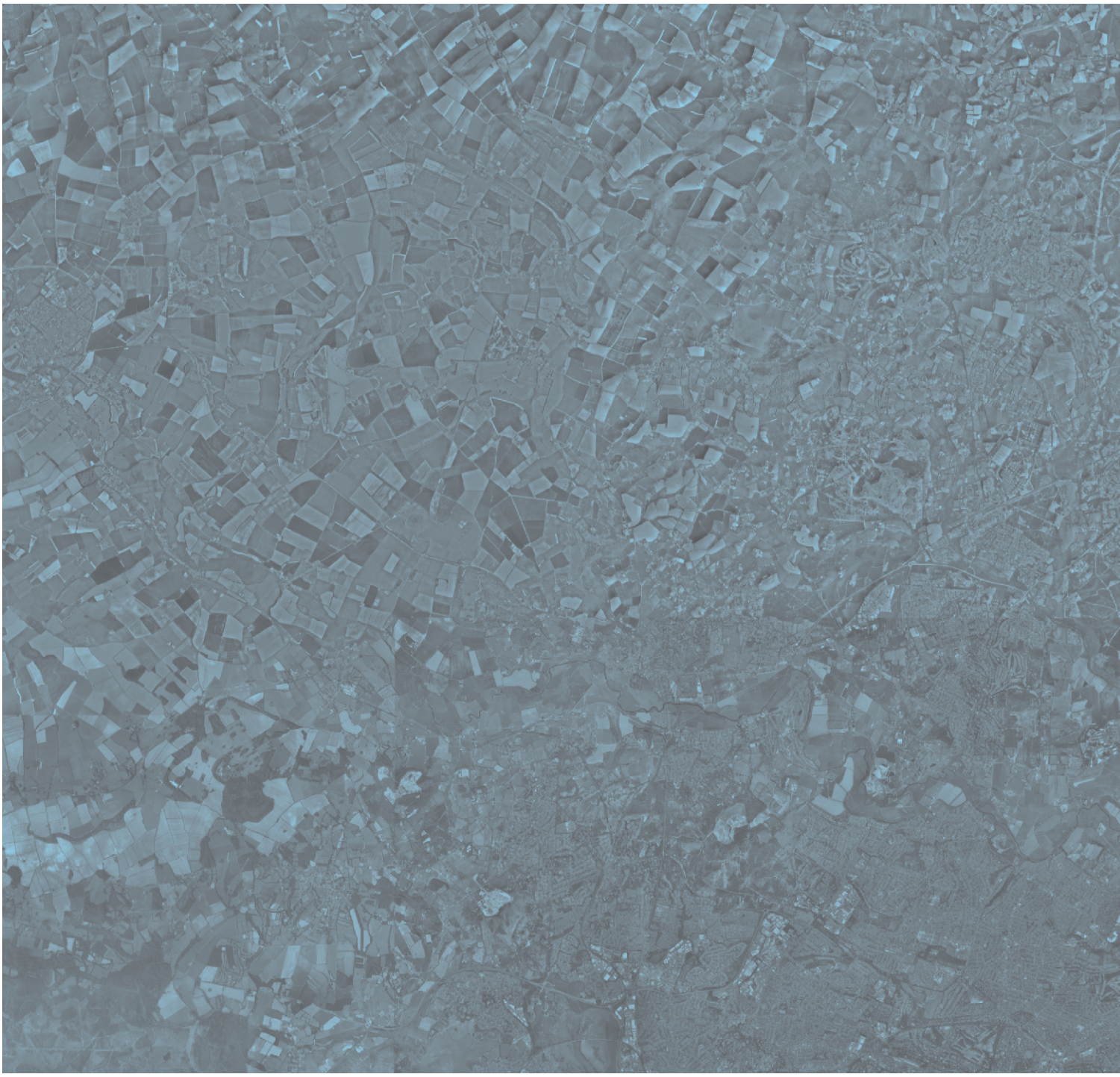
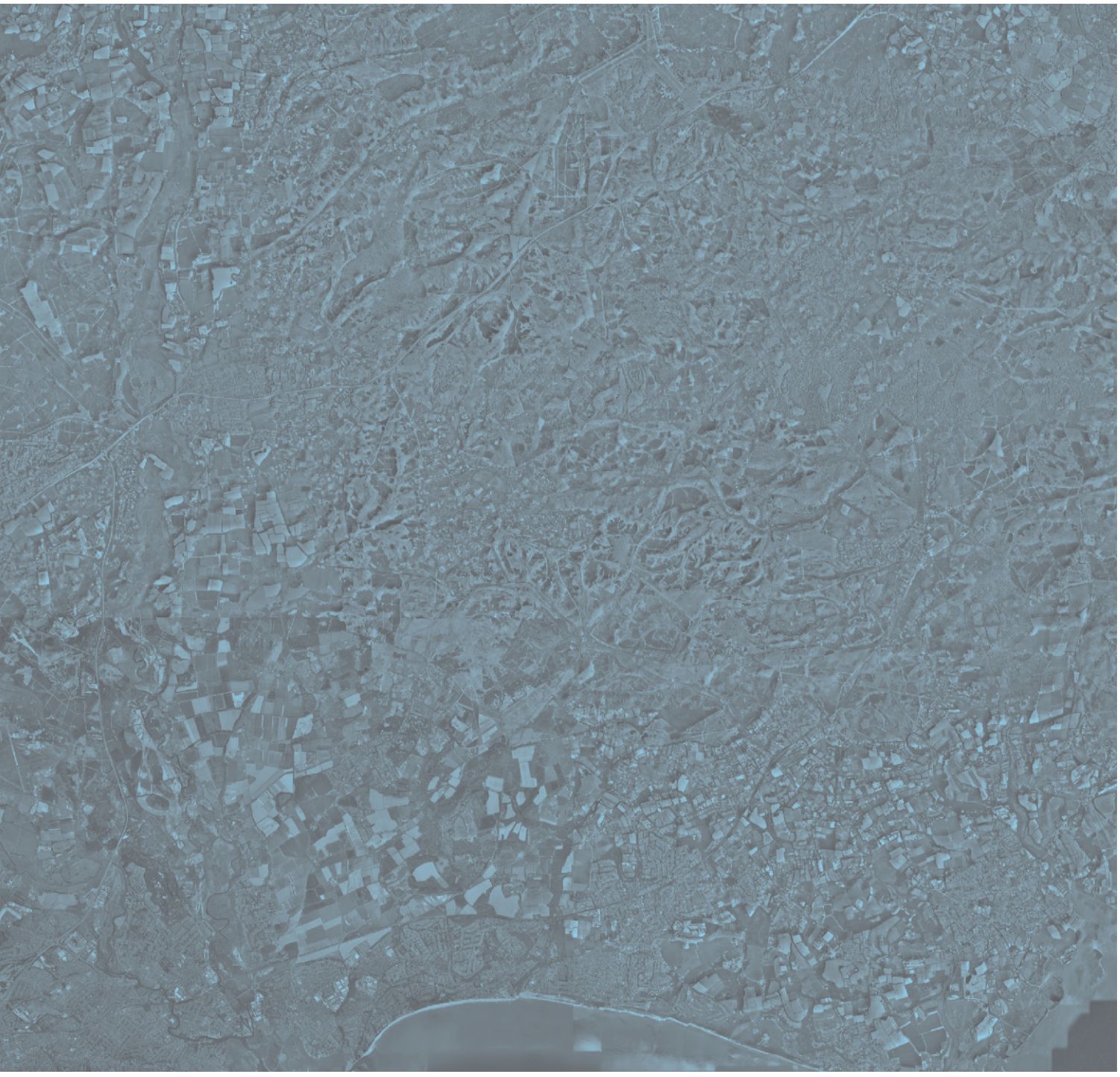
08 URBAN CHARACTER STUDY





08 URBAN CHARACTER STUDY

Introduction

This urban character study focuses on a number of key areas located in close proximity to the proposed new neighbourhoods. The information gathered will help gain an understanding of local character and townscape structure. This understanding is essential in order to develop a sensitive design response and will help inform the development proposals in the next stage of the masterplan process.

Best Practice Guidance
Best practice Government guidance on townscape analysis includes:
Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing), Annex B's definition of Net Dwelling Density states that *"net dwelling density is calculated by including only those site areas which will be developed for housing and associated uses, including access roads within the site, private garden space, car parking areas, incidental open space and landscaping and children's play areas, where these are provided"*.(2006, page 26)

By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice, states that one of the objectives of urban design is to have an understanding of townscape character (a place with its own identity) by *"promoting character in townscape and landscape by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development"* .(2001, Page 15)

The Councillor's Guide to Urban Design (CABE, 2003) defines local distinctiveness as *"the positive features of a place and its communities which contribute to its special character and sense of place".*

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) states that *"Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design that is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted"*. It adds that key objectives should include ensuring that developments *"respond to their local context and create or reinforce distinctiveness"* (ODPM/ CLG, 2005).

Finally, **the Urban Design Compendium** states that *"new development should enrich the qualities of existing urban places. This means encouraging a distinctive response that arises from and complements its setting. This applies at every scale – the region, the city, the town, the neighbourhood, and the street."*

Scope
Five character areas surrounding the two areas of search have been identified, providing a good cross-section of existing neighbourhood character and housing types. The study areas are either directly adjacent to the areas of search or have been selected because of the importance of their townscape precedent.

The study areas are as follows:
1. Church Hill
2. Coronation Road and Edmondsham Road
3. Purbeck Drive
4. Manor Road and Firs Glen Road
5. Hazelwood Road

Methodology
In undertaking a townscape analysis, we have followed a methodology, as set out below

a) Site Location
The location of the sample sites in relation to open countryside and local service centres is a key component in their urban character. The historic growth of the urban area in question is a key determinate of the road pattern; whether buildings cluster around an historic thoroughfares or have been developed as part of a twentieth century residential estate. These features are important to remember when considering what form future development should take.

b) Density Study
An analysis of the density of urban areas will be completed using the Planning Policy Statement 3 (Annex B) definition of Net Dwelling Density. A table is produced at the bottom of each density plan giving the gross area of the block, the PPS3 density of the block, and the percentage of covered area in the block. The results of this analysis will enable the calibration of appropriate densities for the various future character areas within the development framework plan. Where the sample area consists of different development types, it is broken down into blocks to provide a greater understanding of the ranges of densities present.

Whilst the residential density measurement figures are in accordance with the density calculation methodology as set out in PPS3, it should be noted that measuring the development densities of historic residential blocks using a methodology that is used as a basis for assessing modern development schemes can result in higher than average residential density measurements. This is primarily due to the fact that older developments were often built as stand alone blocks. They did not include development specific access roads (as they are often built and front onto key historic arterial routes into towns) and had little in the way of incidental open space, areas of landscaping and children's play space. There is generally a requirement for modern development to include such provision, which is included into the PPS3 calculation, thus resulting in lower residential density figures.

c) Streetscape
The study areas have been analysed using figure ground drawings to understand the relationship between the buildings and the surrounding open space as well as the space between the buildings. Key features are noted that inform the nature of the public spaces, such as street width, vegetation, the presence of public open space and any key views.

d) Built Form
The range of housing types present (terrace, semi-detached, and detached), within the selected areas of study is fundamental to the character of each area. In addition, details of external wall, roof and boundary treatment materials are observed. These features, where appropriate, will help to ensure that future development is aesthetically rooted in the locality.

Introduction
Verwood is the third largest urban area within East Dorset, with a population close to 14,000. The town lies on land north of the River Crane at the eastern edge of the District, adjoining the County boundary with Hampshire.

Much of the area was formerly covered by heaths, with farmed land and woodlands along the river valley. The town grew substantially through the 1980's to the early part of this century, with the population doubling. As a result of this the vast majority of Verwood is modern family housing many of which comprise private detached dwellings with front driveways and garages. There are, however, several traditional thatch and cob cottages together with some nineteenth and early twentieth century brick villas and workers' cottages remaining.

Verwood has a large industrial area on its eastern edge, at Ebblake. This provides some employment for the town and for workers in many of the adjoining rural parishes. However, despite this, Verwood is closely tied to the remainder of the conurbation, with a large outflow of commuters to other parts of the District, to the coastal towns and across the border to Ringwood and other parts of Hampshire.

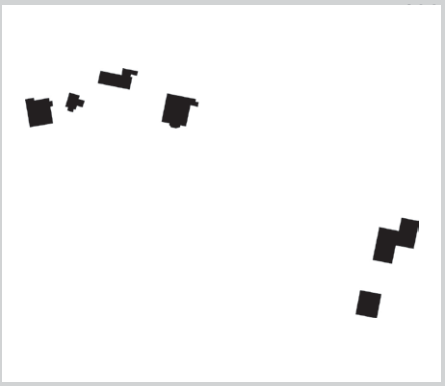
The town has two small shopping centres. The historic centre around the Village Green has grown as Verwood has developed, and offers a variety of small shops and services. Parking is satisfactory, with more than 100 spaces recently being provided at the Potters Wheel car park. A major superstore (Morrisions) and smaller shops were developed in the early 1980's at a second site away from the historic centre, centrally placed on the planned road network and with extensive car parking.

SITE 1:
CHURCH HILL

Site Location
The site is centrally located in Verwood, within easy walking distance of both the historic town centre and major superstore. The study area lies on the transport network, to east of Manor Road, at the point it meets Vicarage Road.

The site has been developed around a historic core following the erection of a small Independent Chapel on Church Hill in the early 1800's. After several successive moves and improvements the Chapel remains today as the United Reformed Church in Manor Road.

In the late 1800's Verwood became an ecclesiastical parish, at which time the chapel was completely rebuilt in local brick to become St. Michael & All Angels parish church. The church was greatly extended in 1980 to reflect the growing population.



Block Density Analysis

Area 1 - Church Hill						
Block Number	Block Area (Ha)	No. of Dwellings	Area of Built Form (Ha)	Non-built Area(Ha)	Ratio-Built Form / Block Area (%)	Density (Units/Ha)
Area 1 - Church Hill	1.38	6	0.062	1.318	4.5	4.3
Total Area	**1.38**	**6**	**0.062**	**1.318**	**4.5**	**4.3**

Density Study
The study area has an overall density of 4.3 ha, the lowest of all the character areas studied. This is a result of large properties set in generous plots. Several of the plots are heavily wooded to the rear of the dwellings.

Streetscape
There are large trees in and around the area, particularly along the street edge contributing to the leafy character of the area. There are two triangular areas of amenity space either side of Manor Road containing shrubbery and smaller trees. There are two cemeteries in front of the church. The houses are slightly set back from the street edge and clearly visible with

small entrance driveways. There is limited parking in the church sites and roadside parking occurs. Cycle lanes run through the site.

Built form

The houses are predominately modern, red brick detached bungalows in keeping with St Michael's Church. The site affords views to the north west of the site of a thatched cottage, which is listed.

SITE 2: CORONATION ROAD & EDMONDSHAM ROAD

Site Location
The site is located on the northern edge of the urban area of Verwood in very close proximity to the historic centre around the Village Green. There are two first schools near to the site.

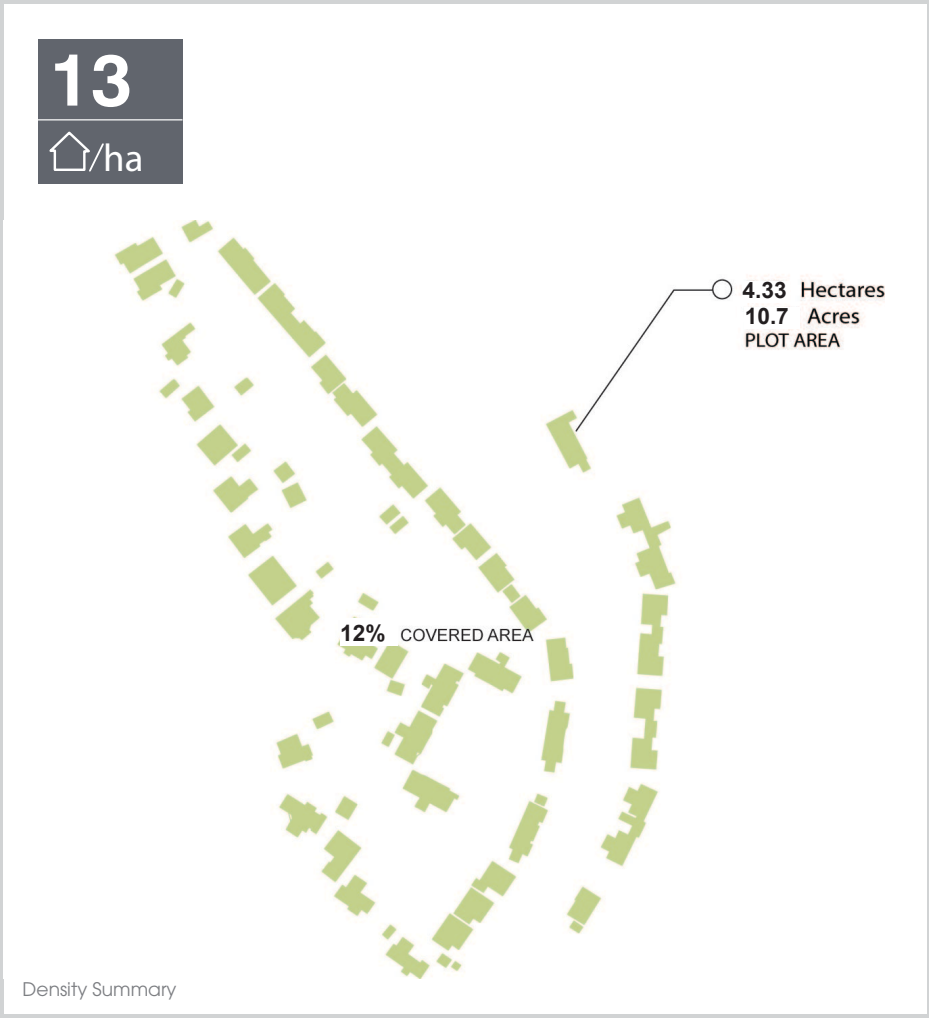
The area is located on land adjoining the B3081, and is contained by Edmondsham Road to the east and includes properties either side of Coronation Road to the west. Both roads are accessed via the roundabout and the area is currently very lightly trafficked.

There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument within the area of SSSI at Stephen's Castle and another to the north of the site.

The north east section of the site affords views to an extensive area of about 50km2 of AGLV. A small residential development has been approved adjacent to the site on Coopers Lane which may affect visibility and character.

Block Density Analysis

Area 2 - Coronation Road & Edmondsham Road						
Block Number	Block Area (Ha)	No. of Dwellings	Area of Built Form (Ha)	Non-built Area(Ha)	Ratio-Built Form / Block Area (%)	Density (Units/Ha)
B1	2.97	31	0.326	2.644	11.0	10.4
B2	0.57	11	0.107	0.463	18.8	19.3
B3	0.79	12	0.068	0.722	8.6	15.2
Total Area	**4.33**	**54**	**0.501**	**3.829**	**11.6**	**12.5**



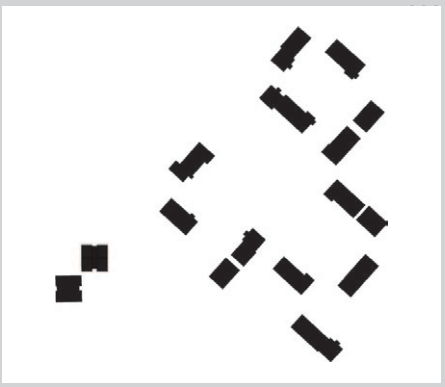
Density Study
The area has an overall density of 13 dwellings per hectare. The properties have generous plots and a number are single storey, detached units.

Streetscape
The streetscape contains large trees, shrub planting and hedges. There are generous roadside verges throughout the area and parking is largely on private driveways.

Built form
The area consists of mixed quality, low rise housing. The area marked B1 consists of large properties, both single and double storey, detached and semi detached, with generous plots to both the front and rear. The properties in B1 vary in their built form where as the adjacent area (B2) presents a more uniform pattern of semi-detached, red brick properties. The cul-de-sac block, Coronation Close, (B3) comprises single storey, semi-detached, smaller, red brick units.

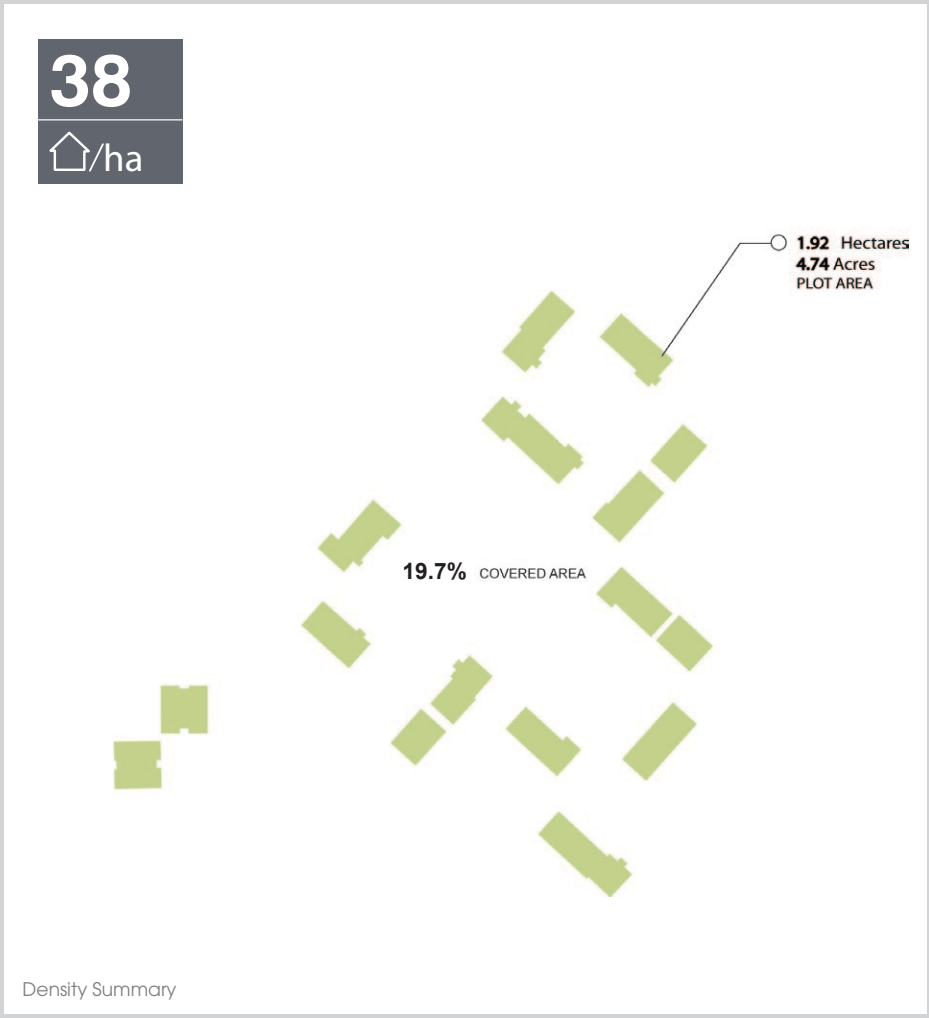
SITE 3:
PURBECK DRIVE

Site Location
The site is centrally located on the planned road network in easy walking distance to the superstore, extensive car park and smaller shops. The site is insular in character and vehicular access is solely via Pennine Way.



Block Density Analysis

Area 3 - Purbeck Drive						
Block Number	Block Area (Ha)	No. of Dwellings	Area of Built Form (Ha)	Non-built Area(Ha)	Ratio-Built Form / Block Area (%)	Density (Units/Ha)
B1	0.56	24	0.077	0.483	13.8	42.9
B2	0.57	23	0.08	0.49	14.0	40.4
B3	0.79	26	0.221	0.569	28.0	32.9
Total Area	**1.92**	**73**	**0.378**	**1.542**	**19.7**	**38**



Density Study
This area has an overall density of 38, the highest of all the study areas. This level is achieved by the close arrangement of dwellings.

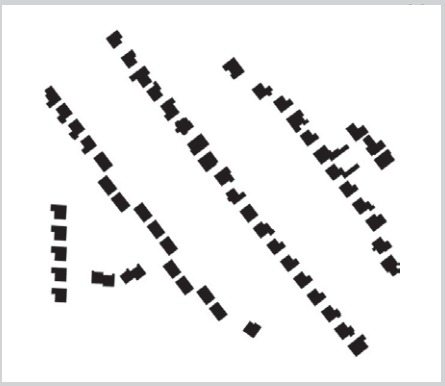
Streetscape
The study area consists of three cul-de-sacs off Pennine Way, each with shared amenity space with trees and shrubbery. The surrounding area contains a high level amenity space relative to the whole of Verwood. Despite being close to shopping facilities the area has a relatively quiet suburban character. Front gardens are generally open to the street with a mixture of on plot and on street parking.

Built Form
The site contains small, mostly one and two bed terraced houses with front and rear gardens. The building facades are red brick. There is a listed building to the west of the site.

SITE 4: MANOR ROAD & FIRS GLEN ROAD

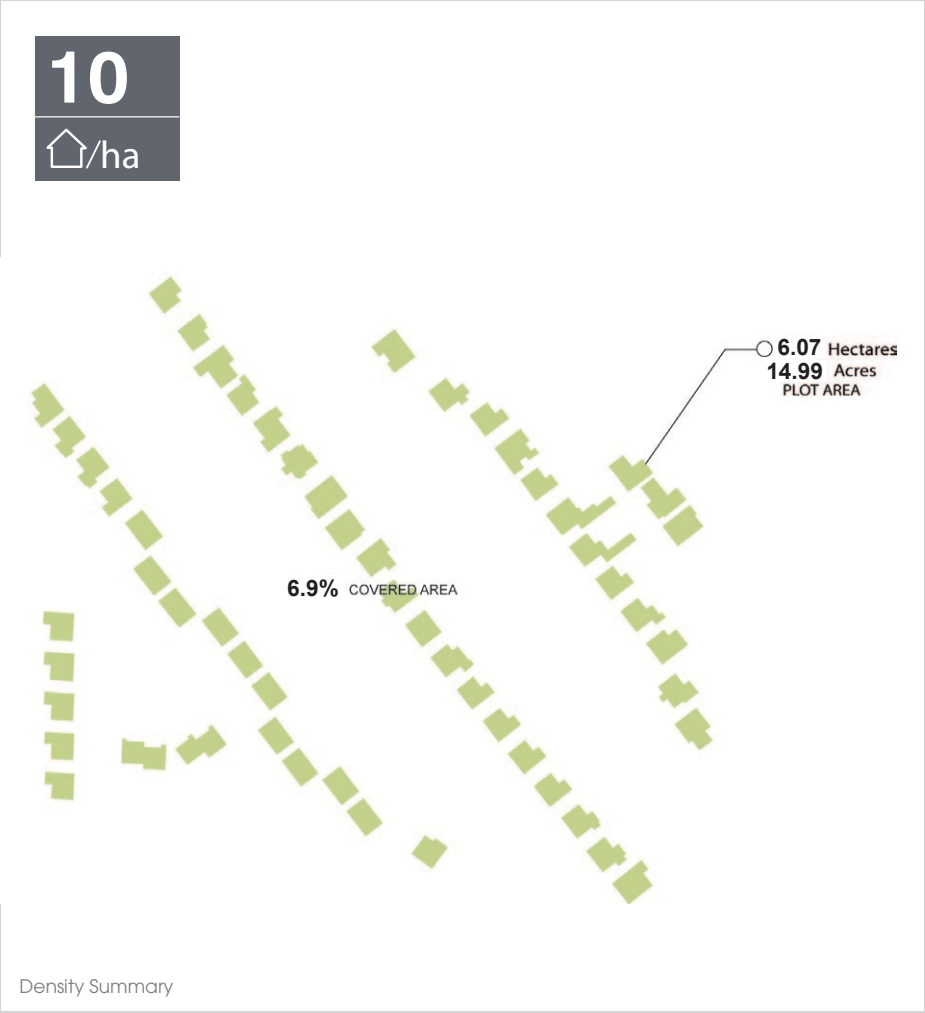
Site Location
The site is located on the southern periphery of Verwood. The site is in close proximity to the surrounding countryside, including an area of SSSI to the south east and an area of SNCI to the south west.

Proximity to the town centre is reasonable via Manor Road which runs through the site. Ebblake Industrial Estate, an employment area to the east, is approximately a kilometre and a half away.



Block Density Analysis

Area 4 - Manor Road & Firs Glen Road						
Block Number	Block Area (Ha)	No. of Dwellings	Area of Built Form (Ha)	Non-built Area(Ha)	Ratio-Built Form / Block Area (%)	Density (Units/Ha)
B1	0.56	9	0.072	0.488	12.9	16.1
B2	3.60	31	0.186	3.414	5.2	8.6
B3	1.91	15	0.162	1.748	8.5	7.9
Total Area	**6.07**	**55**	**0.42**	**5.65**	**6.9**	**10.4**



Density Study
The density of the area is low at 10.4 units per hectare. This is largely due to large detached properties in individual plots consisting of private gardens to the front and rear. Most of the dwellings have separate garages.

Streetscape
Manor Road, a major route through Verwood, transects the site. One side of Manor Road is treelined which provides an effective screen to the dwellings behind. On the other side of the road are open driveways to large detached properties.

Many of the properties have rear foot access onto Manor Road from the end of their back gardens

Firs Glen Road is a privet and shrub lined un-made track looking onto garages belonging to the properties in B2. On the other side of the track (B3) the driveways to the properties front the track.

There are no significant areas of amenity space within the study area.

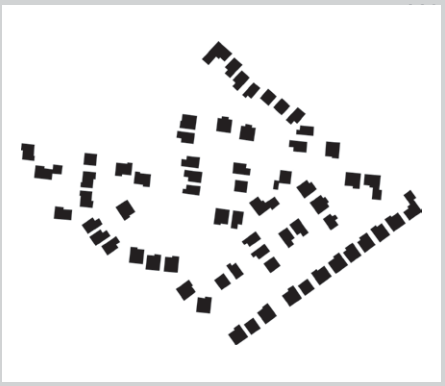
Built Form
Dwellings are arranged in rows of detached properties. The style of the properties is mixed, some red brick, some with white painted timber detailing. St Michael's Cottage, a Listed Building, is in close proximity of the site, just to the south.

SITE 5:
HAZELWOOD ROAD

Site Location
The site is located to the north east of Potterne Park and to the west of Ebblake Industrial area. This is the most remote site from the town centre and over a kilometre from Morrisions and associated small shops.

Due to the cul-de-sac layout of the estate, this sample site is insular in character, requiring car based transport to access local services.

The site is close to open countryside. There is a small area of SNCI running around the southern boundary of the site and a large area of SSSI is located further south.



Block Density Analysis

Area 5 - Hazelwood Road						
Block Number	Block Area (Ha)	No. of Dwellings	Area of Built Form (Ha)	Non-built Area(Ha)	Ratio-Built Form / Block Area (%)	Density (Units/Ha)
B1	0.77	19	0.132	0.638	17.1	24.7
B2	0.78	24	0.136	0.644	17.4	30.8
B3	0.86	24	0.169	0.691	19.7	27.9
Total Area	**2.41**	**67**	**0.437**	**1.981**	**18.1**	**27.8**

Density Study
The density of the area is 27.8 units per hectare with the built form accounting for 18.1% of the study area. Although not the highest density of the areas studied the site contains the largest proportion of built area indicating the greater size of dwellings in relation to their gardens and the close arrangement of the properties along the street. The sample site contains two small pockets of heavily wooded areas.

Streetscape
The area has limited tree planting within the public footpaths with front boundaries defined by low hedges and shrubs. Some gardens have medium sized trees within which help to soften the streetscape. The front gardens do however have a large proportion of hard paving with space for

2 or 3 cars per dwelling. The properties are very close giving the impression of a continuous façade, despite actually being detached. The tarmac road finish is replaced with terracotta coloured herringbone paving towards the end of cul-de-sacs, aiming to creating a more exclusive character.

There is a listed building south west of the site.

Built Form
Mixture of 2-storey 2, 3 and 4 bed detached properties some of which have garages within the main building. The building facades are generally brick faced. Some of the roofs are hipped or gabled.

	Site 1 – Low density	Site 2 – Close to Historic Core	Site 3 – High density	Site 4 – Urban Edge (Southern)	Site 5 – Urban edge (Northern)
Site Location	Centrally located in Verwood, within easy walking distance of both the historic town centre and major superstore. The study area lies on the transport network, to the east of Manor Road, at the point it meets Vicarage Road.	Located on the northern edge of the urban area of Verwood in very close proximity to the historic centre around the Village Green.	Centrally placed on the planned road network in easy walking distance to large foodstore and smaller shops.	Located on the southern periphery of Verwood. The site is in close proximity to the surrounding countryside, including an area of SSSI to the south east and an area of SNCI to the south west.	Located to the north east of Potterne Park and to the west of Ebblake Industrial area. This is the most remote site from the town centre and over a kilometre from Morrisions and associated small shops.
Density Study	4.3dph	12.5dph	38dph	10.4dph	27.8dph
Streetscape	Large trees in and around the area, particularly along the street edge contributing to the leafy character of the area. Two triangular areas of amenity space either side of Manor Road containing shrubbery and smaller trees. There are two cemeteries in front of the church.	Large trees, shrub planting and hedges. Generous roadside verges throughout the area and parking is largely on private driveways.	Consists of three cul-de-sacs off Pennine Way, each with shared amenity space with trees and shrubbery. The surrounding area contains a high level amenity space relative to the whole of Verwood. Despite being close to shopping facilities the area has a relatively quiet suburban character.	Manor Road, a major route through Verwood, transects the site. One side of Manor Road is treelined which provides an effective screen to the dwellings behind. On the other side of the road are open driveways to large detached properties. Firs Glen Road is a privet and shrub lined track looking onto garages belonging to the properties behind.	The area has limited tree planting within the public footpaths with front boundaries defined by low hedges and shrubs. The properties are very close giving the impression of a continuous façade, despite actually being detached.
Built Form	The houses are predominately modern, red brick detached bungalows in keeping with St Michael's Church.	Mixed quality, low rise housing. The properties in one area of the study area vary in their built form where as in another they exhibit a more uniform pattern of semi-detached, red brick properties.	Contains small, mostly one and two bed terraced houses with front and rear gardens. The building facades are red brick.	Dwellings are arranged in rows of detached properties. The style of the properties is mixed, some red brick, some with white painted timber detailing. St Michael's Cottage, a Listed Building, is in close proximity of the site.	Mixture of 2-storey 2, 3 and 4 bed detached properties some of which have garages within the main building. The building facades are generally brick faced. Some of the roofs are hipped or gabled.

SUMMARY OF DENSITY AND TOWNSCAPE ANALYSIS

The density and townscape analysis in this chapter has given us an understanding of the DNA of the settlement and is a helpful guide to understanding how localised density ranges can be utilised in future development proposals. The area requires a careful placement of housing type and density within landscape and townscape character zones. This analysis provides the contextual background for understanding the calibration of density in the future masterplanning of new neighbourhoods.

Verwood exhibits a range of density types from 4.3dph to 38dph reflecting the more suburban feel of the settlement. The average density of the areas studied is low - 18.34dph, reflecting the dominance of large, modern family housing which has been developed in the area over the last 20 years.

Verwood presents an opportunity to provide housing for the District, in locations that will not, if carefully planned, damage the important interests protected by nature conservation designations, landscape and other policies. However it is important to note that constraints exist on many of the sites in Verwood, including important trees and hedgerows. PPS 3 advises that landscaping should be an integral part of new development and opportunities should be taken for the retention of existing trees and shrubs, and for new planting. The potential conflict between residents and areas of national and international interest would also need to be addressed.

By intensifying the population of Verwood the range of services and infrastructure may need to be strengthened in a number of respects, most notably an upper school (or secondary school) is likely to be required, and this is expanded on in Chapter 10.

Particularly important in Verwood will be creating a strong ‘sense of place’ by keeping as much as possible of the character of existing buildings and features and by ensuring that new buildings are visually attractive. Designs should retain and conserve existing features which positively contribute to the character of this area of the town and must be of a high standard visually.