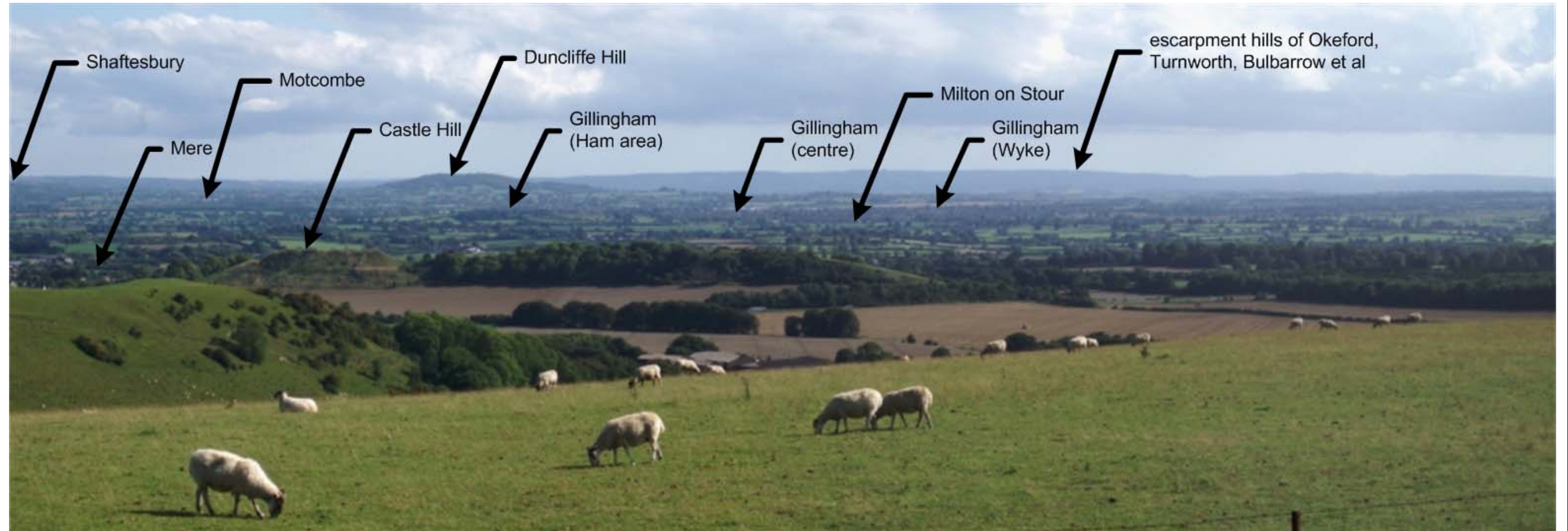


3.0 – LANDSCAPE SETTING

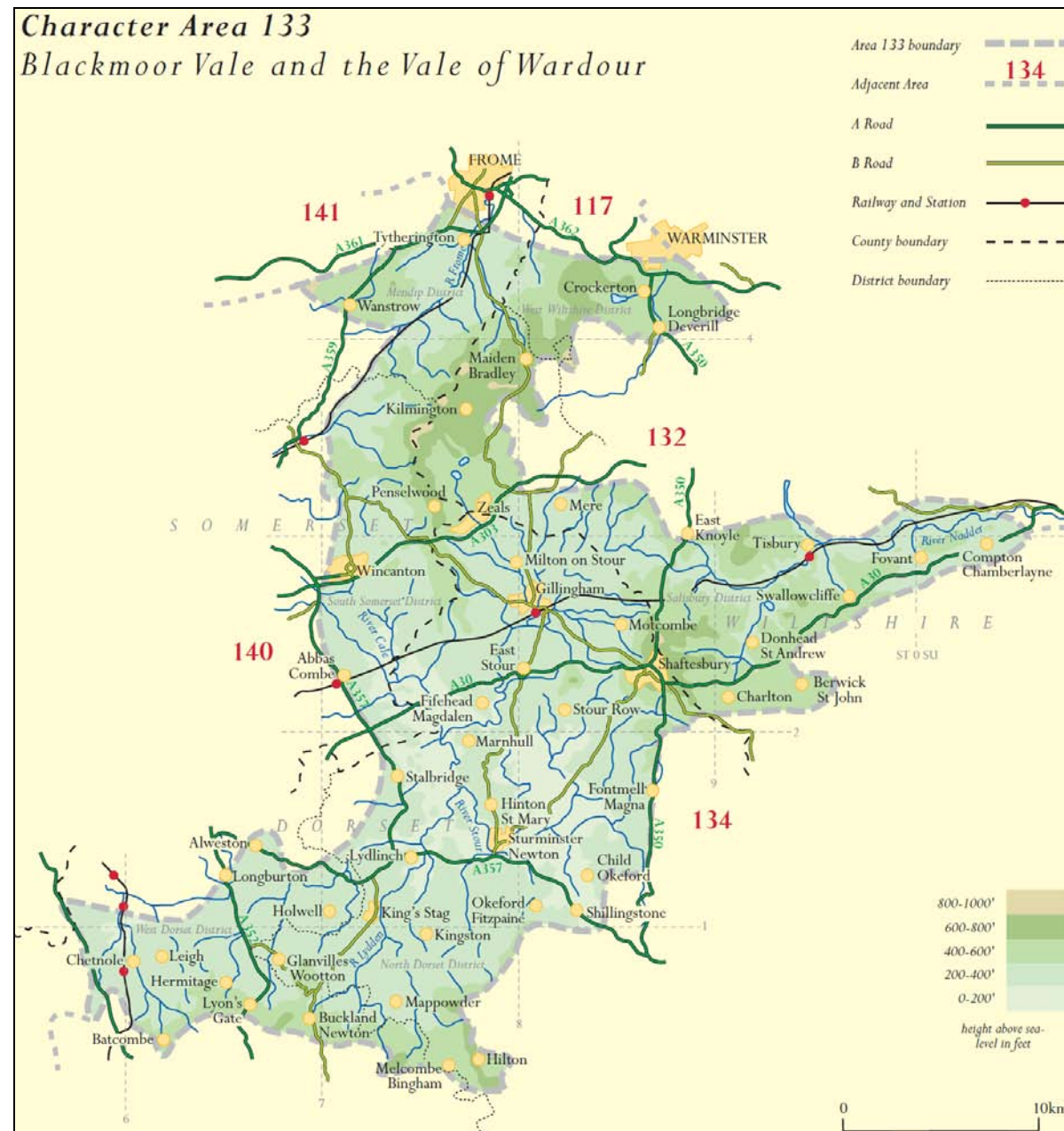


The Blackmore Vale viewed from Whitesheet Hill looking south

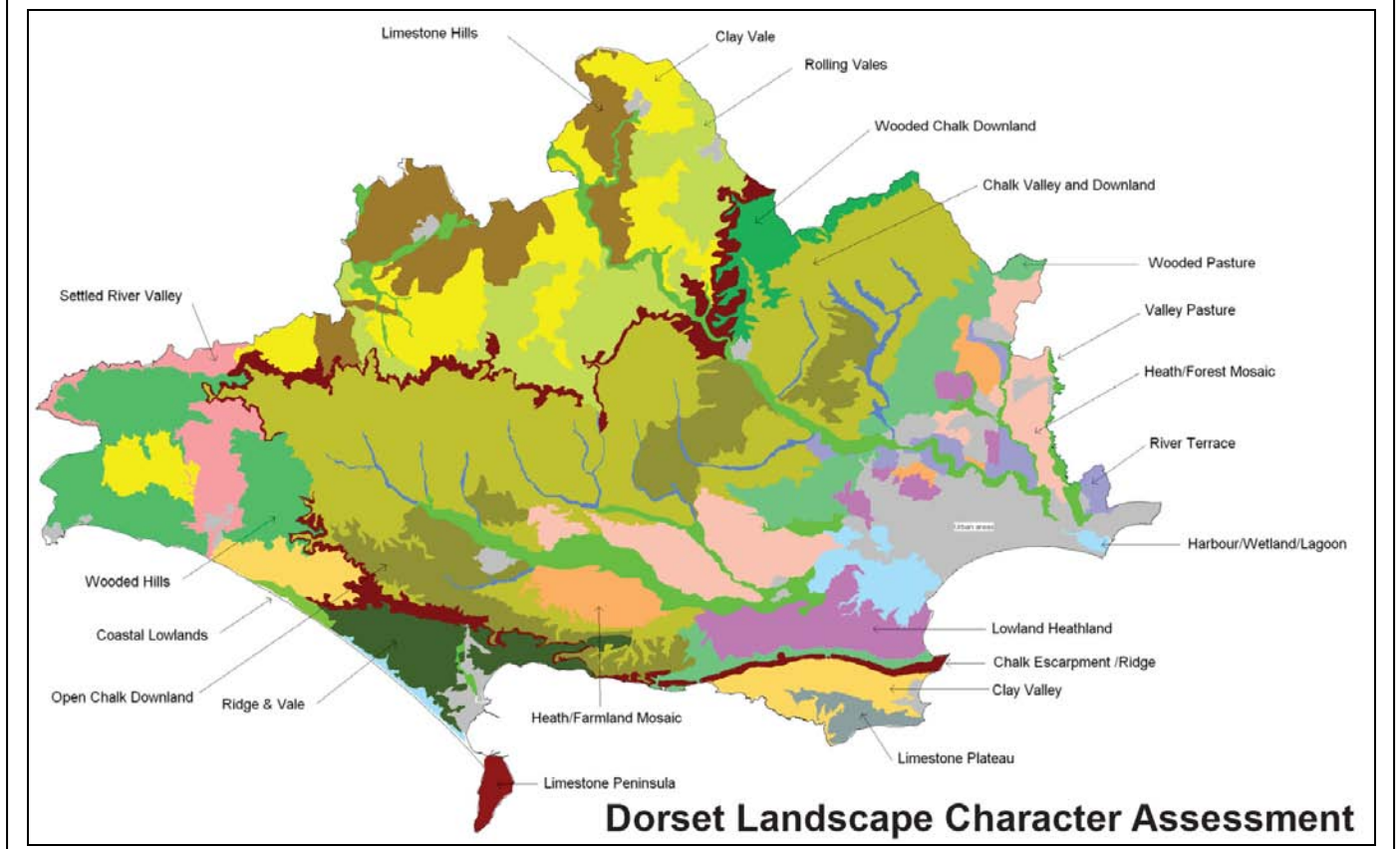
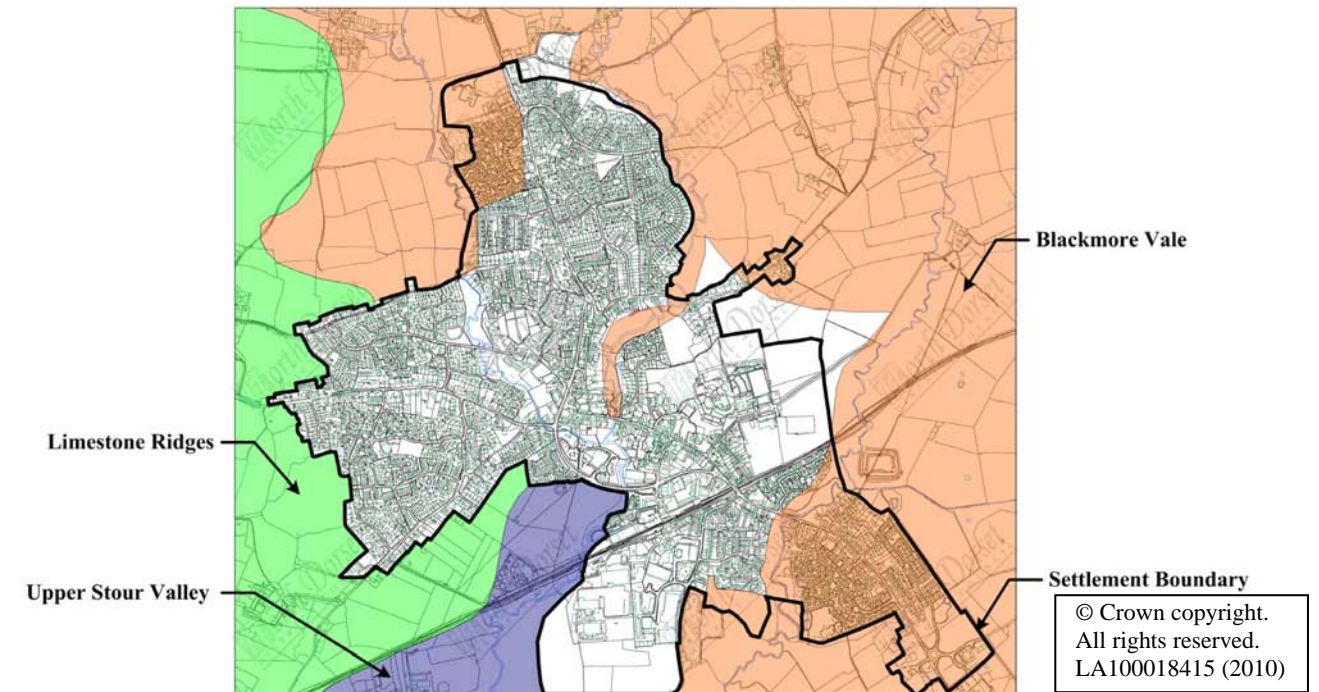
LANDSCAPE SETTING

Gillingham lies within the National Character Area 133 defined by the Countryside Agency in 1999; Blackmoor (sic) Vale and Vale of Wardour. The characteristics of this area are summarised as:

- A complex mosaic of mixed farming: undulating, lush, clay vales fringed by Upper Greensand hills and scarps.
- Small, rectilinear pasture fields with hedgerow oak trees and many scattered small broadleaved woodlands.
- Many streams and waterside trees.
- Broken, low, limestone ridges with shallow valleys crossing the clayey Blackmore Vale and steeper valleys around the margins of the area.
- Small villages and hamlets form nuclei within a patchwork of fields, hedges, woods and trees.
- Many villages at scarp foot, river crossing points and strategic sites.
- A wide variety of local building materials, including local stone.



The North Dorset District Landscape Character Assessment provides a detailed assessment of the features and landscape elements present in the wider Gillingham area (North Dorset District Council 2008). To the north, east and the immediate south is the Blackmore Vale Character Area, which includes Ham Common and part of Peacemarsh. The River Stour flood plain area to the south of the Town also delineates the Upper Stour Valley Character Area. West of the Town, is the limestone Ridges Character Area and just over 1 kilometre to the south is the character area of North Blackmore Vale Rolling Hills Farmland.



AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH



This image is an aerial photograph of Gillingham taken in 2006. This provides a clear visual demonstration of the rural setting of the Town, and most importantly, the layout which provides the residents easy and quick access to the surrounding countryside. The open country feel of the Town, together with plenty of footpaths providing access to the surrounding fields is a feature which was most noted as an asset of the Town within the first public consultation.

Another important aspect, which can also be clearly seen from this photograph, is the number of trees which are within the built environment. This again was also a key attribute which the public consultation confirmed. Also note the mainly regimented layout of the existing streets, which through the combination of this and the housing density, provide views to the surrounding fields.

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LANDSCAPE SETTING



Although Gillingham lies on a small ridge, the low rise building heights, generally single and two storey, mean that the profile of the Town does not present against the horizon.

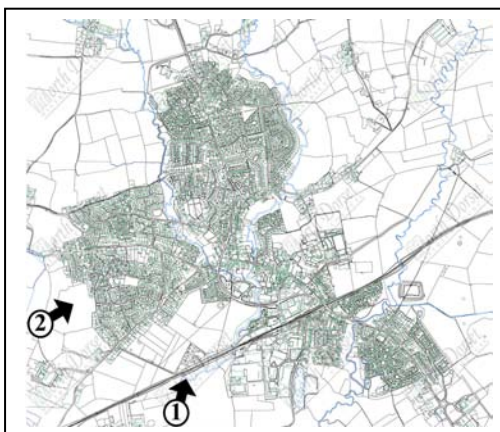
The photograph above is taken from the west of the Town, looking east (indicated by arrow **1**) towards the area of Peacemarsh. This highlights the low profile, especially with the higher hills of Shaftesbury behind on the horizon. Also note the mature trees which are a significant feature of the Town's landscape.

Below, the photograph shows an elevation from the south-east looking north (indicated by arrow **2**) towards the Ham area. Again, mature trees provide some screening, but a recent development that has included three storey buildings is much more visible to the centre and right. In the distance, the Wiltshire Downs north of Mere can be seen.

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LANDSCAPE SETTING



Two further panoramas taken at a distance from the Town, also show the small ridge and low rise building heights.

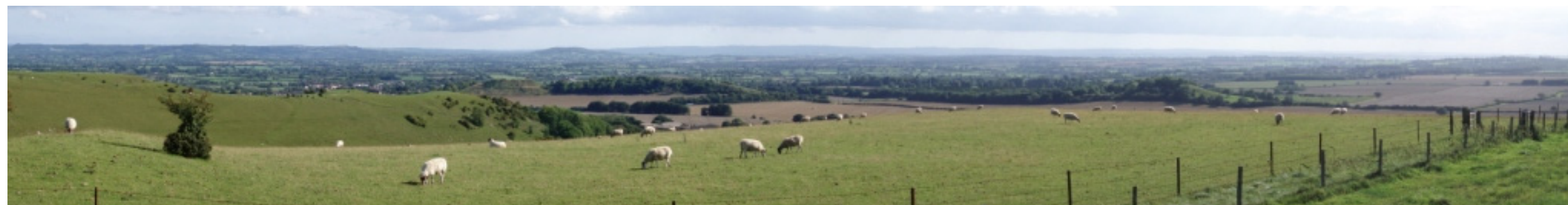
The photograph above is taken approximately one kilometre south of the Town, looking north (indicated by arrow 1) and taken from a point along a track between Folly Lane and Madjeston). To the left side is the area of Wyke and towards the centre, where the ridge level dips, are the areas of Cold Harbour and the Town Centre (in the direction indicated by the hedge leading away from the foreground). On the right are the industrial buildings of Brickfields Industrial Estate, which as can be seen from their prominence, have not been previously sufficiently screened from their impact on the landscape.

Below, the photograph is taken around 1.5 kilometres from the west looking east (indicated by arrow 2) towards the Wyke area. Again, mature trees provide some screening, and subtle colouring of building materials in the main and low building heights, reduces the impact on the horizon.

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The panorama photograph below is a wider view taken from Whitesheet Hill, some 6 miles to the north of Gillingham looking south.



LANDSCAPE SETTING



Approaching the Town in a vehicle, there are two routes, which because of their elevation immediately prior to entry, provide panoramic views of the built environment.

The photograph above is taken approaching from the north-west along Bay Road just as it enters the Town (indicated by arrow 1). The Historic Rural Settlement of Bay can be seen to the right, on each side of the road. Towards the centre, on the slight rise, are the buildings and sports pitches of Gillingham School, with Windyridge Farm in the foreground. To the left, is the area of Ham, with Duncliffe Hill in the distance, some 4.5 kilometres away. The more prominent buildings that can be seen in the Ham area are some recent three storey houses. The significant feature of this aspect is the mature trees and hedging.

Below, and taken just off the carriageway, the photograph is taken from Hunger Hill, East Stour which is around 1.5 kilometres from the south looking north (indicated by arrow 2). From this approach to the Town, the Brickfields Industrial Estate buildings are very prominent almost all the way into the Town from this point (centre of the picture). To the right, is the area of Ham, and the more visible buildings are recent developments with three storey houses. On the ridge to the left of the picture is the settlement of Wyke, with the Town Centre in the centre behind the industrial area. This photograph also illustrates the rural setting of the Town, and the important feature that has been made clear during public consultation, that of quick and easy access to the surrounding countryside.

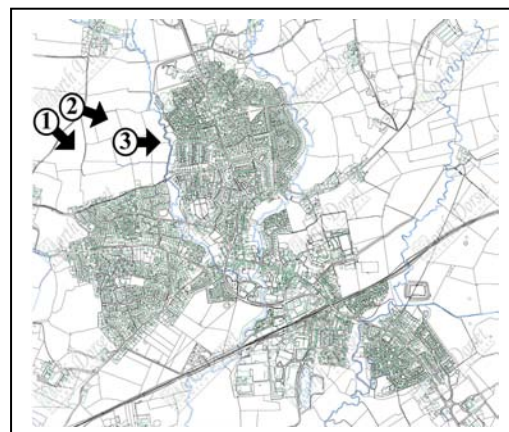
Inset right, the photograph shows the important 'green' entrance approaching the Town from the north (indicated by arrow 3). This section of carriageway bounded by open fields, mature hedges and trees provides an effective buffer between the Town and the village of Milton-on-Stour, which has its own individual character that is distinct from that of the Town. A shared surface footway/cycleway behind the hedge on the left, links the village with the northern end of Peacemarsh.



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LANDSCAPE SETTING



From the west, there are two different types of development: infill and larger scale developments.

The photograph above is taken looking towards Wavering Lane West (indicated by arrow 1), and comprises infill development that has occurred over time. Whilst the housing is generally of the same type, shape and within a uniform building line, they do vary through the choice of materials prevalent at the time of their construction.

In contrast the main photograph at the bottom shows two larger sized developments (indicated by arrow 2). On the right, the low dark brown roofs of bungalows within Wessex Way can be seen, which were constructed in a regularised square layout during the 1960s. The bungalows are uniform in their shape, size and materials.



To the left and centre, is a recent development that includes Merlott Road, Casterbridge Way and Yalbury Wood Way, that was constructed post-2000. As can be seen, this is not only a mix of modern building materials and finishes, but also two and three storeys of varying house design.

The inset photograph to the left (indicated by arrow 3) illustrates the imposing three storey development that has been constructed immediately behind the single storey bungalows, and also the difference between the monochrome development of Wessex Way with uniform layout, materials and designs compared to the modern design, where all these parameters are mixed up.

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LOCAL SETTING



The following Local Setting photographs have been taken from the historic centre of the Town, atop the tower of St. Mary's Church (indicated by arrow 1). From this location the views afforded provide an excellent insight into some of the remaining early character of the Town.

To the left is a photograph looking towards the Town Square. Just beyond the buildings is the important open space of Chantry Fields.

The photograph below has been taken facing west towards the Wyke area. Across the foreground is Le Neubourg Way, and in the centre just beyond, are the buildings housing Gillingham Youth Centre, Army Cadet and Guides.

It is noted that the panoramic effect of the photographs distorts the foreground images.



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LOCAL SETTING



The above photograph is from St. Mary's Church tower looking north towards the Peacemarsh and Bay areas.

Below, the historic buildings of Queen Street can be seen in the foreground. In the centre, the large building is Barnaby Mill, which has been rebuilt on the site of the original mill. Above it, on the summit of the small rise, are the buildings of Gillingham School and Gillingham Primary School. To the right, the road from the bottom right corner leading diagonally upwards is the High Street. Even in the centre of the Town, the abundance of mature trees is very apparent.



LOCAL SETTING



The above photograph is from St. Mary's Church tower looking south-east towards the High Street and the Chantry Fields area beyond. In the centre-left foreground the stone building is The Red Lion public house, with its car park and open space behind. The footway and bridge beyond leads to the multi-pitched roof of Waitrose. To the left of this, is the large plain profiled steel building of Asda, and above is the area surrounding the railway station. The industrial buildings of Brickfields Industrial Estate can just be seen at the top.

The view of the High Street pictured above right is dominated by the Gillingham Methodist Chapel. This later 19th Century building is constructed with rock-faced stone and ashlar dressings and detail.

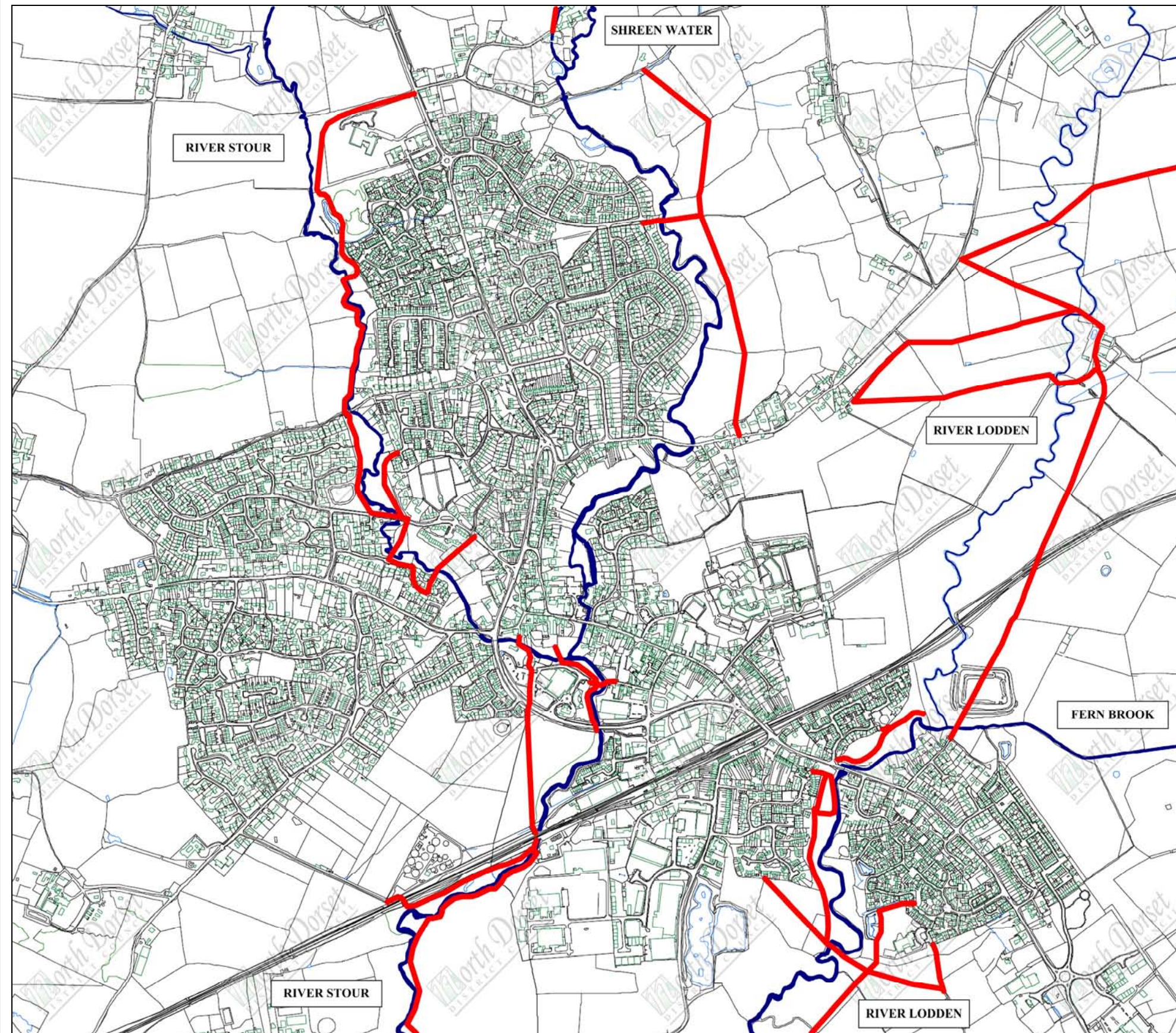
Below facing east and just right of centre, the reconstructed stone houses of Barnaby Mead can be seen. Above these is Gillingham School, and to the left of them, are the new houses of Bayfields and Mulberry Court. In the bottom left corner, and built with Gillingham brick is St Martin's (Gillingham Adult Education Centre).

From left to right through the centre and masked by the mature trees, flows the Shreen Water and mill leat. At the bottom-right, is the High Street long stay car park and War Memorial.

In the distance the open fields of Bowridge Hill can be seen, together with the upper end of Bay Lane





RIVER CORRIDORS



The rivers that have played an important role in the shape of Gillingham, also provide an ongoing leisure amenity for the residents. Some of the flood plain areas contain footpaths which allow public access to the river banks or nearby. The map to the left shows these locations, and most of these routes are used regularly.

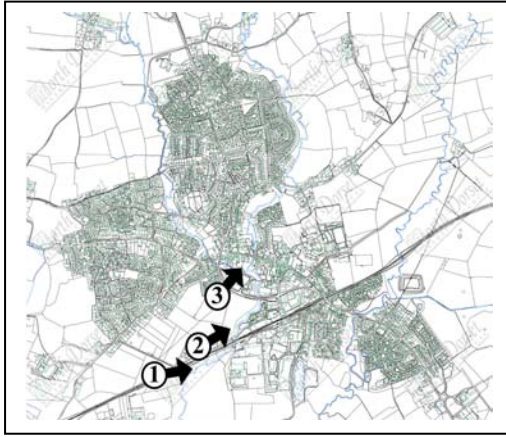
These river corridors provide a unique attribute to the Town, and contribute to the 'countryside feel' that was well documented during public consultation.

Future developments should not impact on the existing network, but improve and/or extend these corridors wherever possible to cater for increased demand the development would create.

-  Rivers.
-  Public access alongside rivers providing Riverside Corridors.

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RIVER CORRIDORS



The rivers that run through the Town have not only played a defining role in the shape of the Town, but also provide an extremely important recreational asset. The flood plains that prevent development mean green corridors exist which are well used by residents.

Although public pedestrian access does not run the whole length of the river banks, there is a significant length that exists, even into some areas of the centre of the Town.



The upper photograph was taken within a nature area that lies on the west bank of the River Stour, just after it has passed underneath the railway line (indicated by arrow 1). This has a formal stoned path and along with benches, provides a quiet area. In the back ground, the western edge of Brickfields Industrial Estate can be seen. From this elevation some landscaping has been undertaken to soften the view of industrial buildings, but this is still very young.

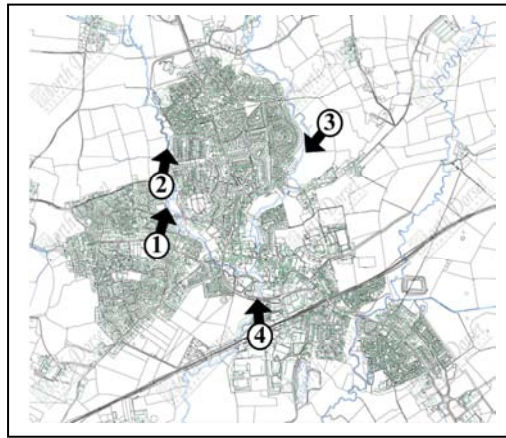
The central photograph shows Chantry Fields, which is an important green space at the heart of the Town (indicated by arrow 2).



The lower photograph was taken at the confluence of the River Stour and Shreen Water (indicated by arrow 3). A gravelled path follows the river bank for a short section, and there are two key footbridges that link the High Street with the buildings of Chantry Fields that are the Library and Waitrose.

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RIVER CORRIDORS



To the left, this photograph shows the River Stour looking from Rolls Bridge Way towards Wavering Lane (indicated by arrow 1), where it has formal surfaced paths on each side (only partial length on the east side). Here there is also a grassed and shallow surface water balancing pond, which together with the wide flood plain areas and proximity to housing, provides another valuable green space, particularly used by children.

The centre-left photograph shows the continuation of the western footpath that closely follows the River Stour from Wavering Lane, up to Casterbridge Way (indicated by arrow 2). This footpath again has been surfaced and is very well used by pedestrians and cyclists travelling north-south, as it avoids the traffic on the Peacemarsch main road.



The photograph centre-right shows the open field alongside the Shreen Water, just north of Bay Road (indicated by arrow 3). Although the public footpath crosses the centre of the field, parallel to the river some distance away from it and with no treatment of the grass, this open walk just above the flood plain provides the opportunity to have a circular route which returns along the River Stour noted above. Just visible behind the trees are the bungalows of Shreen Way, and the tower of St Mary's Church can be seen to the far left.

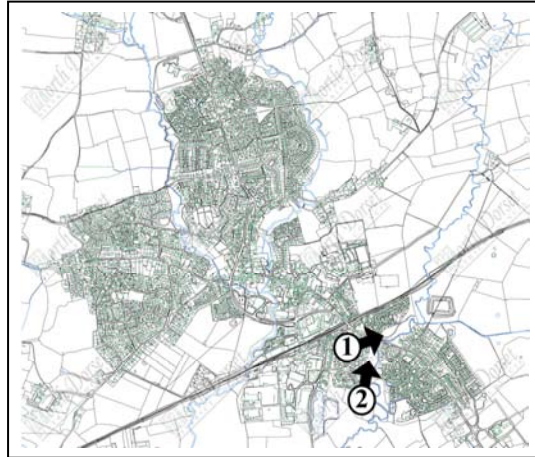
The lower-left photograph shows the same point looking north.



The lower-right photograph is another view taken of the River Stour in the Chantry Fields area. It has been taken just upstream of the Le Neubourg Way Bridge looking north (indicated by arrow 4), and shows the gravel path alongside the river.

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RIVER CORRIDORS



These three photographs show the River Lodden just upstream and downstream of Lodden Bridge. This area has seen some significant recent development on either side, but it has maintained and promoted the recreational area the riverside flood plain area provides.

The photograph at the top is looking east from the bridge. To the left is the edge of post-2000 development of King John Road, that also provided the surfaced riverside walk and lighting that can be seen (indicated by arrow 1). This green area provides a valuable open space immediately adjacent to the houses that is very well used. On the right and amongst the mature trees, is the back elevation to the much older houses of Kings Court Road.

The central photograph was taken around 300m downstream, looking north towards the bridge (indicated by arrow 2), approximately behind the electricity pole and masked by the trees that line the riverbank. In the central area of the picture, the dark coloured roofs of Bridge Close can just be seen behind the trees, which comprise mainly bungalows on this elevation. On the right, the prominent houses are part of the recent development of Kingscourt Meadow. The surfaced footpath in the foreground is a short link between developments only.

At the bottom, the left photograph was taken from the same point looking downstream in a southerly direction. Unlike the area north of the bridge, this side of the river has been developed over a much greater period, in a piecemeal fashion, first by the Local Authority, then by other developers. As a result, there has not been a similar investment in pedestrian facilities such as the surface footpath or lighting, and the area has a more informal appearance. In the distance, the wooded top of Duncliffe Hill can be seen on the horizon.

To the right, the photograph shows the footbridge further downstream.



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4.0 – SETTLEMENT PATTERN AND SHAPE

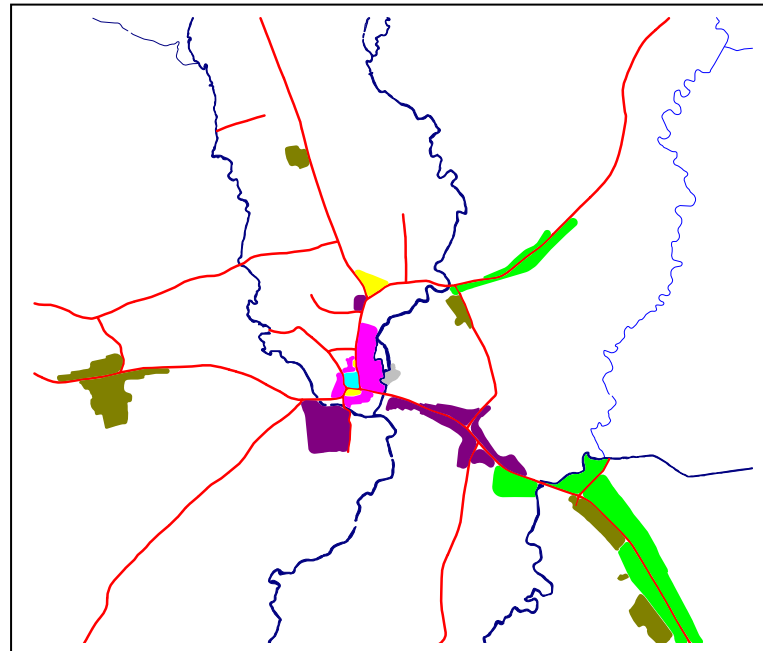


St Mary's Church – photograph courtesy of David Hansford

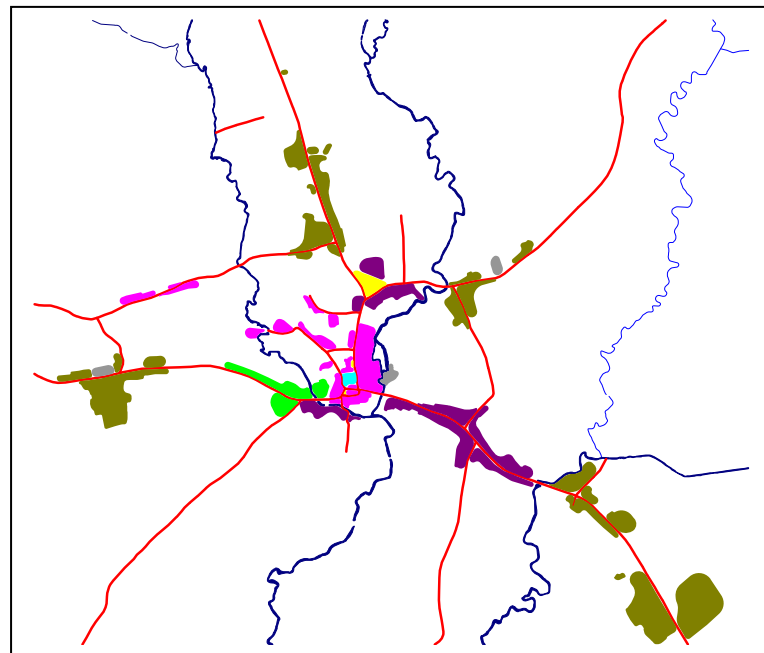
OVERALL PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT

The historic urban character of Gillingham has been determined by many factors, as with any other town that includes land ownership, relationship with other nearby towns, villages and hamlets, local resources and other historical events.

Medieval settlements are typically a nucleated form, centred on rectangular church enclosure. From this, a radial pattern of streets emanate and a series of satellite settlements or suburbs. In the case of Gillingham, the three historic main streets run along the ridges between the rivers. The Saxon and medieval core is founded on the ridge between the River Stour and the Shreen Water, just upstream of their confluence. This would have been a typical site for a Saxon Minster.



The diagram shown above right provides an indication of the likely extent of the Town in the period 1066AD to 1539. The rivers are shown in blue, and the carriageways indicated for the Town area in red. In addition, the suburbs are purple, historic plots pink and rural settlements in dark green. Also of interest are the yellow Market sites and the Common Land represented with light green. A consequence of the Common Land can still be seen in places, where older properties are set back from the main carriageways behind these areas.



gradually expanded during this era, but the areas of Common Land have disappeared and the suburb associated with the Chantry has significantly diminished.

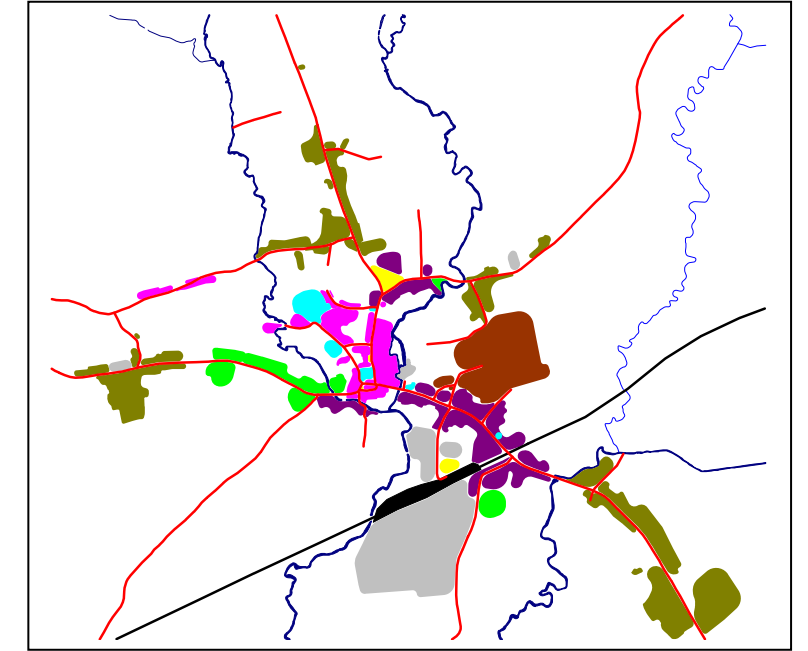
The Town has grown around the church at this location (Saint Mary's), which is also likely to have had an adjacent market place(s). Initially, the medieval borough of Newbury, then the later post-medieval settlements of Bay, Cold Harbour, Ham Common and Peacemarsh were developed as enclosed plots along the wide historic routes through the adjacent Royal Forest.

Although rural, Gillingham has a significant industrial aspect, with an established late 18th Century/early 19th Century silk throwing industry, and a bacon factory during the middle 19th Century.

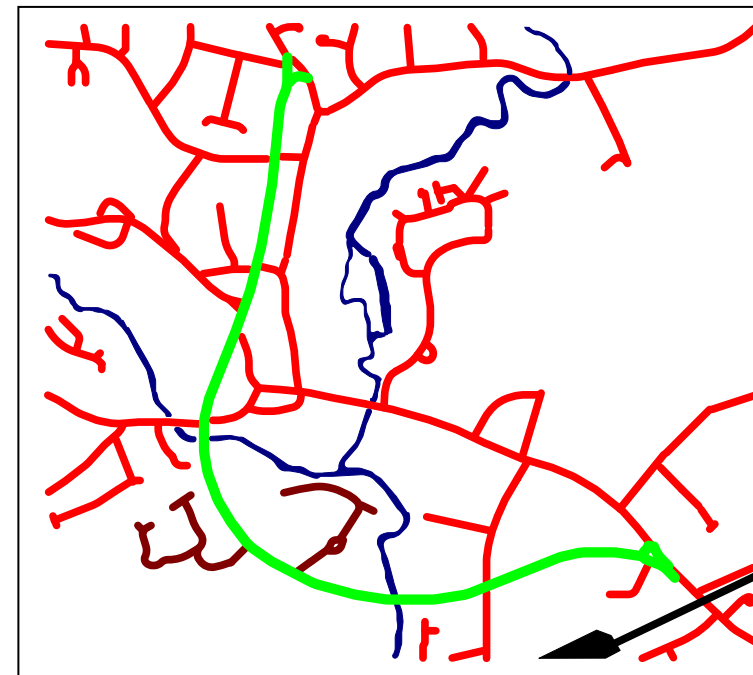
The diagram to the left indicates the period 1540AD to 1850. Generally the Town has

In 1859 the railway cut through Newbury and separated Ham, and although numerous footpath crossings were maintained, only a single road crossing was provided. Whilst this has had a significant impact on vehicular traffic flow through the Town, the subsequent shape of growth from this period does not seem to have been impacted. The railway provided a second industrial and commercial focus, reflected in the growth of the industrial estates in the station area (notably the Gillingham Pottery, Brick and Tile Company in 1865).

Within the diagram to the right representing 1851AD to 1945, the railway has been coloured black, and the significant new grey areas represent the expansion of industry. Whilst the growth of housing has continued to be slow a number of religious sites, both churches and cemeteries have now been established, which are shown in light blue. The other dominant sites shown in brown represent the school sites.



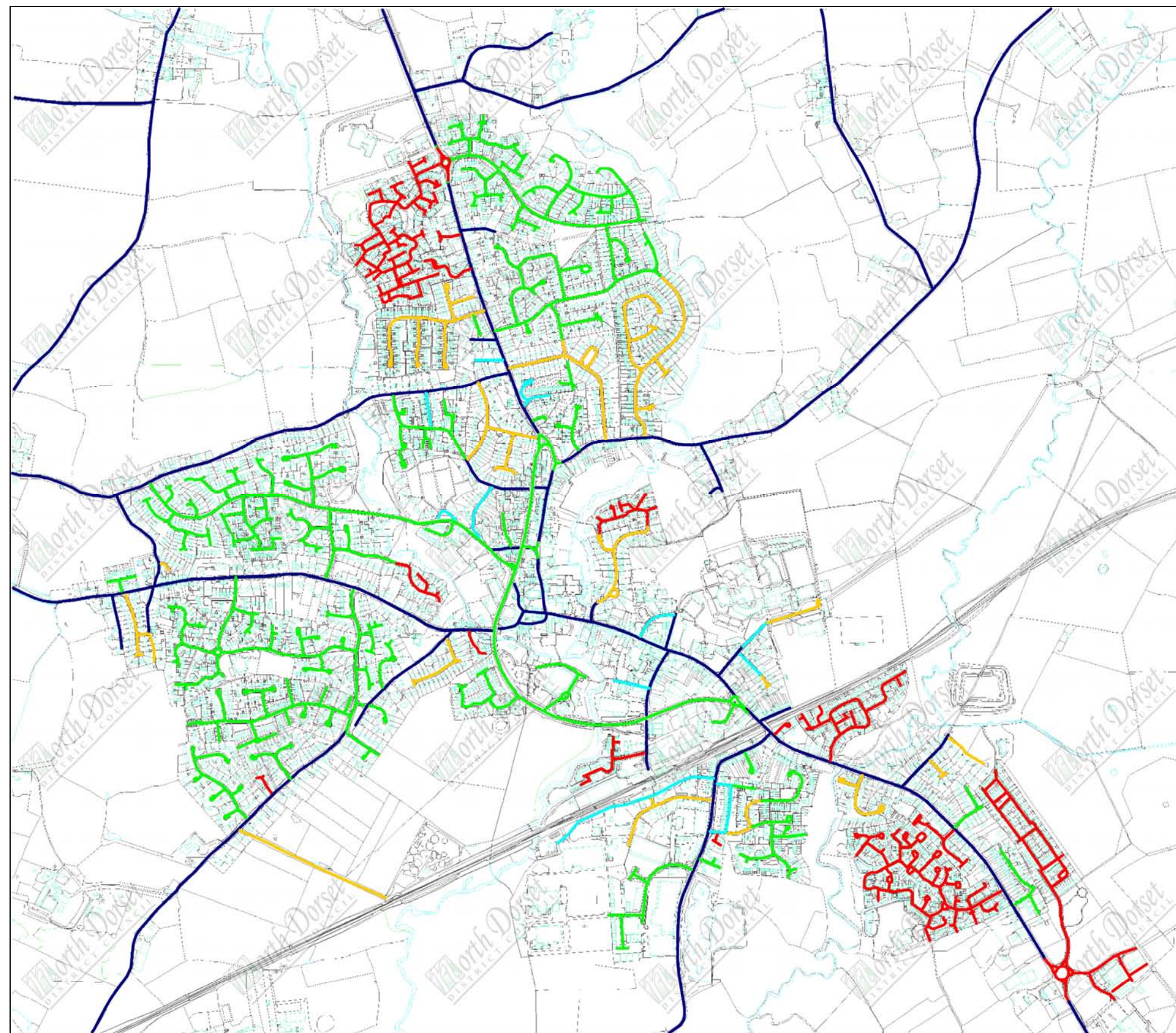
In recent years, the new relief road has truncated many of the historic plots, and ultimately changed the traffic flow through the centre of the Town. However, unlike some large scale bypass schemes, the relief road has not created any significant areas of new infill development, except that of the Waitrose and Library sites. The open fields that are opposite these sites, to the south-east of the relief road, provide a significant open space of great importance to the Town, which the adjacent sewage treatment works also help to protect.



As a consequence of the relief road, the original centre around the Church of St. Mary is now less obvious. Fire has also shaped the Town, with a number of serious fires in the 17th and 18th Centuries that destroyed many of the earlier buildings. Even in the late 20th Century, the mill buildings that stood in Barnaby Mead (just off the High Street) were lost in a fire.

The diagram (at a larger scale) to the left illustrates the extent of the relief road in relation to the Town Centre. Existing carriageways are shown in red, with the relief road in green. As before, the rivers are blue and the railway line in black. Carriageways subsequently constructed served solely from the relief road are shown in dark red.

STREET LAYOUTS



In addition to the relative densities of the developments, a further indication of the age of the developments can be seen in the street layouts.

To simplify the view, the background in the map has been lightened, and the layout of the streets highlighted by colour. In using different colours to illustrate time periods, this demonstrates that until 2000, the majority of housing was within a square formal street scene.

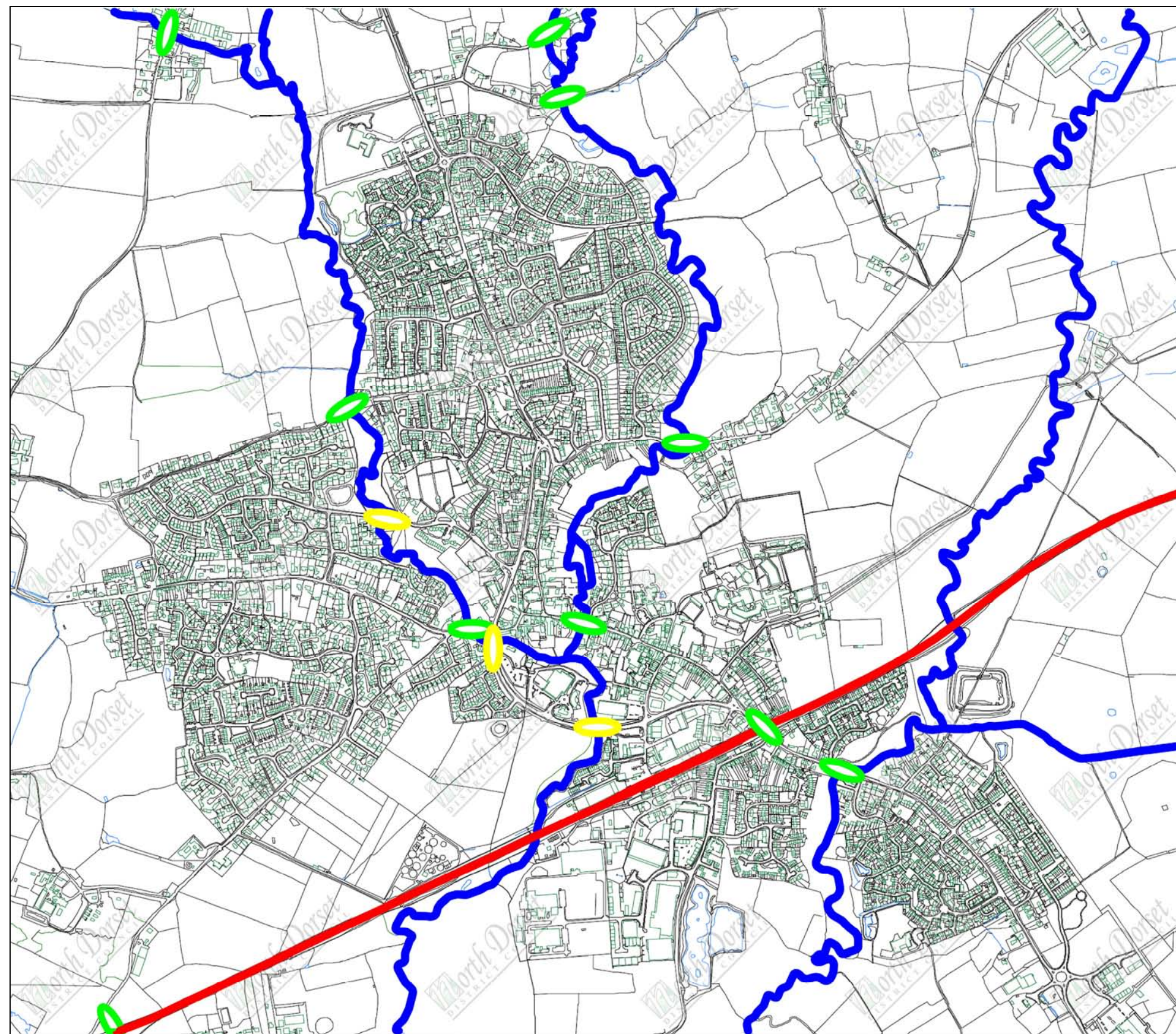
Interestingly, the main original routes into the Town that existed pre-1886 still dominate the map. This emphasises the need to ensure new developments that front these roads need to be of high quality and reflect the original character types identified later. Older roads that no longer exist have been omitted.

It is only post-2000, that winding and irregular street scenes have appeared, which are clearly out of character for the Town.

- Pre 1886
- 1887 to 1938
- 1939 to 1970
- 1971 to 2000
- Post 2000

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PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS – BRIDGES



The shape of the Town has been defined by the physical constraints created at first by the rivers, then with the construction of the railway line.

The significant expense of crossings these obstacles with highway bridges has had the affect of constraining the roads through the Town, and limiting the infill development.

One consequence is that the original access roads have remained, and the only recent new crossing points have been as part of the relief road construction during the 1980s. This funnels traffic through the older parts of the Town where most of the historic character buildings are situated.

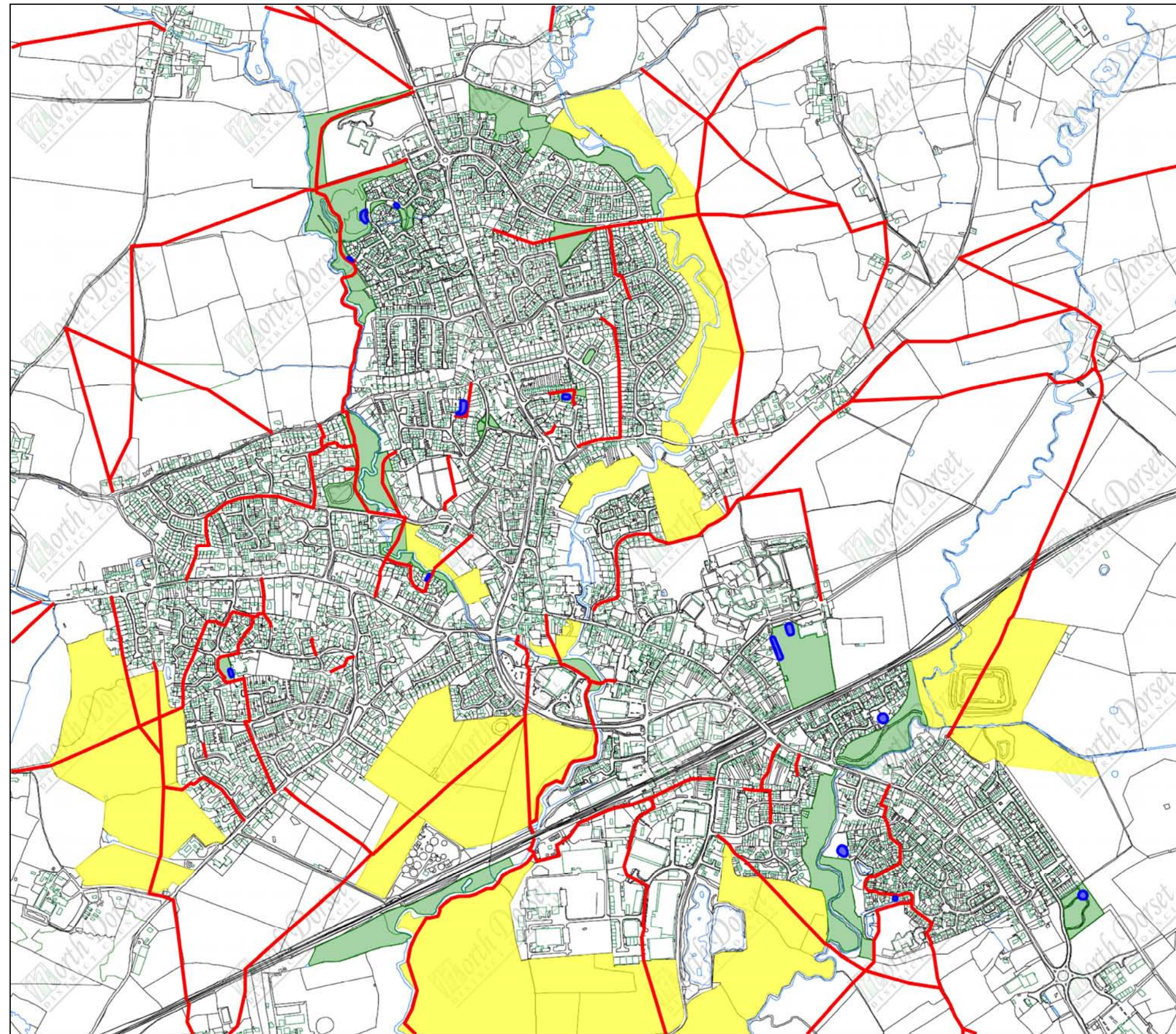
Whilst visitors passing through the Town may follow the main route along the relief road, and not view the High Street, they do experience some of the character areas.

- Rivers
- Railway Line
- Road Crossing Points Pre 1881
- Road Crossing Points Post 1980

The rivers have a reasonable number of footbridges over them, and there are some pedestrian culverts through the embankments and other level crossing points crossing the railway line that have been omitted for clarity. All crossings are over the rivers or railway line except one, where the carriageway passes beneath a railway viaduct between Wyke and Eccliffe (bottom left corner).





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OPEN SPACES AND FOOTPATHS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



The significant open spaces within the Town are coloured, and demonstrate the short distances and easy access that exists for the residents to reach open space. This is a factor which reinforces the 'countryside' characteristic of the Town. The open spaces also highlight the river corridors which need to be maintained and further supplemented as an amenity aspect of the Town.

Illustrated are the approximate routes of footpaths which link these areas and also provide amenity for walking. The small number of existing play areas for children are shown and their locations highlight this as being in need of additional resources with any future development.

-  Green corridors and amenity open space
-  Privately owned space
-  Provision for children
-  Footpaths open to the public

This map is indicative only; it is not definitive and has no legal status.

The information has been assembled from:

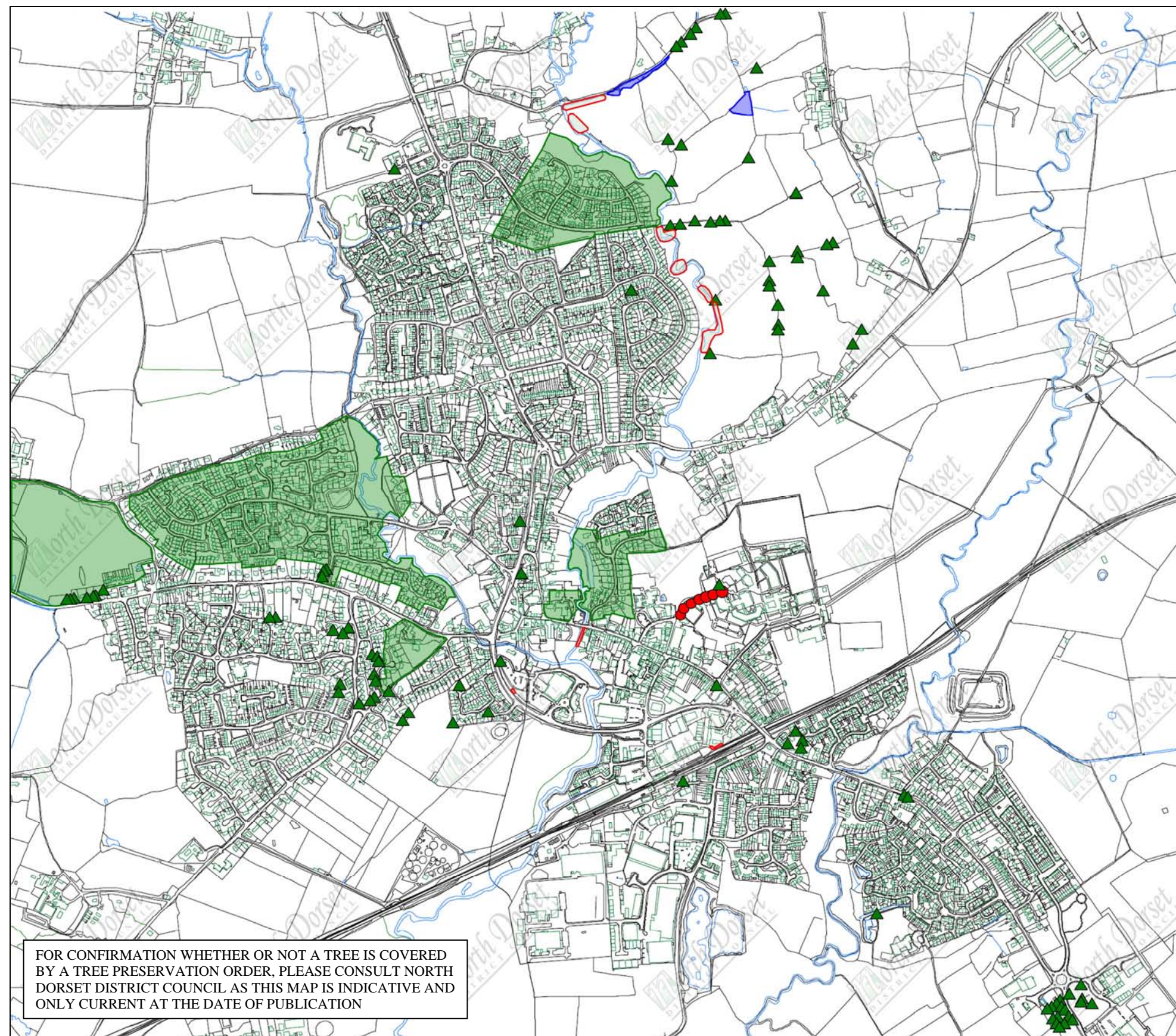
The Three Rivers Partnership – Open Spaces Group Report for Gillingham, Dorset 2005.

North Dorset District Wide Local Plan (1st Revision).

Dorset County Council map "Gillingham Rights of Way".

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TREES



The importance and significance of trees within the Town has been referred to in numerous places within this document. A key attribute is that they soften the hard built environs and add to the 'countryside feel' which is an important characteristic valued by the Community. They also encourage birds and other small wild life into the Town, and help to absorb traffic noise.

To ensure the trees are maintained for the future, a number of Tree Preservation measures have been introduced, as indicated on the map to the left. This map is representative only, it is not definitive and has no legal status. In addition, a proposed extension of the Town's Conservation Area is planned, which will provide some further protection to some trees not already covered.

Where developments have proceeded that surround existing mature hedges, these have gradually been lost over time through householder expansion of the gardens. These hedges are also important features of the Town, and to ensure they are not slowly removed in favour of additional garden space, they should be properly managed as a feature of the development for the future.

- ▲ Tree Preservation Order - Individual.
- Tree Preservation Order – Group Point.
- Tree Preservation Order – Group Outline.
- Tree Preservation Order - Area.
- Tree Preservation Order – Woodland.

Where a new development surrounds an existing tree, sufficient protection spaces must be provided around the tree to ensure its long term survival.

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FOR CONFIRMATION WHETHER OR NOT A TREE IS COVERED BY A TREE PRESERVATION ORDER, PLEASE CONSULT NORTH DORSET DISTRICT COUNCIL AS THIS MAP IS INDICATIVE AND ONLY CURRENT AT THE DATE OF PUBLICATION