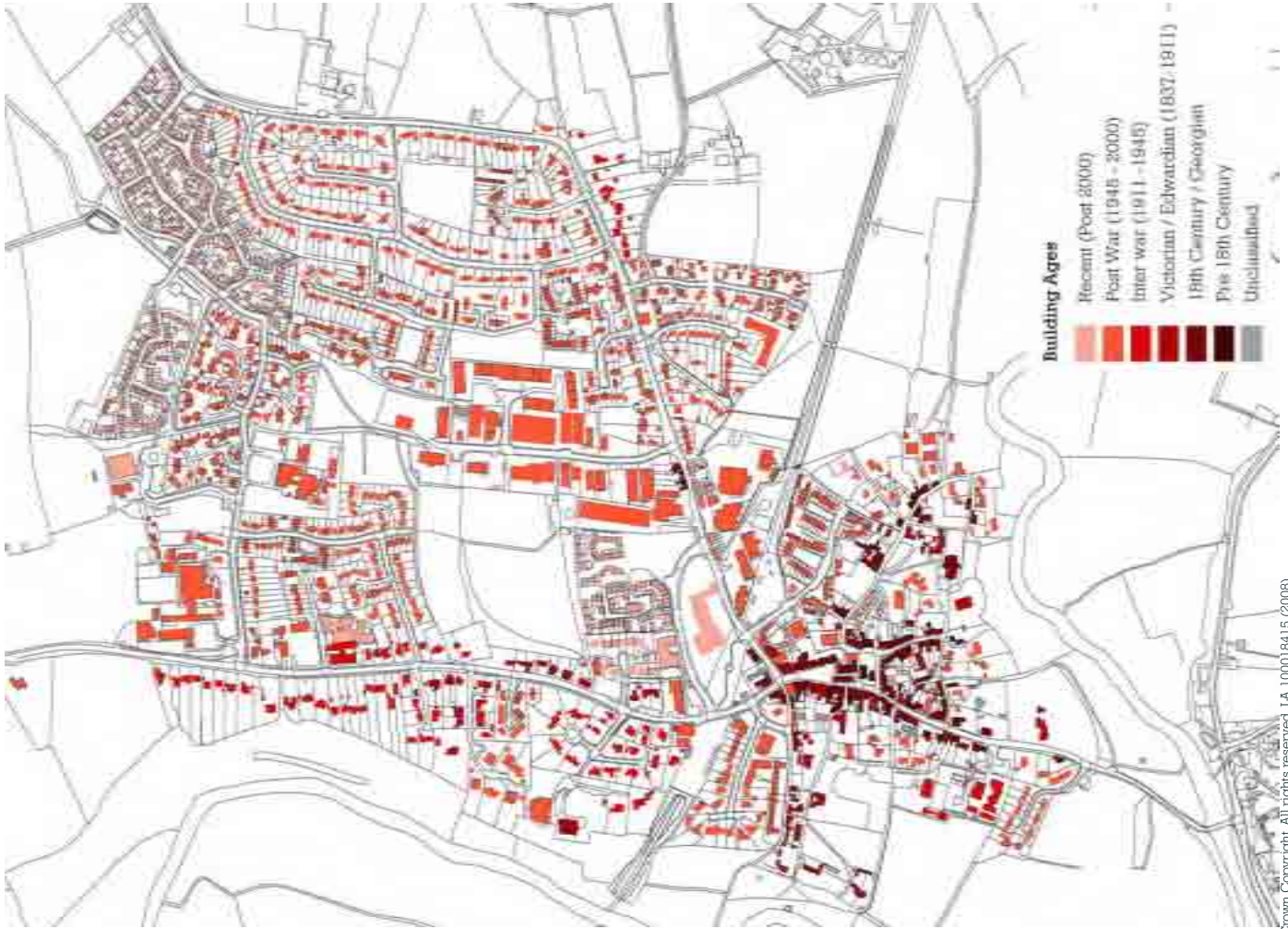
This drawing confirms the historic growth of the town through the estimated ages of the buildings themselves. (Buildings were mostly dated on site approximately from their external appearance and they are not therefore necessarily correct individually. However the exercise gives a good general impression of the progressive expansion of the town)

The original foundation of Sturminster Newton around the Market Place can be immediately identified, together with a scattering of old buildings along and adjacent to Penny Street, including of course the church that was rebuilt to what is substantially its present form in 1486.

Most of the oldest buildings are situated in the southern part of the old town because the extensive fire of 1729 destroyed the buildings in the main market square, whereas those to the south near Market Cross survived and it is here that older buildings are found, such as the White Hart. Buildings around the northern Market Place therefore date mostly from the mid eighteenth century.

Later development, mostly from the inter-war period can be seen extending north of the town centre along Bath Road and Mansston Road.

Further expansion northwards, together with infilling between the two roads has continued up to the present, with the most recent development apparent at the extreme northern edge of the town in the Honeymead Lane area and indeed on the former Cattle Market site just north of the town centre. Minor infilling can also be identified within the old town.



Map-based analysis

03.05

Urban grain



A clear feature of the urban grain drawing is the dense frontage of development that faces onto the Market Place and the principal adjoining streets.

Beyond this frontage, where traditionally there was little depth of development, as already noted, infilling has subsequently taken place. In some instances 'one-off' houses have been absorbed into the organic forms of the old town, but some of the small estate developments can be readily identified from their regular and often cul-de-sac arrangements.

In the newer, northern part of the town, standard repeated house sizes and regular layouts belie the inter- and post-war period of these developments.

Also notable of all but the most recent development is the relatively low density of development. This contrasts with the old town with its high density core and lower density hinterland.

To the north, there is far less variation, not only in density, but also in road and plot layout.

However in the extreme northern part of the town, and on the former Cattle Market site, density increases significantly for the most recent developments, and road layouts are again rather more organic with fewer cul-de-sacs.

Within the new town, there are several much larger buildings that stand out clearly from the others. These include the large sheds that are part of the Butt's Pond Industrial Estate, various schools, the new sports centre and the now derelict creamery. Amongst these larger masses of development is the Exchange building and associated Co-op development. This makes for a large building with a plan that compares more closely in scale with the industrial estate and education establishments rather than the old town or the other residential areas.

Map-based analysis 03.06 Trees and open spaces



Tree cover and open spaces

In the old town part of Sturminster Newton there is a marked variation in tree cover and other vegetation between the town centre and the town edges.

In the centre of town in the Market Place and at Market Cross there is no tree cover, and this results in a remarkably hard, although certainly not unattractive, urban environment. (Interestingly, the only vegetation in the Market Place is a series of neatly trimmed climbers on the front of the Swan Inn. Although relatively small, they make an important contribution to the townscape)

Moving out from the town centre however, there is a progressive increase in the amount of vegetation that is generally in inverse proportion to the density of development. Walking down Penny Street, for example, development is initially hard up against the pavement, with no space for vegetation, but further down the road a larger house with a garden that partly adjoins the street introduces vegetation which, whilst not particularly substantial, has a considerable impact on the character of the lane. (See following elevation of Church Street)

This effect is quite typical of the old town, and there are several routes radiating out from the centre to east and west where the amount of vegetation increases whilst the density of development decreases. This does much to create a progressive and very attractive change in character between town and country.

In external views towards the town, trees and other vegetation in and around the town create a pleasing effect of buildings contained within and below trees.

In the new parts of the town north of the former railway, there is again a marked contrast. Tree cover in this area is altogether more limited, and much that exists survives along former hedges between fields, now incorporated into the town. Despite the generally lower densities in much of the new part of town there is surprisingly little vegetation, especially in the inter- and post-war estates, thus creating many hard and unrelieved skylines of repeated roof forms.

Also in the northern area, there is no gradual increase in vegetation towards the town edges, with the exception of the south-west corner opposite the River Stour, and this exacerbates the hard and uncompromising boundary between town and country already noted.

However, more reassuringly, recent development in the Honeymead Lane area does exhibit some positive tree planning which demonstrates that it can be successfully integrated into higher density development.

The principal open spaces in the town, including allotments, are to be found in the northern area, although their quality and usefulness for informal recreation is limited. The recreation ground on the south-west corner of the old town is however far more appealing, offering extensive views towards the river and backed by many fine mature trees.

Traditionally there has been no public green space close to the town centre, but in recent years part of the former railway cutting between the town centre and the Exchange building has been backfilled to create a relatively small but welcome green space that fortuitously enjoys a fine view south-eastwards towards open country and Hambleton Hill.

Map-based analysis 03.07 Town analysis



The Town Analysis drawing draws out the main strategic features of Sturminster Newton.

The principal feature of the drawing is the essential distinction between the old town to the south and the recent town extension northwards, divided along the route of the former railway.

The comparative scale of the two parts of the town can be readily appreciated from this drawing with the old town now significantly smaller than its later additions.

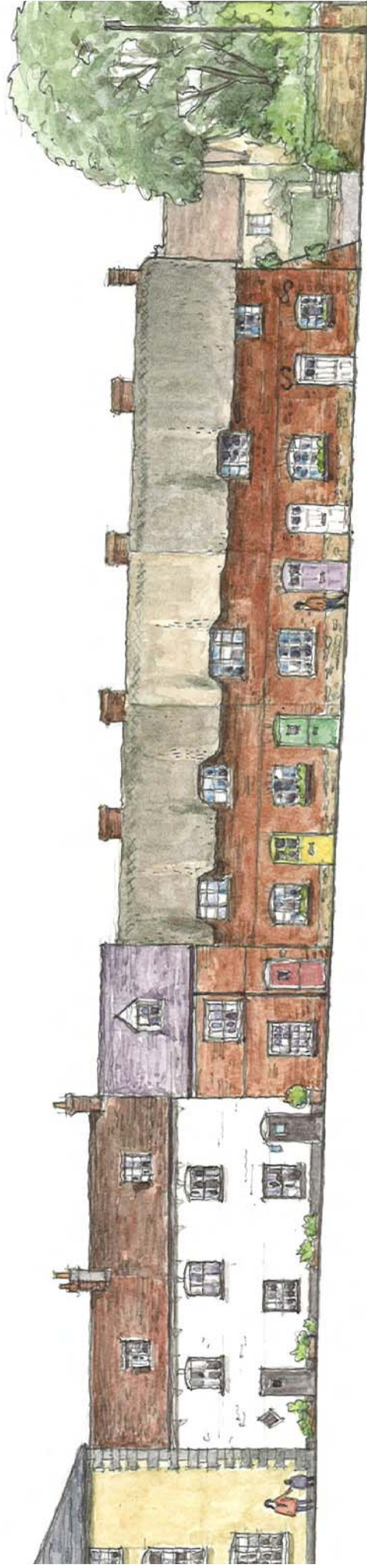
Between the two parts of the town is a marked zone of transition which, although containing some different Character Area types, nonetheless marks a dividing belt that runs east to west across the town. The zone of transition was created substantially by the railway and associated uses, such as the Cattle Market and Milk Factory, and since their closures the fabric of the town has never truly reconnected. The Exchange development (although at a scale atypical of the old town) and adjacent park do much to restore this division, but it is still apparent, and hopefully future development on and around the creamery site will continue this process.

The analysis drawing also identifies the high quality of transition between town and country around the old town. This feature no doubt exists because of the nearby river and floodplain that effectively compelled expansion to move northwards. However to the north there is an abrupt and unresolved edge between the new town and open countryside, as already discussed.

Associated with this issue is the weak point of entry into the town from the north along both main roads. This compares unfavourably with the delightful line of progressive transition between the town and country along Bridge Road to the south.

Town analysis

04 Elevation and section studies





Elevation and section studies

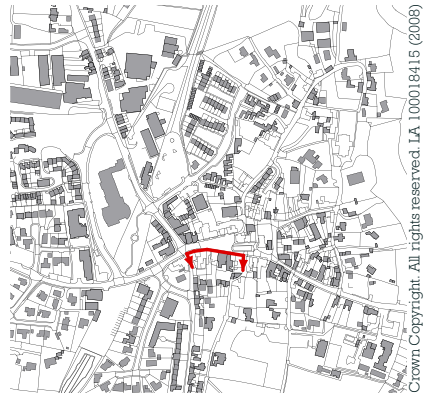
04.01 Market Place

This elevation of the west side of the Market Place (within the Historic Town Centre Character Area) shows the part that was redeveloped after the disastrous fire of 1729, with most buildings dating from the mid-18th century but with some later additions. As a facade, it makes an interesting composition incorporating both a degree of homogeneity and individuality. On the left, the outline of Market House is shown, that sits within and divides the market, and on the right of the elevation is The Row and the corner of Sturminster House.

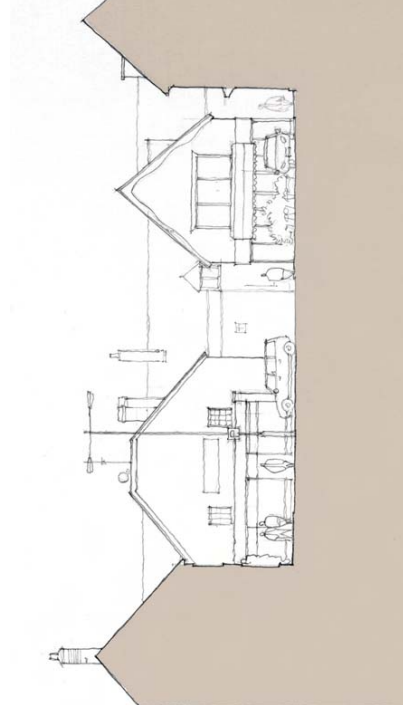
All the buildings are effectively 2 storey which gives a general consistency of scale and roof- and eave-lines with minor variations. (Most buildings have later attic conversions as evident from dormer windows) The most obvious variation is Lloyds Bank, a somewhat typical Edwardian town building in stone, red brick and render under a slate roof, that makes a carefully composed frontage that enlivens the more consistent forms and composition of the other buildings. Barclays Bank, the red/brown brick building (probably 1970s) on the right of the elevation, is altogether bland and uninteresting and it contributes nothing to the town's character.

Typical of Sturminster Newton old town, materials vary, ranging from red brick, local stone and painted render whilst roofs include a variety of slates or tiles, all slightly different, that create a subtle range of shades and textures.

The section through Market Place, that includes an elevation of Market House beyond and the Swan Inn in section on the left, illustrates well the small scale and the close containment of this important space within the town.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. LA 100018415 (2008)





Elevation and section studies 04.02 Church Street

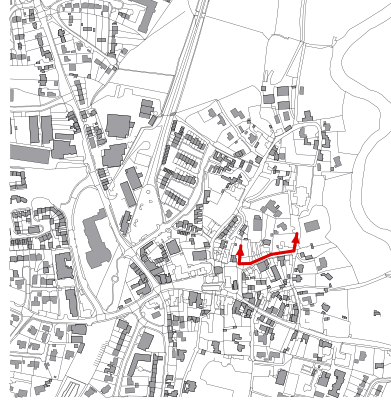
This elevation illustrates well what this study defines as the Edge of Town Character Area which despite its variety of house styles, ages, sizes and building materials makes a most pleasing composition.

On the left of the section, and closest to the town centre, is a large rendered Georgian building, unusually for Sturminster Newton 3 storeys in height, but with a typical fanlight above the door. Progressing down the street in a pleasing transition from town centre to leafy edge of town, is a charming row of late 18th century and early 19th century 2 storey thatched or slate-roofed cottages.

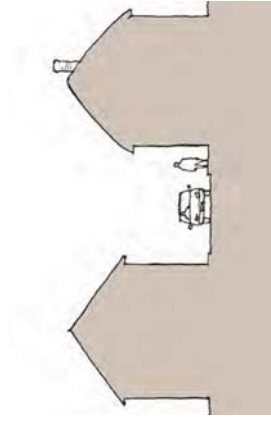
Beyond the cottages is a garden behind a brick and stone wall, and the trees within it make an important contribution to the street, relieving the tight-built frontages that face directly onto the pavement. The last building on the right of the elevation is Church Farmhouse. Its stone frontage is late 1700s, but its timber frame side wall facing onto the garden belies an early 16th century structure within. An adjoining stone shed on the corner is presumably a former farm outbuilding.

The section is interesting insofar that it reveals the extremely tight and small scale of Church Street which, although so confined, is one of the most delightful in the town.

Although not apparent from these drawings, a slight curve in the street prevents direct sight from one end to the other, and this encourages a sense of discovery for the visitor.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. LA 100018415 (2008)





Elevation and section studies

04.03

Rickett's Lane

One of the most pleasing features of the old town in Sturminster Newton is the easy and pleasant change of character and sense of transition between town and country. This is well demonstrated in this elevation along Rickett's Lane.

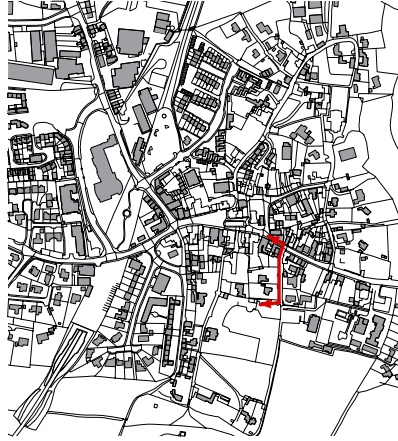
On the right of the elevation is Bridge Street, (within the Historic Town Centre Character Area) tightly enclosed by buildings hard up against the back of the pavement on either side. The dual pitch building and bow window on the building on the corner of Rickett's Lane makes a minor point of focus for the motorist approaching the town centre up Bridge Street.

On entering Rickett's Lane, (which forms part of the Southern Fringe Character Area) two semi-detached cottages with decorative banded tiles maintain the built frontage, but small front gardens introduce a degree of greenery that anticipates a leafier setting beyond.

After a small service/backyard area behind the buildings that face onto Bridge Street, the lane enters a leafy area with bungalows set back behind hedges. (Presumably 1960s infill of former orchards and market gardens) Mature trees dominate the skyline, relieving the unexciting roofline of the bungalows.

At the left end of the section, a fine Victorian building, presumably a former gatehouse for The Lindens, sits on the edge of extensive wooded grounds with adjacent open views to the south.

The section shows how little the buildings along the lane contribute to its sense of enclosure.



Crown. Copyright. All rights reserved. LA 100018415 (2008)



Elevation and section studies

04.04

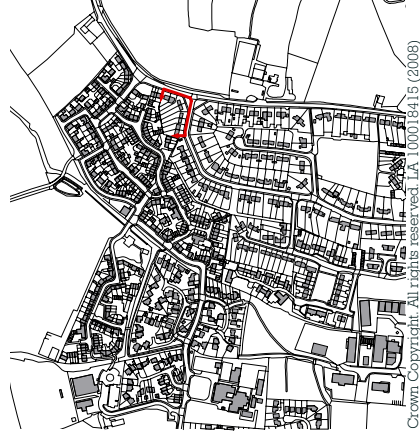
Manston Road/ Green Close

In marked contrast to the variations and subtleties of the old town, more recent development to the north is much more repetitious and homogeneous in character, as this elevation of Manston Road/Green Close (within the Rixon and Environs Character Area) demonstrates.

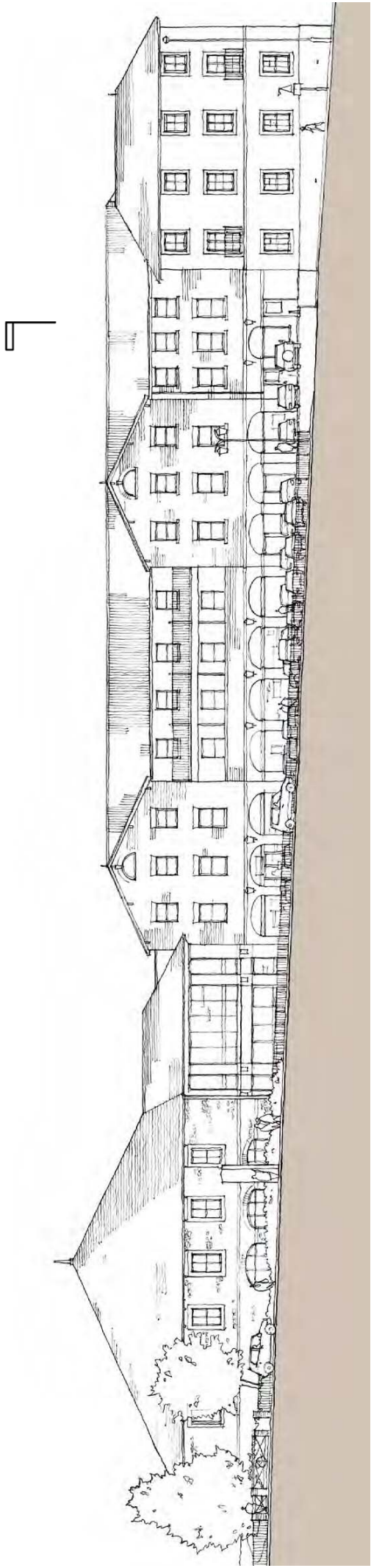
This standard type of red brick semi-detached 1 and 2 storey council house (probably constructed in the 1950s) is a type that is nationally ubiquitous, weak in character and wider townscape value. The lack of tree cover is also a common characteristic of this location and house type.

In this instance, a change of level between road and ground floor level reduces the presence of buildings onto the road on the downhill side, but it also limits the degree to which gardens have been surfaced to create off-street parking. This is otherwise restricted to where road and garden levels more or less correspond.

The section is revealing in that it shows the generous road and pavement widths, the considerable set-back of houses behind front gardens and the general lack of containment along roads. It makes a particularly telling point when compared against the sections of Market Place and Church Street. Although Market Place is the most important space within the town, the distance between frontages in Green Close is actually greater than in the Market Place.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. LA 100018415 (2008)



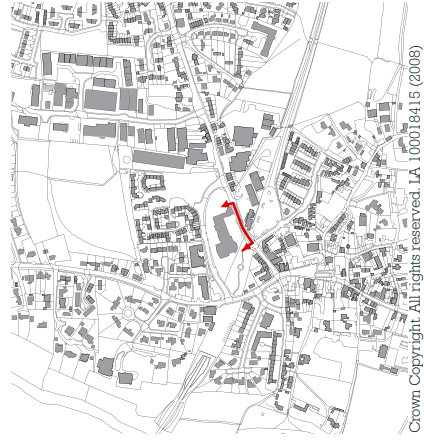
Elevation and section studies 04.05 Station Road (North)

This elevation of the new Exchange building and associated development, that includes a new Co-op supermarket, illustrates the marked change in the scale and mass of this new building from the rest of the established town. This elevation is located within the Central Regeneration Character Area.

Whilst 3 storey development does already exist in the adjacent town centre, the extent of development on this scale marks a considerable departure from that which has gone before, excepting perhaps the industrial estate. Although an attempt has clearly been made to reduce the apparent mass of the building through the detailing of the facades, its bulkiness remains inescapable. (NB. Broad low pitched roofs)

The associated Exchange building, although also having a large footprint, reads as being much less imposing through its lower setting against adjacent ground levels and more varied form, although this has not prevented it from becoming a local landmark.

Although adjacent development is still incomplete, the section shows that the building has a considerable set-back from the road with substantially unscreened car parking to front and rear. Although the issue of parking space is clearly a very real issue in Sturminster Newton, such large set-backs from the road edge are nonetheless an uncharacteristic feature of the town.





Elevation and section studies

04.06

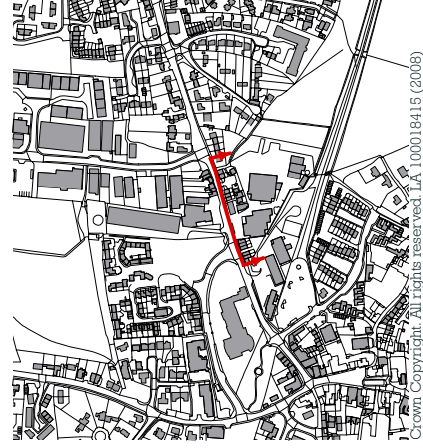
Station Road (South)

Station Road and the western part of Butts Pond have some very marked local changes in character. At the western end, Station Road has the large Exchange/Co-op development to the north with a variety of rather inconsequential retail buildings and unresolved space on the former station site opposite, as well as a rather substantial road junction. At the western end of Butts Pond, there is another inconsequential retail outlet, set back from the north side of the road opposite the entrance to the former Milk Factory and several recently-built cottages that relate in form and scale to a group of traditional buildings mostly on the north side of Butts Pond. (A typical or representative section does not apply in this instance)

The Milk Factory entrance and recent 2 storey cottages are illustrated in this elevation. It shows the general mass of part of the derelict creamery, mostly set back from the road and the new frontage established by several cottages, either semi-detached or in short terraces of three units.

The new cottages are built in red brick, white render with ochre banding or an imitation of the local stone, that is not altogether convincing, under tiled or slate roofs.

Looking along the road, the frontage is quite well defined, but the elevation of small cottages raises issues over the form and character of any new frontages of new development on the former Milk Factory site. Most of the buildings shown in the elevation, including the former Milk Factory site, lie within the Central Regeneration Character Area.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. LA 100018415 (2008)

05 Character Areas



Character Areas

05.01 Character Unit studies

An integral part of the Town Design Statement was the definition of character areas around the town. Initially a study was undertaken at quite a fine level, and this resulted in the identification of the numerous Character Units that are shown on the adjacent map and described below. This detailed analysis supports the North Dorset District Council character study that defines 8 more general Character Areas. These Character Areas have been used as the basis for the Synopsis of Character Areas study that follows Part 05.03 in this report, and as the basis for the application of Design Guidelines.

Turning to the study of Character Units itself, it is interesting to note the close relationship between the period of development and the character of each Unit in Sturminster Newton.

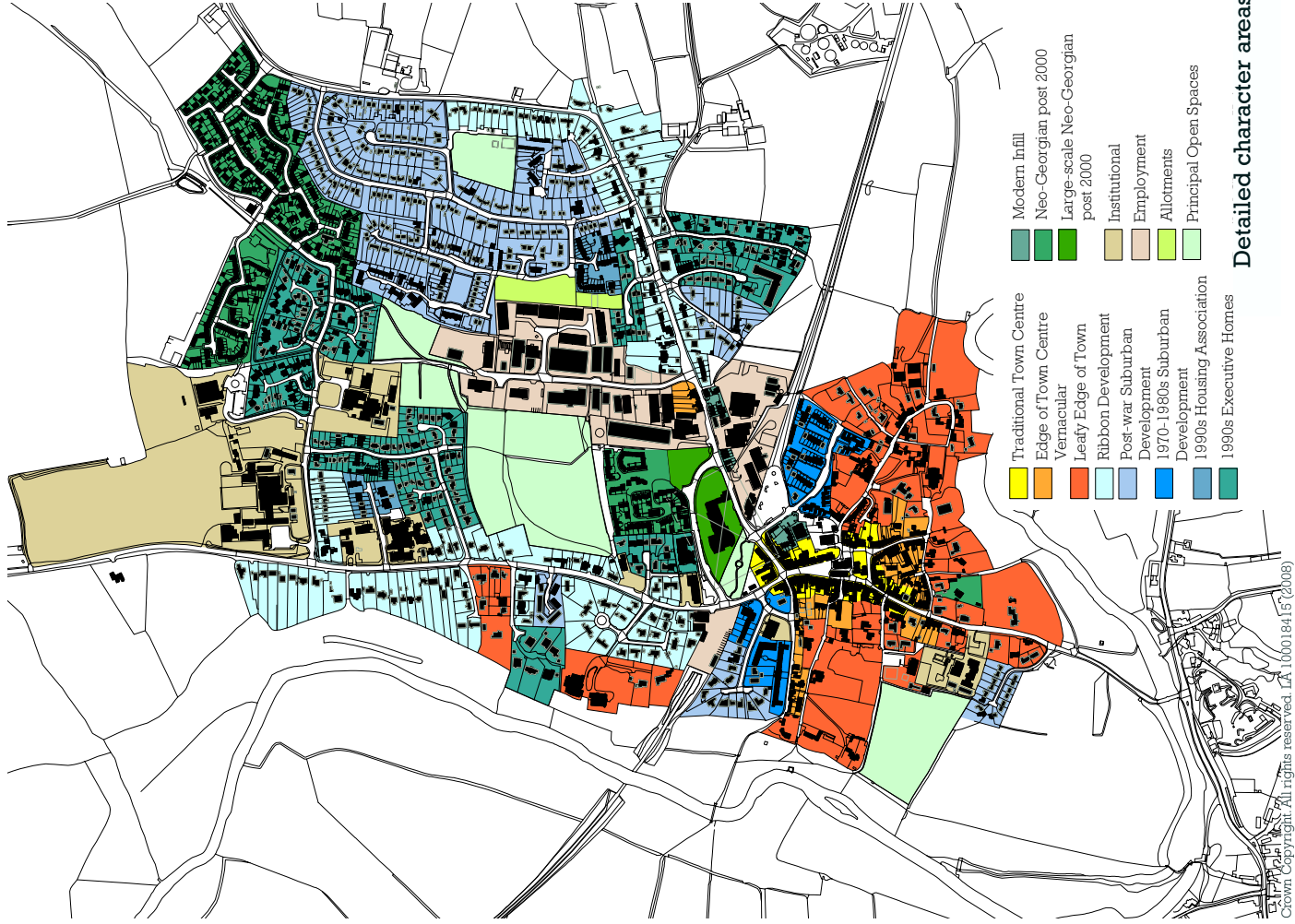
As already identified, Sturminster Newton is divided into two quite distinct parts, separated approximately by the route of the former railway. This division is apparent in the character of the town, and it divides generally into an old town and a new town. The old town is vernacular and organic in character, not elaborate or very remarkable, but rich in simple detail with a clear distinction between a hard, traditional market square and a leafy hinterland and the new town that, in general terms, is lacking in local references and materials, planned in form, weak in detail and with limited contrast from one area to another, particularly along urban/rural boundaries.

Traditional Town Centre

Turning to a finer scale of study, there is an attractive town centre, attractive though unremarkable, part old vernacular, part Georgian (post 1729 fire) with tight shoulder to shoulder 2-3 storey development facing onto the square or adjacent roads.

Edge of Town Centre Vernacular

Immediately beyond the town centre is a mostly vernacular margin, quite different from the town centre being a quieter, mostly residential area. Streets are narrow and spaces are tight and often quite hard in character, but they are invariably relieved by some vegetation including garden trees leaning over a wall, perhaps a hedge or narrow front garden with shrubs and colourful herbaceous planting.



Leafy Edge of Town
Beyond the edge of town centre vernacular area is a lower density zone that surrounds the town centre. Although many of the buildings are ancient, there are some large Victorian houses set in extensive mature and well-treed grounds as well as a number of later bungalows. Although building ages and styles may vary considerably, there is a broadly consistent character, leafy and quiet, more spacious than the previous area, yet full of pleasing detail and incident. There are also similar Character Units of a smaller scale to the north off the Bath Road.

It should be noted that a feature of both the Edge of Town Centre Vernacular and Leafy Edge of Town Character Units is a radiating network of quiet, often winding or dog-legged lanes that seem to invite exploration. As such, they are a most characteristic and delightful feature of the town. These lanes, that are essentially spaces shared by both vehicles and pedestrians, without pavements, have value insofar that they do much to prevent these edge of town areas from becoming suburban in character. In addition to the desirability of development in these areas being in keeping with its surroundings, it is also important that the lanes themselves should not be 'improved' in a manner that adversely affects their character. It should also be noted that the quality of detail generally adds value to the quality of these areas, and this aspect should also be considered carefully when changes are made.

Ribbon Development

Moving to the northern part of town, ribbons of mostly inter- and post-war development line much of the frontage of Bath and Butts Pond/Manstons Road. The houses face onto the road with direct access and set back behind a small front garden, but with longer plots behind at right angles to the road. Tree cover is limited.

Post-war Suburban Development

Typical mostly standard post-war red brick housing, 1 or 2 storeys, often semi-detached and laid out in a regular pattern along planned roads built to regular standards. This gives the roads a very consistent, if unexciting, character not least because they are very lacking in tree cover. However the relatively low density creates a sense of spaciousness between buildings. Plots are aligned at right angles to roads with reasonably generous but rather plain front gardens. Some have been paved to provide additional off-road parking. This type of development is located mostly in the Ribon area.

Character Areas

05.01

Character Unit studies

1970s-1980s Suburban Development

Planned estate development generally built on a cul-de-sac layout. Similar to Post-war Suburban Development but generally tighter and at a higher density with buildings developed in terraces. Roofs built to a relatively low pitch, without chimneys, but flue pipes prominent. Bricks often mid-brown with occasional white painted or dark stained tongue-and-groove panels. This type of development mainly occurs close to the town centre, south of the former railway line.

1990s Housing Association

This includes two small developments in the northern part of town. The buildings are generally traditional in overall form and materials, typical of their period, but the development in Rixon differs by reason of its rather vivid blue panels on the terrace of houses.

1990s Executive Homes

A detached house type of a generally higher specification and with slightly larger gardens than 1970s and 80s development, although still mostly on a cul-de-sac layout. Houses are built in a basically traditional manner to a loose Arts and Crafts style with some mock-Tudor references. Although these houses invariably conform to a defined pattern within estates, there is nonetheless greater variety in individual form and detailing than seen in earlier estates. However there are no local references in their style, materials or detailing and they could be situated anywhere in the British Isles.

Neo-Georgian post 2000

Post 2000 residential development in Sturminster Newton has a very different character from previous estates in the town essentially because of a marked design effort to create individuality and a variety of forms and spaces as well as the requirement to build to higher densities.

New development in the Honeymead Lane and on the former Cattle Market site has been built to a generally traditional neo-Georgian style. The Georgian style is of course a feature of Sturminster Newton and therefore its use in recent development does make a local reference.

Recent post 2000 development breaks substantially with the excessive repetition of standard house forms of earlier estate development and a wide variety of designs in 2-3 storeys has been built. Red brick has been substantially used, although some yellow brick is also found, and roofs are under red double Roman tiles.

Chimneys occur, although sometimes disproportionately small. Window sizes and proportions vary in the Georgian manner, but the use of uPvc with internal glazing bars in the Honeymead Lane area appears somewhat incongruous in a neo-Georgian elevation.

Development is at a relatively high density, particularly when seen in comparison to earlier estate development, with roads generally connected at both ends and with few cul-de-sacs. The roads themselves are often laid out in an informal and rather organic alignment which results in a progression of changing spaces and views. However standard contemporary road widths are used, with pavements, and therefore the tightness found in the old town is not emulated to the same extent.

Large-scale Neo-Georgian post 2000

This Character Unit refers exclusively to the Exchange building and associated 3 storey Co-op development with flats and offices.

This building is very similar in character to the previous Character Units being essentially neo-Georgian in manner and some detailing, but it differs notably in its mass and scale. Although it is clear that the architect has taken considerable pains to reduce the apparent mass of the building by changing styles, materials, roof lines etc. it is nonetheless a substantial building. Although the Exchange building was popularly approved, the large mass of the combined building was a repeated comment during the public consultation exercise, and it is clear that the scale of this development lends itself more towards that of the Butts Pond Industrial Estate and the large schools and sports centre than any traditional development within Sturminster Newton. Additionally the presence and scale of the building is enhanced by its wide set-back from the adjoining roads to both front and back which allows full sight of the whole facade in one view.

Modern infill

This category covers a few recent small infill developments that do not lend themselves readily to other categories. This includes, for example, the row of terraced cottages of generally traditional manner along the south side of Station Road as illustrated in the Station Road (South) Elevation and section studies, Part 04.06.

Institutional

This designation covers a variety of different types of institutional development, but substantially the two large schools in the north-western part of the town, including Sturminster Newton High School. The schools are of post-war construction with flat or low-pitch roofs over large-footprint buildings typical of their kind.

In terms of their effect on townscape character, the buildings mostly present poor frontage to adjacent roads since they are set back within their own grounds. However road boundaries are generally pleasant enough with wide mown verges, hedges and informal tree planting. Playing fields and car parks are also typical features.

Employment

The are two principal employment areas within the town of Sturminster Newton, namely the Butts Pond Industrial Estate and the former creamery and station yard sites.

The Butts Pond Industrial Estate is wholly typical of its kind, consisting of a variety of large utilitarian sheds and other buildings and a mass of associated activity and clutter. As such, it is devoid of any townscape quality although the public face of the estate that fronts onto Station Road is fortunately quite discrete. However, the principal pedestrian route between the northern part of the town and the town centre, apart from pavements along the sides of Bath Road and Manston Road runs down the length of the industrial estate. The location of an important and well-used pedestrian route through the heart of this untidy working environment is particularly inappropriate and potentially dangerous with large vehicles regularly turning and backing across it.

Opposite the industrial estate on the south side of Station Road is the former Milk Factory site, now derelict. The buildings consist of mostly utilitarian sheds with asbestos roofs, but the original brick buildings, currently incarcerated with a mass of later developments, are distinctive with their traditional louvred gables.

The former station yard site contains three large low buildings or sheds, as well as the popular town centre car park. They are of no architectural interest or value except for the Streeters carpets and beds building opposite the new Exchange building that is the last surviving structure associated with the railway. However it presents a weak frontage to Station Road. The whole area has an untidy and unresolved air about it, substantially because of the low quality of the buildings, their irregular alignment and the low quality of surrounding spaces.

Allotments

The allotments are contained within a strip of land situated between the back of the industrial estate and Filbridge Road, and are wholly typical of their kind with their usual rich if rather chaotic texture of different plants, sheds and the like.

Principal open spaces

There are five principal open spaces within the town.

To the south-west there is the principal recreation ground, Durrant Field, at the end of Ricketts Lane. Although there is little built frontage facing onto the space, it is notable because of its fine aspect that looks south towards the river and Sturminster Newton Mill and a backdrop of tall, mature trees to the north and west.

Closest to the town centre is the relatively recent Railway Gardens open space constructed on the filled-in railway cutting that bisected the town. Whilst the gardens are pleasant if rather uninspiring in their design, they have poor built frontage but most notably they do enjoy a fine view to the south-east towards open country and Hambleton Hill in the distance.

In the northern, central part of the town, there is a large open space of two fields still in agricultural use (horse grazing), but they are contained behind existing development and have little effect on the character of the town. This area is allocated for housing development in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan (Site C, north of the Livestock Market)

In the same area, north of the Butts Pond Industrial Estate, there are two fields recently laid out as a nature conservation area. The area represents a quiet and attractive area for informal recreation by local residents, although unfortunately all neighbouring properties back onto it and consequently it has rather poor overlooking.

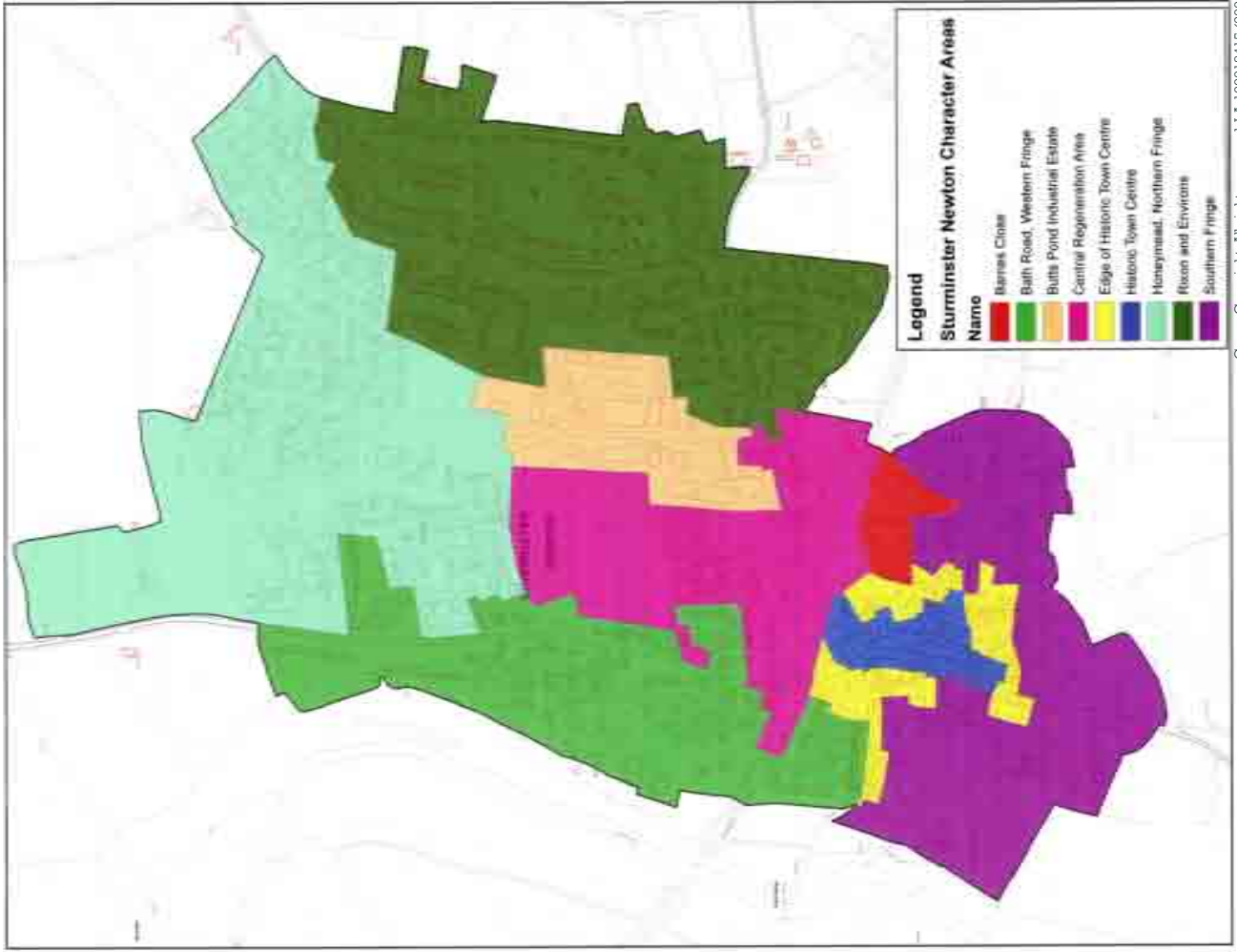
A fifth area of open space is located within residential development at Rixon. This is a rather low quality space having no overlooking built frontages, almost no tree planting or any other features except for a children's play area and it consequently fails to enjoy the essential qualities of a traditional village green.

Character Areas

05.02 Character Area study

The detailed study of Character Units in the previous section provided the essential building blocks that support a series of 8 more general Character Areas illustrated here.

The following area by area Character Area synopsis is more simple than the detailed analysis of Character Units in the previous section and is therefore less complicated to use in relation to the application of the Design Guidelines. Nonetheless it may be helpful to refer to the more detailed Character Unit study when considering development proposals for specific sites.



Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. LA 100018415 (2008)

Sturminster Newton Character Areas (North Dorset District Council)

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Southern entrance to town
Progressive anticipation of Market Place.
Gradual increase in building density.
2 storey, gable-ended buildings face road.

Northern entrance to town
Weakly defined northern entrance, but contained view gives a sense of anticipation.
Dense town centre buildings on the back of the pavement contrast sharply with the set back development just to the north.
2 and 2.5 storey gable-ended buildings on right hand side. Georgian 2 and 3 storey buildings on the left.



Market Place, the Swan Inn

Well-contained space despite 2 storey buildings.
Northern area buildings substantially Georgian in style. Attractive and interesting buildings, if unremarkable.
Recent public realm improvement works, but the main thoroughfare still dominates the space.
No trees, but visually important shrubs against the Swan Inn.

Market Cross, White Hart Inn
Southern part of area, characterised by vernacular buildings.
Strong frontage along back of pavement.
Generally consistent roof lines and eaves with minor variations.
Crude dormer window in roof at top right.
Several bow windows projecting into pavement.



Market Cross, looking towards Penny Street

Dense development against back of pavement.
Narrow winding streets invite exploration.
Sympathetic shop fronts.
Vernacular details such as stone lower courses on roofs.

Market Cross leading to Church Street
Minimal and simple street furniture avoids clutter.
Thatch roofs, but in southern part of area only.
In this instance car parking is integrated into the streetscene without being over intrusive.
Tree in quieter, residential corner anticipates leafy edge of town areas beyond.



Historic Town Centre

Historic high density development around central spaces

Layout

- 1 principal central space (Market Place).
 - 2 irregular secondary spaces (incl. Market Cross).
- Enticing entrances to side streets.
Entrance to town centre:
From south: Progressive, well integrated arrival.
From north: Weakly defined.

Fronts: Near continuous and well defined.
Buildings face directly onto street at back of pavement.
Backs: Irregular and varied with linear extensions, service yards and gardens.

Building character and form
Northern part, substantially Georgian or Neo-Georgian.
Southern part, strong vernacular influence.
All buildings face directly onto street.
Simple pitched roof form.
Generally 2-2.5 storeys with occasionally 3 storeys.
Dormers common, but often crude recent additions.

Materials
Walls: Predominantly render, generally painted white.
Red brick.
Local limestone.
Roofs: Slate.
Red-brown tiles with thatch in southern part only

Hard space
Recent hard landscape improvements raise quality of central space but principal road surface still predominates.
Generally free from clutter of street furniture, signage etc..
Lighting columns and lumieres of rather utilitarian design.

Landscape
Town centre spaces:
Principal space (Market Place) without trees.
Climbers on Swan Inn introduce some vegetation.
Tree cover and other vegetation otherwise very limited in town centre.
Small trees, shrubs and hedges in back gardens.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Church Street

Tight, edge-of-town-centre street full of historic character.
Buildings face onto street with secluded gardens behind.
Street scene enhanced by trees in private gardens despite limited space.

Old and new doorways, Church Street and Penny Street

Traditional windows in Sturminster Newton have a wide variety of forms (i.e. centre left), and although some careful infill developments have been undertaken, inappropriate window details (uPVC with single sheet glass and internal glazing bars) undermine the quality and sensitivity of some developments (far left and right).



Church Lane

Quiet back lane with an informal, organic quality.
Traditional red brick cottages under slate roofs mixed successfully with garages, back yards and gardens.
Some parking in road.
Lack of pavements makes the lane a shared surface, but the treatment is expressed as a road rather than a shared surface. (Tarmac and lining)

Old and new doorways, Church Street and Penny Street

Although an attempt has been made to follow a traditional design (right picture), it lacks the quality of detailing of the original (left picture), appearing rather light and skimpy in comparison. The canopy, door and furniture and the railings have an 'off-the-shelf' look about them.
Also stained dark timber is not an original feature.



Penny Street

Considerable care has been taken here to undertake a characterful new development that fits into the traditional appearance of the road.
Generous vehicular rear access, a lack of chimney pots and the character of planting between buildings and pavement suggest a more recent development.

Community Hall, Brinsley Close

In this instance, a weak building frontage, a deep set-back from the road and a prominent parking area undermine the otherwise relatively tight building pattern of the Edge of Historic Town Centre Character Area.

Edge of Historic Town Centre

An attractive and quiet edge of town centre area full of interesting detail and incident and of generally traditional appearance.

Layout

Mostly narrow, winding streets radiating from town centre.
Lower density than town centre, often with gaps between buildings.
Entrances from Market Place and Market Cross invite exploration.
Some larger modern buildings and associated parking, such as the telephone exchange and the hall in Brinsley Place can compromise the intimate character of the area.

Fronts: Facing street and generally tight to back of pavement, defining an intimate, enclosed street.
Short terraces characteristic, but with intervening entrances and gardens defined by walls or hedges.
Backs: Gardens or yards generally screened from the street.

Building character and form

Varied, but generally residential town vernacular and Victorian.
Simple building forms, but individually different.
Invariably 2 storeys.

Materials

Walls: Predominantly red brick and limestone.
Roofs: Mostly red-brown tiles but with some slate and thatch.

Hard space

Limited by narrow streets.
Tarmacadam predominates but kerbs often stone.
Minimal street furniture. Occasional street lighting, but columns and lumieres of rather utilitarian design.

Landscape

Generally hard spaces, but vegetation in private gardens makes an important contribution to the street scene.
Tubs, window boxes etc., add much to the intimate and personal quality of these streets.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Rickett's Lane, looking east
This and the picture to the right emphasise the transitional change of character from the high-density town centre towards open countryside.
The lower density of development allows the establishment of leafy gardens often with houses set well back from the road. Two bungalows are situated out of sight behind the hedge on the left.

Rickett's Lane, looking west
Although houses may not be visible, the road is well defined by walls and hedges.
Note the lack of pavement, that results in the road becoming effectively a shared surface.
Forward glimpses, in this case of the playing fields, entice the visitor to explore further.



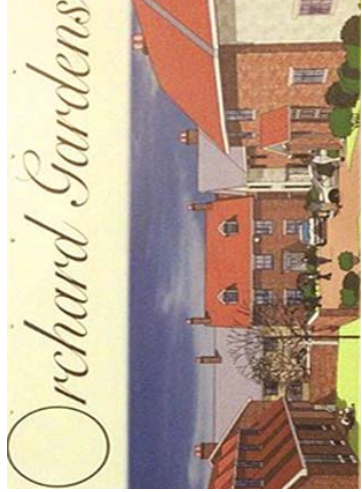
Cough's Close, looking west
A typical narrow lane radiating out from the town centre. Houses are often only partially visible beyond intervening vegetation.
Note the interesting combination of trees and hedges defining the edge of the road.

View south towards the river from Cough's Close
A sudden and unexpected view contrasts with the enclosure of the lane elsewhere adding to the delight of this walk.



Thomas Hardy's villa from footbridge over the river
A feature of the Southern Fringe Character Area is the very attractive manner in which it adjoins surrounding countryside. Buildings are generally seen partly visible beyond and within mature trees and other vegetation.

New development, Church Lane
An agent's board advertises new infill development. Inward-looking estate-mannered cul-de-sac development of this kind is not a type traditionally associated with Sturminster Newton old town.
The lack of mature trees in the illustration could appear to hint of the dangers that intensification could pose to the defining landscape structure of this area.



Southern Fringe

A leafy low-density residential area between the town centre and open countryside.

Layout

Generally rather irregular and dispersed except where some post-war development occurs (i.e. Durrant). Low density plots with houses often set in large well-planted gardens.

Fronts:

Frontages vary considerably from edge of pavement development to houses set well back within plots, orientated irrespective of roads and plot orientation. Nonetheless streets and lanes have some well-defined frontages, often substantially defined by walls, hedges and outbuildings.

Backs:

Secluded gardens behind or surrounding houses.

Building character and form

A wide variety of building ages, character and mass and form, ranging from medieval vernacular buildings to large Victorian villages and 20th Century bungalows. Building height ranges from 1 - 2.5 storeys. Pitched roofs and chimney stacks a common feature.

Materials

Walls: Red brick, limestone and painted plaster.

Roofs: Generally red-brown tiles, slate and some thatch.

Hard space

Narrow leafy lanes predominate, often without pavements.
Minimal street furniture and limited lighting.

Landscape

The mature, leafy landscape setting is the principal unifying feature of this Character Area.

Many boundaries are defined by well-established hedges.

Large gardens accommodate many large and mature trees that have a significance in wider views of the town.



Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Barnes Close internal courtyard
The two principal internal courtyards are well planned and maintained and do much to raise the quality of this development.



Barnes Close from adjacent to the town centre car park
The Barnes Close development presents a particularly unfortunate back elevation to the wider town. Apart from the single detached house built in reconstituted stone, all houses are built in a locally uncharacteristic brown brick.



Barnes Close from the end of the North Dorset Trailway
The plain rear elevations of the houses and the flat-roofed garages are unfortunately visible from this entrance to the town from the Trailway.

Barnes Close

An inward-looking 1970s - 80s estate development on the edge of the old town.

Layout
Cul-de-sac development with two principal courtyards including communal gardens.
Rear parking and garage yards.
Layout radically different from the intricate and organic layout of the adjacent old town.
Rear aspect elevations do not contribute positively to the wider townscape.

Fronts: Standard terraced house type fronting onto attractive and well planted courtyards.

Backs: Small rear gardens and plain utilitarian access and parking areas.

Building character and form
Principal blocks to a plain standard design, slightly staggered and stepped down the slope.
1 and 2 storey terraced blocks with low-pitched roofs, without chimneys.
Blank end walls.
Rear garages in standard flat-roofed blocks.

Materials
Walls: Mottled mid-brown bricks. Attractive, but not locally characteristic.
Roofs: Brown-grey concrete double-Roman tiles.

Hard space
Barnes Close is designed and laid out and built to contemporary standards/materials. Rear garage courtyards strictly utilitarian.

Landscaping
Green, well-planted courtyards significantly mitigate this otherwise rather characterless development.

Character Areas

05.03 Synopsis of Character Areas



Entrance to Sturminster Newton along Bath Road
Buildings in the northern part of this Character Area are generally well set back from the road behind garden vegetation.
However, the substantial stone building on the left and museum beyond make something of a local landmark.

Exit from the town along Bath Road
Sturminster Newton High School beyond the turning at centre right has very little presence on the road despite its size and significance.
However, Yewstock plantation beyond makes a prominent landmark that visually defines the edge of the town.



Edwardian houses on Bath Road

Towards the southern end of Bath Road development becomes more prominent as in the case of these substantial Edwardian houses.
The area is situated on relatively high ground, and there are consequently some occasional glimpses towards the chalk scarp in the distance, as seen on the right of this view.

Leafy cul-de-sac development on White Lane Close
Some large plots give rise to an attractive leafy setting. Vegetation predominates, and the large trees are important in wider views. Hedges are also an important feature.
Note also the lack of a pavement that creates a quieter, more intimate character.



Infill at Hanover Close

Relatively high density infilling in the grounds of an Edwardian house (centre). The estate character, layout and architectural manner look rather insensitive and out of place in this location.

Recent infilling in Buffets Road
In this development of large and rather exclusive detached houses, the properties face westwards towards the view.
Note the apparent lack of substantial tree planting within the development. Such developments could potentially threaten sensitive views towards the town from the west.



Bath Road, Western Fringe

An extended leafy residential suburb with some extensive views to the west.

Layout

Originally ribbon development along Bath Road with additional cul-de-sac development to the west. Incremental pattern of development with progressive infilling of fields and large gardens.

Fronts: Houses adjacent to Bath Road face the road, often with deep set-backs, particularly towards the north. Cul-de-sac development also faces the road, but plots are smaller, as are set-backs.

Some houses adjacent to the western boundary face westwards overlooking open country (See panorama in section 02.02, Landscape setting).

Backs: Secluded back gardens.

Building character and form

Some older traditional houses but mostly Edwardian and inter-war along Bath Road. Cul-de-sac development generally more recent.
Building character substantially individual, often Arts and Crafts influences. Buildings generally traditional in manner.

Materials

Walls: Various including painted render, local stone exposed timber frame, but generally red brick.
Roofs: Mostly red-brown tiles.

Hard space

Bath Road has a pavement on one side with street lighting and can appear cluttered especially with telegraph poles. Cul-de-sacs often have no pavements. Scale of more recent roads can appear rather excessive.

Landscape

The mature leafy setting is an important and cohesive character element except in the extreme southern area. Many trees are prominent on the skyline within and beyond the town.
Higher density infill development could threaten the tree cover.



Character Areas

05.03 Synopsis of Character Areas



Green Close
A typical view of former council estate development on Rixon Hill.

Note how houses set down the slope below the road present a weak frontage to the road, especially bungalows. The repetitious skyline is often unrelieved by tree cover, and the wirescape tends to dominate.

Green Close looking south
Although trees are limited, hedges are a strong feature of this area. Note the unsympathetic treatment of the garden boundary on the left that intrudes on the overall character of the road. Since drives are limited, informal parking along roads is a feature of the area.



Looking west down Rixon Hill

This forward view down the road towards Butts Pond provides a clear sense of arrival in Sturminster Newton unlike previously along Manston Road to the north. Trees form an important part of this view on the skyline west of Bath Road, as does the tree in the foreground that does much to relieve the skyline and frame the view.

Looking north along Manston Road
The north-east edge of the town is generally rather crudely defined. Here Manston Road defines an abrupt demarcation between town and country. Situated on a local ridge, houses on the left intrude on local views to the east.



Dormer Windows in Green Close

It is particularly important to ensure that new dormer windows are in scale and proportion with the host property, unlike these in Green Close. They should generally be smaller in scale than the windows on the lower floors of the host building.

Rixon from Rabin Hill
This view shows how the topography of the town provides views towards Rixon and the chalk scarp beyond. The composition of development, including building form, scale and materials, as well as vegetation, are all important aspects of this and other views. Note that the large dormer windows illustrated opposite can be clearly identified in the centre of the photograph.



Rixon and Environs

Substantially ubiquitous post-war estate development.

Layout

Originally relatively low density ribbon development up Rixon Hill with a later council estate generally laid out along contours. Also some more compact recent estate development in the south of the area. The area includes several cul-de-sac layouts.

Fronts: Houses face roads beyond front gardens. No rear access.

Backs: Relatively long gardens behind, backing onto other gardens, but often not very secluded.

Building character and form

On Rixon Hill building character and form is quite varied, but elsewhere simple standard repeated house types typical of estate development. Generally 1 or 2 storey. Pitched roofs, often with blank end gables. Most houses have chimneys. Originally without dormers, but increasingly common with loft conversions.

Materials

Walls: Invariably red brick, but also painted render. Some old buildings on Rixon Hill built of limestone.

Roofs: Invariably red-brown tile.

Hard space

Standard, relatively wide tarmacadam roads with concrete kerbs and pavements. Few drives, so much parking along roads. Utilitarian street lighting.

Landscape

Vegetation generally very limited except for garden hedges. Relatively few trees, especially large mature specimens. Where these do occur, they are notable and do much to improve the local environment. Low quality public space at Alder Road.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Rabin Hill

Estate development dating from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although there is some articulation of building forms, garages and parked cars predominate, detailing is weak, and rooflines are monotonous.

There is consequently little sense of place or local distinctiveness, not least to Sturminster Newton, and there is little mitigating tree planting to relieve the effect.

Thomas Hardy Close from Honeymead Lane

A typical view of mostly late 20th Century development in the Honeymead Lane area. Note the houses backing onto the road and the generally gauche effect of the two new cottages, despite the introduction of some detailing.

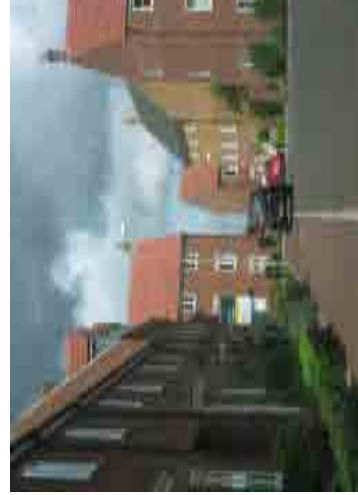


Honeymead Lane/Mansion Road turning

Recent higher density development shows some concerted efforts to create a positive streetscene through the articulation of building heights, facades etc..

Northfields

Recently completed housing at Northfields. Whilst an attempt has been made to create a place with character and variety, a range of features has been poorly handled in this instance. The choice of bricks is particularly perverse, whilst the large yellow block in the centre of the view is unfortunate in its bland and crude treatment including the strange relationship between ground floor windows, the front door and external levels. Note also the parking issues.



Honeymead Lane

The relatively high densities of recent development around Honeymead Lane are now a feature of the area. Whilst there is variation in building orientation and materials, the rather crude forms of some of the buildings, repeated in a variety of different orientations can create a somewhat unconvincing effect. Some appropriately scaled tree planting could do much to mitigate the effect.

Nature conservation area north of the Butts Pond Industrial Estate

A recently created nature conservation and informal recreation area provides a valuable new amenity for the northern part of the town, although it does not relate very well to surrounding development.



Honeymead, Northern Fringe

An area of large higher density post 1980s residential estates on the northern extremities of the town.

Layout

More irregular layout than other post-war development. Circuitous through routes and cul-de-sac layouts.

Fronts: Earlier development of mostly detached houses facing or slightly oblique to the road.

Later development denser with irregular terraces of varied buildings.

Backs: Earlier development with secluded rear gardens. Later development has mostly small walled gardens contained within perimeter blocks.

Building character and form

Earlier development more varied than previous estate types but general forms, massing, materials and details regularly repeated. 1-2 storey development. Architectural style has general Arts and Crafts features but of a kind ubiquitous throughout the UK.

Later development has larger and more compact buildings of generally greater mass. Architectural style generally Neo-Georgian in style with considerable variation in scale, orientation, height (2-3 storeys), and materials.

Materials

Walls: Mostly red brick.

Later development has a greater variety of materials, including different colours of brick.

Roofs: Red and brown tile. Slate.

Hard space

Wide standard design roads, often at odds with the traditional and dense character of the built development. Most roads and pavements tarmacadam, but some variation, especially in cul-de-sacs.

Landscape

Often narrow shrub and flower beds between back of pavement and building face. The area appears to be generally weak in tree planting, especially forest-scale trees. Very weak edges to open countryside.



Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Entrance to the Butts Pond Industrial Estate
The entrance to the estate of the main road is relatively discrete, and clutter within the site is screened from view.



The spine road from near the site entrance, looking north
A typical view of the estate, with parked vehicles a prominent part of the scene.



The spine road from the entrance to the nature conservation area looking south
The footpaths on either side of the road are part of a principal pedestrian route in the town. Parked and moving vehicles pose a hindrance and threat to pedestrians.



Entrance to the nature conservation area from the industrial estate
For the pedestrian there is a marked change of character at this point.



Looking towards the industrial estate from the allotments adjacent to Filbridge Rise
This view demonstrates how the low position of the industrial estate does much to screen it from external views. Yewstock Plantation beyond the north-west edge of the town is visible in the background.

Butts Pond Industrial Estate

A ubiquitous but contained industrial estate

Layout

The Butts Pond Industrial Estate is situated in the bottom of a shallow valley between Market Hill and Rixon Hill. The estate is laid out along a single spine road with the various premises facing onto it beyond a forecourt space. A principal pedestrian route between the northern part of the town and the town centre runs the length of the site.

Forms: The industrial estate has a range of utilitarian buildings that face onto the main access road behind a mass of foreground clutter including parked vehicles.

Building character and form

A range of utilitarian sheds with low pitched roofs.

Materials

Walls: Painted profiled steel and some brick.
Roofs: Profiled steel.

Hard space

Large areas of hardstanding surround the buildings.

Landscape

The entrance to the estate off Butts Pond/Rixon Hill is relatively discrete being screened by trees and shrubs. There is minimal landscape treatment within the estate but there is some partial screening around its edges.

Character Areas

05.03 Synopsis of Character Areas



Above: Former station yard
The car park and various retail activities on the former railway site with the Milk Factory beyond. A development brief has been prepared for the redevelopment of this whole area.

Old Market Hill

Recent mixed use development on the former Cattle Market site including the Exchange Building and associated development. Development of this mass and scale has not previously been characteristic of Sturminster Newton.

The Gavel
New high density and carefully considered residential development in the area of the former Cattle Market site.



Fields on Market Hill

These fields, which are allocated for housing development, are surprisingly screened from public viewpoints, but they are seen here from Filbridge Rise on Rixon Hill above the roofs of buildings in the Butts Pond Industrial Estate.

Railway Gardens

This small park is a relatively recent addition to the town, and although it has poor building frontage, it has a fine view towards Hambledon Hill to the east. It will be important that any future development (or tree planting) does not interrupt the view. The Exchange building is seen on the left.

Central Regeneration Area

An area of diverse uses, but all either recently developed or potentially available for development or redevelopment.

This area covers a very diverse range of land uses and individual types and characters of site that cannot readily be classified.

Sites include the following uses:
Community, residential, retail and office development on the former Cattle Market site.
The derelict former Milk Factory.
Flats.
A builder's yard.
Railway Gardens park.
Undeveloped fields.

This Character Area lies between the old town to the south and the more recent major extension to the north. There is an opportunity with future development to restore the division between these two parts of the town: a process which has already begun in recent schemes. Future regeneration schemes should take their references from those aspects that give the old town its character, whilst also respecting and enhancing neighbouring Character Areas.

It might be noted that all the potential redevelopment sites have weak public frontages, and that there is therefore a real opportunity to significantly enhance this part of the town through the redevelopment process.



06

Design Guidelines



Design Guidelines

06.01

Discussion of issues

Having studied the principal characteristics of Sturminster Newton that make it unique, as well as some of the weaknesses and other issues, this section of the Statement provides the main outcome of the study, namely a series of Design Guidelines.

It is important to note that these guidelines have been developed, not only from the authors' own views, but that they have been tested against the opinion of local people through on-going public consultation, as well of course with the involvement of North Dorset District Council and SturQuest. Although few opinions on local character were raised at the main public consultation event in July 2007, there was a clear concurrence with the assessment presented at the event.

It will be remembered that the purpose of the Design Guidelines is to safeguard local character and to encourage sensitive, high quality design where new development occurs through a process of development guidance and control. As such, its purpose is to manage change and indeed to encourage regeneration, and not to prevent it.

It should be noted that the Design Guidelines are all linked to appropriate existing planning policies and guidance, both national and local.

What makes Sturminster Newton distinctive?

This Town Design Statement finds that Sturminster Newton has a number of fine characteristics that make it distinctive from other towns elsewhere, whilst also exhibiting a number of features that make it representative of Dorset and the Blackmore Vale.

The study has found that the town does not contain features that make it wholly unique to the degree to which say, Bath, Salisbury or Lyme Regis are, although, as a community, it does have a distinct sense of energy. It does not contain any particularly unique relationship to its surrounding landscape, it does not contain any outstanding buildings or architectural themes, nor is it planned in any comprehensive and historically outstanding way in the manner of Blandford Forum, for example.

This view is largely supported by the findings of the public consultation at which when asked what makes the town unique, the majority answered that it is the people and the sense of community, although closely followed by the historic environment in general without any particular aspect predominating.

However there are several features that make the old part of Sturminster Newton a delightful and attractive part of the old town. Although not nationally or regionally remarkable, these features nonetheless contribute to making a fine historic environment, rightly to be conserved and enhanced.

Some key features of the town are:

- Its close relationship to the surrounding landscape, both topographically and historically with special reference to the River Stour and its ancient bridge and mill.
- Its special relationship between town and country particularly the progressive transition between the town centre and open countryside.
- The importance of the public realm within the town centre.
- The network of narrow shared-surface lanes radiating out from the town centre.
- The network of public footpaths linking town and country.
- The rich matrix of historic buildings, walls and vegetation that together make up the old town.
- The historic layout and development pattern of the old town.

It is important to note that many of these qualities relate to what might be termed the 'backland' areas behind the main frontage onto the Market Place, Bridge Street etc. In the past, it is often these areas that have been overlooked and, whilst the main frontages have been well protected, the 'backland' areas have been disrupted by inappropriate development including relief roads, car parks, filling stations, large shed development etc. Here in the old town of Sturminster Newton the 'backland' areas have survived substantially intact and they remain a delightful environment, particularly in view of their location between the town centre and open countryside.

It should be noted that none of the features identified as special relate to the more recent northern part of the town which is substantially lacking in any features that make it characteristic or distinctive, let alone unique.

Design Guidelines

06.01

Discussion of issues

A feature of the Town Design Statement is its emphasis on the protection of quality environments demonstrating "how local character and distinctiveness can be protected and enhanced in new development." (NDDC Adopting Village and Town Design Statements as Supplementary Planning Documents - Planning Guidance Note, March 2007)

This issue is fairly straightforward in locations in and adjacent to historic environments, but it begs the question about what will be appropriate in both the new town with its lack of local distinctiveness and uniqueness and any further expansion into the surrounding countryside that will be even further removed from any historic context.

There are several options on this issue, as follows:

1. Adopt historic references irrespective of location around the town.
2. Adopt references from the immediate context, even if the locality is lacking in urban quality (i.e. 1930s Council estate)
3. Respect and adopt historic references in historic and quality contexts, but in other areas where quality and local distinctiveness are poor, or in greenfield locations encourage the creation of places with new and distinctive urban character.

Whilst the respect of existing and adjacent urban environments is unquestionably the way forward in and adjacent to historic areas, the creation of exciting new character areas, free from many of the constraints of more historic environments, could provide an exciting way forward for any greenfield and/or edge of town developments.

This study has found that there is a certain incongruity about some of the recent higher density neo-Georgian development located on the northern extremity of the town, especially when modern methods and materials try to emulate earlier features.

The authors are also of the view that the development of more contemporary urban forms and styles, perhaps expressive of modern trends such as sustainable 'eco' development, within certain constraints, could result in some new and dynamic neighbourhoods not dependent on potentially pastiche references.

Taking an historic perspective on this issue, it might be recalled that some of the main building styles that are now regarded as part of our cultural heritage were once themselves novel and even contentious. The Georgian style, now so much part of Sturminster Newton might be cited as an example.

The authors of this study consider that, within certain clearly defined constraints or guidelines, the opportunity to introduce some rather more contemporary urban development could be an exciting way forward, possibly to be preferred to the adoption of retrospective styles that have no immediate historic context.

An important element in this debate is the point that the Government is firmly committed to the creation of quality environments, as confirmed in PPS3 for example.

Whatever form new development does take, the question arises over how new, high quality buildings and urban environments can be assured. An important tool in this regard is the **development brief** which can be a natural site-specific extension of the Town Design Statement Design Guidelines. Development briefs and design codes are a well established principle with a long and illustrious history. Much of Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian town building was governed by similar codes, as well as more recent developments such as Letchworth Garden City.

Development briefs are particularly relevant insofar that they can apply to specific areas and sites, and it is recommended as a fundamental part of this Statement that such guidelines are adopted for any significant or particularly sensitive new development sites in and around Sturminster Newton. The former creamery site and adjacent land are directly relevant in this regard.

It was found that the workshops and response forms threw up relatively few comments on the subject of the Town Design Statement, most being directed towards the Development and Design Brief for the creamery site.

The general consensus from this is that most of the features relevant to the Town Design Statement were covered in the Matrix presentation and that there was little additional relevant information to add, although some interesting background information was noted.

Design Guidelines

The final part of the study provides specific design guidance that identifies key issues relevant to the Town Design Statement, and they are intended as a useful tool in directing future development in the town. The guidelines are covered through a clear and easily referenced methodology with accompanying references to the relevant Planning Policy Statements and Local Plan policies which they are supplemental to.

Design Guidelines 06.02 Introduction to Design Guidelines

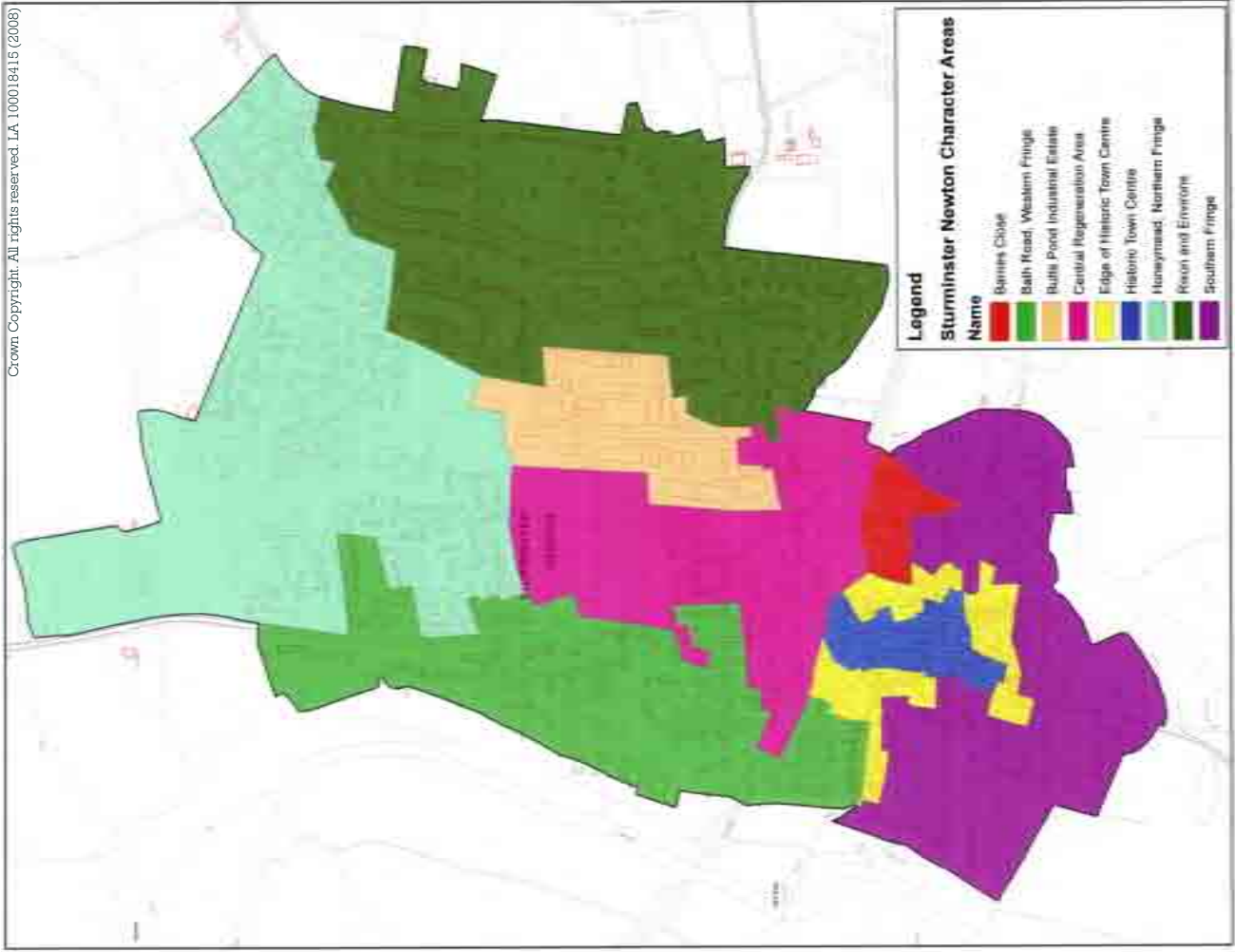
This part of the Town Design Statement defines a series of guidelines that indicate a range of constraints and considerations that will be applicable to new development in different parts of Sturminster Newton.

The Statement has already identified a range of existing features that are considered to be of importance in defining the character of the town, and these are the basis for the Design Guidelines, the general aim being to ensure that any new development should retain, incorporate and be sensitive to features that give the town character and local distinctiveness.

The guidelines listed here are not for the most part intended as absolute constraints that must be rigorously followed in each and every instance. To do this could strangle the very design responsiveness and flair that the Government seeks to foster through its PPS1 and PPS3 guidance. Rather, the proposals are identified as guidelines, but ones that should require very clear reasons and justification if they are not to be followed.

It is accepted that such an approach will demand a high level of site assessment and design input on the side of the would-be developer, and also a high level of design assessment on behalf of the Local Planning Authority in advising on and determining planning applications. Each site and application must be assessed on its own merits as well as its compliance with relevant planning policies, the Design Guidelines and any subsequent Development Briefs.

The Design Guidelines for Sturminster Newton are related to the different Character Areas defined in the NDCC Character Area map, repeated opposite. This allows a more sensitive and specific application of the guidelines appropriate to the particular circumstances and features of each part of the town.



Sturminster Newton Character Areas

Design Guidelines

06.03

The Design Guidelines

The Development Guidelines listed here identify a range of features of the built environment that are important and which any new development will need to acknowledge. These include scale, height, mass, building line etc.

It should be noted that the essential character of the historic old town is one of individual developments of single residences, with the exception of terraced houses, and comprehensive estate developments are not historically part of its character and should be avoided. Although there may well be pressure to redevelop some spacious existing sites at increased density, new infill developments should be handled with particular care in order to avoid the appearance of a comprehensive development or should be avoided altogether.

Development-related guidelines

D1 SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT
All new development should be substantially of the same or lesser scale, height and mass of adjacent buildings, unless proposed as a key feature or landmark building.
(Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), 1.23, 1.24, 2.1.1, SN1, SN3)

Applies: All areas.

Comment:
Existing buildings across the town are broadly of the same scale and height. With the exception of some town centre buildings that reach 3 storeys and some recent development near the northern fringes of the town, almost all development is of 2 storeys. Although a proportion of accommodation may be provided in roof space, subject to the effect of dormer windows and height of ridge line, and the like, development should not exceed 3 storeys. Exceptions may occur, subject to other considerations, where a key feature is required, such as at the northern entrance to the Market Place, although strictly dependent on merit.

D2 BUILDING LINES
In locations where a clear historic building line has been established, new development should generally follow the existing line of development.
(Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), 1.23, SN1, SN3)

Applies: All areas.

Comment:
Building lines vary considerably around Sturminster Newton, but any new development should normally seek to respect and reinforce established building lines whether they be along the edge of pavement or well set back.

D4 DEVELOPMENT DENSITY
Whilst the density of residential development should normally fall within the range defined by Government guidance (30-50 dph), it should also respect its setting and context. Lower densities may be appropriate in certain areas as given below.
(Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), (iv), 1.23, 1.24, 2.10, 2.1.1, SN1, SN3. Also see PPS3)

Areas where densities below 30 dwellings per ha may be acceptable:

- Edge of Historic Town Centre
- Southern Fringe
- Barnes Close
- Bath Road, Western Fringe

Areas where densities should usually be in the range of 30-50 dph:

- Historic Town Centre
- Rixon and Ervions
- Honeymead, Northern Fringe
- Central Regeneration Area

D3 BUILDING FRONTAGE
Any new development should acknowledge road frontage in a manner appropriate to the locality.
(Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii) (iv), 1.23, 1.24, SN1, SN3)

Applies: All areas.

Comment:
Normally throughout Sturminster Newton traditional development faces directly onto roads, and this pattern should normally be followed. However in some parts of the old town some buildings in 'backland' areas do not directly face the road and therefore this feature may be permissible if sensitively handled. However inward facing cul-de-sac developments are not appropriate and should not be permitted.

Comment:
Openness is an important quality of parts of the old town outside the high density historic town centre, and it is important that new development should not undermine this characteristic. Vegetation is an important element of the old town and inadequate in newer parts of the town, so it is important that no new development should impinge on existing trees in any way that might imperil their health and future growth.

Design Guidelines

06.03

The Design Guidelines

D5 RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER
Any new residential development in the Character Areas listed below should be domestic in appearance and character, rather than having the appearance of apartment blocks or flats.
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), (iv), 1.23, 1.24, 2.11, SN1, SN3)

Applies:
 Historic Town Centre
 Edge of Historic Town Centre
 Southern Fringe
 Barnes Close
 Bath Road, Western Fringe

Comment:
 The development of flats or apartments are not a feature of the old town and should therefore be avoided in these areas. It is important that any new development in the old town should reflect the form and character of domestic buildings, avoiding the more typical features of flats such as large mass, bulky proportions and repetition in the treatment of facades. However where the conversion of former industrial buildings to flats is acceptable in other respects, this may be an appropriate design solution.

D6 VIEWS OF COUNTRYSIDE
Development should not adversely affect important views of the countryside including the principal and rural views shown on the Town analysis map in Part 03.07.
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (iii), (v), SN1, SN3)

Applies:
 Edge of Historic Town Centre
 Southern Fringe
 Bath Road, Western Fringe
 Central Regeneration Area

Comment:
 General guidance is already provided by Local Plan Policy 1.8(v), but particular attention is drawn here to important views from Railway Gardens south-east towards open countryside. This issue is likely to affect any future development in this locality. Other important views are shown on the Town analysis map in Part 03.07.

D7 ARCHITECTURAL TREATMENT
New development should be of high quality, raising the standard of architectural treatment, and respecting the qualities of any nearby buildings and notable trees and other landscape features.
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), (iv), 1.23, 1.24, 1.26, 1.27, 2.11, 3.20, SN1, SN3)

Applies: All areas

Comment:
 This guidance closely follows government guidance that requires high standards of building design and for new development to respect features that provide local distinctiveness. Attention to architectural detail is considered to be an important ingredient of high quality design, and development proposals would normally be expected to provide information on such details. The Synopsis of Character Areas in Part 05.02 highlights those features that give the different parts of the town their character and local distinctiveness.

D8 FRONT AREAS/ENTRANCES
Any new development or redevelopment should not result in frontages being dominated by hard surfacing and parked cars. Site entrances should be designed to be as discrete as possible. (The conversion of front gardens in the old town should be avoided if possible)
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), (iii), (iv), (vi), 2.10, 2.11, 5.6, 5.7, SN1, SN3)

Applies: All areas

Comment:
 Parking associated with new development can be highly intrusive, resulting in a general lowering of townscape quality. Intrusive parking should therefore be avoided.

D9 SHOPFRONTS
Shopfronts are an important part of the historic town centre. New and replacement shop fronts should contribute to the character of the area or buildings in terms of their scale and style and should not lead to the loss of existing shop fronts (or parts of shop fronts) of historic or architectural value. Alterations to traditional shop fronts should incorporate traditional elements and materials.
 (Supplements Policies 3.15, 3.16, 3.17)

Applies:
 Historic Town Centre
 Edge of Historic Town Centre

Comment:
 The District Council has produced a 'Guide to Shopfront Design' which provides more detailed advice on shop fronts. This advice should be followed in any proposals for new or replacement shopfronts in the town.

Design Guidelines

06.03

The Design Guidelines

Landscape-related guidelines

L1 DEVELOPMENT ADJOINING COUNTRYSIDE
Any new development adjoining or close to rural edges of the town should be planned and designed to create a sensitive transition between town and country.
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), (iii), (iv), (viii), 1.23, 1.24, SN1, SN3, SN4)

Applies: Edge of Historic Town Centre
 Southern Fringe
 Bath Road, Western Fringe
 Rixton and Environs
 Honeymead, Northern Fringe
 Central Regeneration Area

Comment:
 The treatment of urban edges around Sturminster Newton exhibits some very marked contrasts. Whilst the transition from town to country in the old town is exemplary, the situation in parts of the new town is hard and insensitive. Any new development or redevelopment on or close to town edges must respond to this issue, through the inclusion of green space and vegetation, the encouragement of footpath links and, if necessary, through the adoption of reduced development densities.

L2 TREES
Works which are likely to have a detrimental impact on important trees within the town will be resisted. All development proposals should consider the amenity value of trees and an assessment of their contribution to their immediate and wider setting and the character of the town should be included in the development proposals. The likely impact of development on trees should be considered at the very start of the development process.
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), (iii), 1.23, 1.24, 1.39, 1.40)

Applies: All areas.

Comment:

1. Tree cover is of great importance in Sturminster Newton. In the old town, vegetation is an important part of the overall environment, integrating the town into the surrounding countryside, giving the town character and diversity and containing the scale of development below a higher tree canopy.
2. In the newer parts of the town, the relative paucity of vegetation means that the larger trees that do exist have a greater importance in relieving what is often a rather mundane and unexciting skyline.
3. In any redevelopment proposal, it is important that a proper assessment is made of the value and contribution of trees within each site to the immediate locality and the overall character of the town, rather than just in terms of tree size, species, health etc. Whilst some tree loss may be acceptable as part of a redevelopment proposal, it will be important to identify and protect if necessary, trees that make an important contribution to the townscape.
4. Whilst the old town has some high quality tree cover, it is often weak in the newer parts of the town. New development proposals should therefore be encouraged to make some contribution, appropriate to the size of the site and its context, to additional tree cover.
5. Policies 1.39, 1.40, and 1.41 of the Local Plan seek to protect trees and encourage new planting. The Council has also produced detailed 'Trees and Development Guidelines' which should be followed in any development proposals where trees may be affected.

L3 LANDSCAPE DESIGN
Hard and soft landscape should be provided where appropriate to enable development to integrate successfully into the local environment.
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), 1.23, 1.24, 1.40, 1.41)

Applies: All areas.

Comment:
 As a sound general design principle, hard and soft landscape should be fully integrated into the overall design concept of a site, including proper consideration for the potential use of public and private spaces. Open space and planting should not be used as a convenient filler for left over spaces. (Extensive planting of shrubs to fill residual space should be avoided in particular)

L6 BOUNDARIES
New boundaries and changes to existing boundaries between properties should make close reference to the traditional treatment of similar boundaries in the locality and be of high quality.
 (Supplements policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), (iii), 1.23, 1.24, SN1, SN3)

Applies: Historic Town Centre
 Edge of Historic Town Centre
 Southern Fringe
 Bath Road, Western Fringe

Comment:
 Detail is a very important aspect of quality environments, not just on buildings but also in a range of associated features, including boundaries. Boundaries, including hedges, fences and walls in a variety of materials should take reference from established examples with particular reference to such aspects as height, species, building materials and style.

Design Guidelines

06.03

The Design Guidelines

Transport-related Guidelines

T1 TRAFFIC EFFECTS OF DEVELOPMENT
The impact of any increased traffic resulting from new developments should be assessed in terms of its effect on townscape character.
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (ii), (vi), (viii), 1.23, 1.24, SN1, SN3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14)

Applies:

- Historic Town Centre
- Edge of Historic Town Centre
- Southern Fringe
- Bath Road, Western Fringe
- Central Regeneration Area

Comment:

New roads and increased traffic can have a significant effect on the character of urban areas, and these guidelines require that these effects should be carefully considered as an essential part of any development proposals.

Of particular concern is the effect of road 'improvements' and increased traffic on smaller roads and lanes in the old town. This should be carefully considered. Many of these routes, that are often shared surfaces, are both important recreational routes between town and country and important in defining much of the quiet and attractive character of these 'backland' areas. Any proposals that undermine the character of these routes in terms of their townscape character or quietness should be resisted.

T2 FOOTPATH CONNECTIONS
New development proposals should seek to incorporate new pedestrian and cycle links to create greater permeability around the town.
 (Supplements Policies 1.7, 1.8 (viii), SN4, SN10, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10)

Applies:

- Bath Road, Western Fringe
- Rixon and Environs
- Honeymead, Northern Fringe
- Butts Pond Industrial Estate
- Central Regeneration Area

Comment:

Public opinion at the July 2007 consultation event revealed very little enthusiasm for any new public open space in the town, and indeed there seems to be very little opportunity for this. However footpath and cycle connections within the newer, northern part of the town are limited, as well as connections to open countryside and to the old town. Better provision for pedestrian and cycle access should be encouraged as appropriate as part of development proposals.

Design Guidelines

06.04

Conclusion

The studies undertaken as part of the background for this Statement found that, whilst Sturminster Newton cannot truly be regarded as unique or exceptional in townscape terms, the old town with its immediate landscape setting is nonetheless a delightful and attractive rural town with many interesting and historic features.

The study has also found that, in marked contrast to the old town, the larger new northern extension to the town is, for the most part, substantially lacking in character or local distinctiveness.

The Design Guidelines included in this Statement seek to ensure that both the essential characteristics of the old town are conserved and that any future redevelopment in the newer part of the town uses the opportunity to create a much higher quality of urban environment. It also seeks to encourage substantially higher quality new development around the edges of the town wherever and whenever that may take place, and some of the issues associated with creating new urban environments in such locations have been discussed. An important tool in achieving high quality new development is the Development Brief, the use of which is strongly recommended.

Whilst the Design Guidelines also seek to provide a useful tool for the encouragement of sensitive and high quality development, it does not seek to be so prescriptive as to stifle development or the expression of imagination and flair.

Critical to the application of this principle must be the exercise of reasonable and balanced judgement in the evolution and consideration of each planning application, weighing often opposing issues of protection and change.

This places considerable demands on the skill and application of both would-be developers and planning authority alike. The view is expressed here that, professionally handled, the balance between protection and change can be successfully managed and that, within the guidance provided by the government, Local Plan policies and the more detailed Design Guidance provided in this Statement, Sturminster Newton can remain a delightful town, further enriched through an ever on-going process of sensitive change and evolution.

APPENDIX

Relevant Local Plan Policies

The Design Guidelines all comply with and/or support existing Policies in the current North Dorset District-wide Local Plan (1st Revision) Adopted Plan to 2011.

It will be noted that the Local Plan identifies under Strategy and Environment four problems and issues that are considered to be "particularly critical" in drawing up the Strategy and environmental policies for the Plan. Three of these (1.6 Protection of the Countryside, 1.7 Protection of the District's Heritage and 1.8 The Quality of New Development) are addressed in one way or another in the Design Guidelines. Also, of the eight aims of the Sustainable Development Strategy, two of them (1. Improve the quality of life and 7. Conserve the built and the natural heritage character) relate to the Town Design Statement Design Guidelines.

In Part 06.03, Design Guidelines, a note is added that identifies which Local Plan Policies apply to each Design Guideline to ensure that they comply with existing policy.

For ease of reference, the relevant Local Plan policies are listed below:

Policy 1.7
Development within Settlement Boundaries
Development will only be approved within Settlement Boundaries if the proposal satisfies the Standard Assessment Criteria Policy

(b) Protecting the Environment

Policy 1.8
Standard Assessment Criteria

The following assessment criteria are of acknowledged importance for the environment of North Dorset District and will be used in the determination of planning applications.

All applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

(i) Character

The form, scale and density of new development should be in character or enhance the immediate surroundings and the settlement or area as a whole.

(iii) Amenity

The amenity of neighbouring land users should be safeguarded.

(iv) Design & external appearance of buildings

The adoption of local vernacular styles and use of local materials will be expected in conservation areas which have a strong local historic character where pre-20th century properties predominate. Buildings in a modern idiom may be approved where they are in sympathetic relationship to their surroundings. The main elevation of new buildings will be expected to face either the major road leading to, or the major road running through the development, so as to create a sense of enclosure, public security and to help integrate new development with existing patterns of development.

(v) Views of the countryside and the built environment heritage

Development should not adversely affect public views of the countryside, the built environment or Important Open/Wooded Areas.

(vi) Vehicular access & car parking

The provision of access roads, turning areas and car parking which generate traffic movements likely to cause or increase unnecessary danger to highway users, will not be permitted. (For car parking strategy see Policies 1.1 (i) and 5.1.7). Road networks leading into new development shall be designed so as to achieve a high level of 'permeability' i.e. to have the maximum number of links and access points between all areas for pedestrians, cyclists and for motor vehicles so as to integrate new development with existing patterns of development, to create a greater sense of public security and to reduce journey length.

(viii) Pedestrian & cycle rights of way

Existing rights of way for pedestrians and cyclists should be safeguarded and improved where necessary.

(c) Conservation of the Historic Environment

Policy 1.21:

Alterations to Listed Buildings

Development proposals which involve the alteration or extension of a listed building will only be permitted if the architectural and historic interest of the building will be preserved and no original or historic features will be destroyed.

Policy 1.23

Setting of Listed Buildings

Development affecting the setting of a listed building and its contribution to the local scene will only be permitted provided that it either preserves or enhances the listed building's special interest or its setting.

Policy 1.24

Character of Conservation Areas

The District Council will pay special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas and proposals for any new development, alterations and changes of use of existing buildings and land which have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area will not be permitted.

Policy 1.27

Shopfronts in Conservation Areas

Proposals to alter or remove traditional shopfronts which have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area will be resisted. Proposals for any new shopfront that will have an adverse effect on the character or appearance of the Conservation Area will not be permitted.

APPENDIX

Relevant Local Plan Policies

(d) Landscape Protection and Ecology

Policy 1.39

Tree Preservation Orders

Tree Preservation Orders will be made to protect individual trees, groups of trees and woodlands that:

- (i) contribute to the amenity and character of an area;
- (ii) are under a known threat of felling that would be detrimental to the amenity and character of an area;
- (iii) are fine and rare species that make a particular contribution to the area's quality, character and interest.

Tree preservation Orders will be reviewed to take account of development, storm damage, age or legislative changes in order to maintain accurate and enforceable tree protection across the District.

Policy 1.40

Landscaping of New Development

On any development site where existing trees are a significant landscape feature, a full tree survey, (based on an accurate land survey), forming part of the submitted planning application is required. Existing woodland and the most significant trees and hedgerows will be retained wherever possible. Appropriate management initiatives will be encouraged.

Where appropriate, schemes for good quality hard and soft landscaping (and proper provision for long term landscape maintenance) should be submitted as an integral part of any development proposals, in order to enhance the environment and setting of new development or to help integrate the development into its surroundings.

Policy 1.41

Amenity Tree Planning

In connection with development proposals, the planting of locally occurring trees, shrubs and hedges, and positive management of trees and woodlands is proposed in order to:

- (i) strengthen existing tree cover
- (ii) improve public amenity

- (iii) create new woodlands

unless there are overriding ecological, archaeological or local landscape or amenity objections.

(e) Housing

Policy 2.10

Density of New Development

The density of new development should make full and effective use of the proposed site, bearing in mind the character of the locality and following the principles of good design in line with the urban village approach.

Policy 2.11

Extension to Dwellings

Proposals for the extension of existing residential properties will be permitted provided that:

- (i) the plot size of the existing property is large enough to accommodate the extension without resulting in a cramped or overdeveloped site;
- (ii) the scale and design of the proposal compliments the existing dwelling;
- (iii) the character of neighbouring properties and amenity enjoyed by their occupants are not jeopardised.

(f) Local Area Policies - Sturminster Newton

Policy SN1

- (i) All development in Sturminster Newton should respect the historic character of the town and its surroundings.

(ii) In accordance with the overall Local Plan Strategy, Sturminster Newton will act as the main centre for the Stalbridge/Sturminster Newton area and will receive the majority of population, housing and employment growth and the development of major community facilities.

- (iii) In the period up to 2011 "moderate" levels of development will be permitted within the settlement boundary of the town. This will include the development of a limited number of sites defined as "major".

Policy SN3

Development will only be approved within the Sturminster Newton Conservation Area if the proposal is in keeping with the intrinsic character of each environmental sub-area.

Policy SN4

Approximately 3.5 Ha of land to the north of the Livestock Market will be released for residential development of about 90 dwellings, subject to the following requirements:

- (i) The land will not be released for development until the link road required under Pl.Ap 2/97/390/(54) has been completed.
 - (ii) A traffic assessment of the impact of the development on the junction of Bath Road/Rabin Hill will be required.
 - (iii) Provision of a landscaping/buffer zone to the east of the site to incorporate footway/cycleway provision.
 - (iv) Footway/cycleway provision through to Bath Road and the former Livestock Market Site to the south will also be sought.
 - (v) Provision for the accommodation or relocation of badgers on the site must be made.
 - (vi) Hedgerows together with associated land within the site should be retained and used as an amenity corridor for pedestrian access.
- Policy SN10
Measures to make cycling safer and more attractive will be encouraged along the following routes;
- (i) East - West link, Sturminster High School - Rixon estate via the proposed housing developments to the north of the town (sites 'D' and 'B');
 - (ii) North - south link, Honeymead Lane - Station Road via the proposed informal open space, residential development (site 'C') and former Livestock Market Site.