

Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2031



November 2016
Pre-Submission Draft for Consultation
Sturminster Newton Town Council

Foreword

Sturminster Newton has been a market town since the thirteenth century and its shape today reflects this history. It remains a market town, the smallest of the four in North Dorset, but in more recent years it has become a place of change. Our Neighbourhood Plan, when adopted, ensures that decisions about development will include consideration of our community's wishes for respect for the past, concern for the present and ambition for the future of the town and its people.

Sturminster Newton must make a contribution of sites to satisfy housing demand in North Dorset. We must do all we can to ensure that businesses find accommodation and grow. Our town centre should provide an excellent experience for businesses and customers. We must have services and facilities that satisfy the needs of every person whatever age, and have options for everyone to move easily around the town. In addition to considering the built environment, we must pay close attention to open and green spaces and our landscape setting. These requirements must be delivered in a way that sustains and protects what is precious about our environment. In this Neighbourhood Plan, we state how we envision Sturminster Newton in the future:

Our Vision

The Parish is a place in which people want to live and raise their families, invest, work in and visit. Development here will have been achieved in a sustainable way that has retained and enhanced the strong sense of community. Our heritage will be respected and safeguarded - including the town's attractive historic centre, its beautiful landscape setting and open spaces, as well as the rural character of the rest of the Parish. New housing will be matched by the necessary services and facilities including sports and leisure, community facilities, footpaths and cycle-ways, healthcare, schools and shops. Sturminster Newton will be seen as a contemporary Dorset market town that has adapted and developed so that by 2031

- > **it has a safer, more vibrant and more “user-friendly” town centre**
- > **it better serves the needs of the surrounding rural area, its residents and businesses, and**
- > **it has attracted and retained new industries, enterprises and services**

From this Vision some Aims developed that would help us achieve our Vision, and in turn Policies to guide development to achieve those Aims.

How this Plan is organised

Sections 1 and 2 – useful background information

Section 1 briefly talks about how this Plan was made, how it will be used and when and how it gets reviewed. Section 2 tracks the evolution of the town and provides information about its important and sensitive natural surroundings. The population data provides context for our policies on housing types and community facilities, covered in later sections.

Section 3 - our aims and challenges

Section 3 puts our Vision and Aims in the context of the challenges we experience and those we foresee for the future. This section considers a role and identity for the town; how the town centre is experienced and must be improved. We look at the changes in our range of businesses, what keeps them here, why some have left and what others consider before making a decision to move here. We examine our housing supply against the needs of local people and consider what housing will be needed. This section also provides detail about the provision of community facilities, such as places to learn, to meet and to worship. We also examine research about how people and goods move around and through the town. All these topics are viewed with an overall desire to maintain and develop our most precious resource, our heritage and landscape setting. This section provides rationale to many of the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and is relevant to all.

Section 4 Potential Projects

This section sets out some projects, strategic and within the Plan's scope but in addition, some that will work alongside the plan to help achieve the town's overall aspirations.

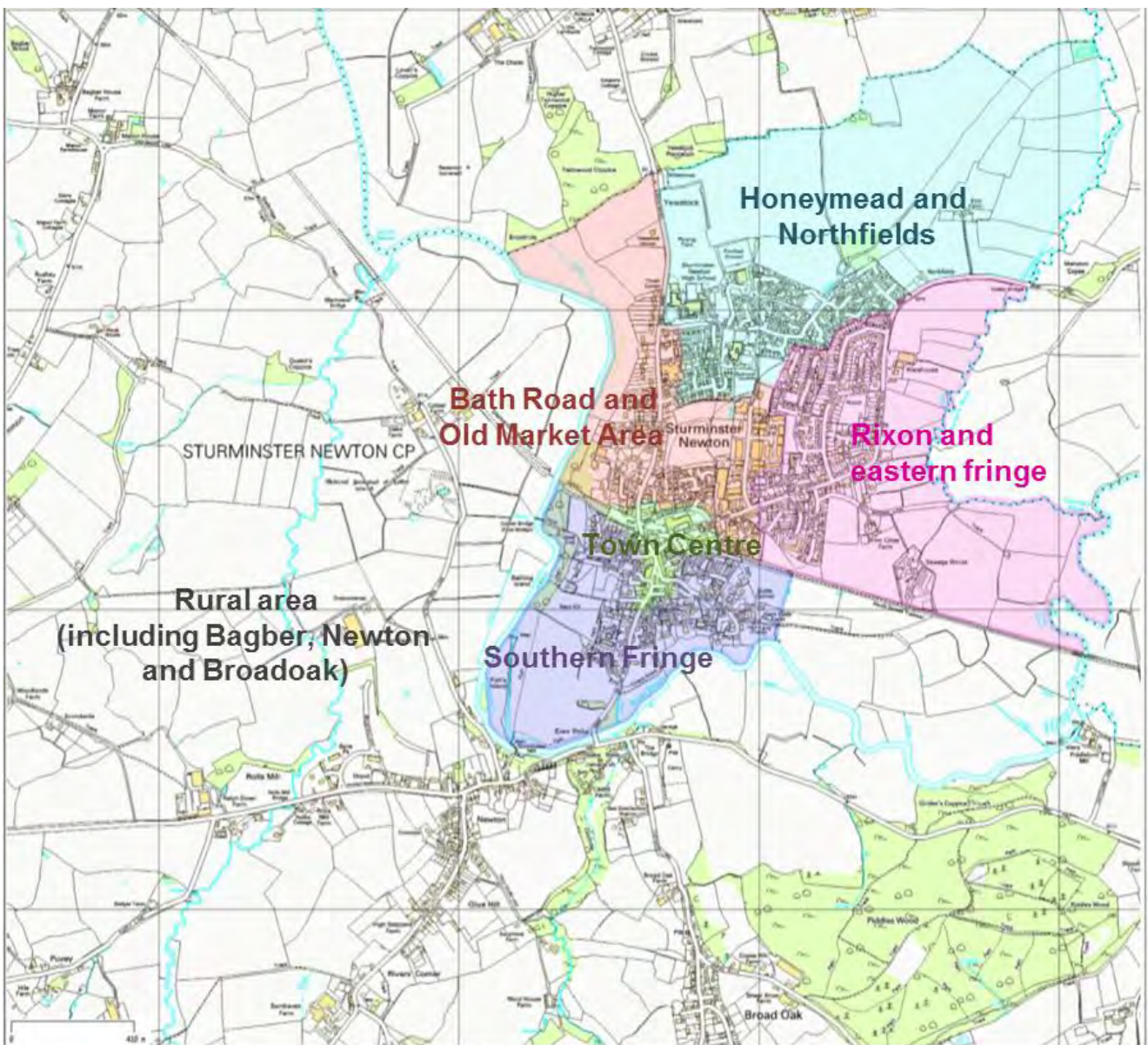
Section 5 General Policies

This section sets out general policies which are over-arching and will apply to all planning decisions and should be considered alongside current National and local North Dorset planning policy. The section includes policies on housing (numbers, location and types); open spaces (those existing and required in the future); the travel network; the character of buildings; important existing buildings; open spaces, trees and landscape and views. It is very important that these policies are used together with policies relating specifically to individual areas of the town (found in sections 6 to 11).

Section 6 to 11 – Area Focus

Section 6 to Section 11 provides detailed information and policies relating to specific and discrete geographic locations within the Plan area, each with its own distinct set of characteristics. Sections 6 to 11 allow us to provide finer detail and more thorough context about the policies that apply. These policies should be considered together with general policies set out in section 5.

Map 1. Spatial Areas



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Thank you for your interest in our Neighbourhood Plan. We look forward to receiving any questions, comments or issues through the pre-submission consultation.

Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	What is a Neighbourhood Plan?	2
1.2	How will it be implemented and reviewed	2
2	About Sturminster Newton	4
2.1	A Short History.....	4
2.2	Socio Economic profile	5
2.3	Environmental Qualities	6
3	Current Issues for the Parish, Vision and Aims	7
3.1	Role and identity	7
3.2	Town Centre	8
3.3	Businesses	10
3.4	Housing.....	11
3.5	Community Facilities	12
3.6	Movement and transport	13
3.7	Design, landscape and environment.....	15
4	Potential projects	17
5	Neighbourhood Plan Aims and Policies	19
5.1	How to use this section	19
5.2	Town Centre and Businesses	19
5.3	Housing.....	19
5.4	Community facilities	22
5.5	Movement around the Parish.....	27
5.6	Design and landscape and environment.....	30
6	Town Centre area	38
7	Bath Road and Old Market Area	53
8	Honeymead and Northfields	61
9	Rixon and Eastern Fringe area	70
10	Southern Fringe	77
11	Rural areas – Newton, Town Bridge, Glue Hill, Bagber and beyond	84

Policies List

Policy 1.	Housing numbers and locations	21
Policy 2.	Settlement boundary revision	22
Policy 3.	Housing types	22
Policy 4.	Important community buildings	25
Policy 5.	Open space provision and standards in new developments.....	26

Policy 6.	Delivering a safe and convenient travel network	27
Policy 7.	The Trailway	27
Policy 8.	Design and character of buildings and their settings	34
Policy 9.	Important views and landscape sensitivity	34
Policy 10.	Important local buildings	35
Policy 11.	Important Open Spaces and Local Green Spaces.....	35
Policy 12.	Trees in the landscape	37
Policy 13.	Town centre uses.....	40
Policy 14.	Uses in the shopping frontages area	40
Policy 15.	Town centre area character.....	41
Policy 16.	Shop Fronts.....	44
Policy 17.	Town centre public realm improvements.....	46
Policy 18.	Station Road site.....	50
Policy 19.	Market Hill site	51
Policy 20.	Clarkes Yard site and adjoining land	52
Policy 21.	Bath Road and Old Market Area character	54
Policy 22.	Bath Road and Old Market Area pedestrian and cycle route network	57
Policy 23.	Market Fields site, east of Bath Road	58
Policy 24.	Former council offices at Stour View	59
Policy 25.	Land at Yewstock Fields	60
Policy 26.	Honeymead and Northfields character.....	62
Policy 27.	Honeymead and Northfields pedestrian and cycle route network	64
Policy 28.	Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub	65
Policy 29.	North Honeymead Field.....	67
Policy 30.	Land North of Manston Road: Reserve Site	68
Policy 31.	Rixon and eastern fringe character.....	71
Policy 32.	Rixon and Eastern Fringe Area Pedestrian and Cycle Route Network	73
Policy 33.	Land south of Elm Close.....	74
Policy 33a	Land east of Elm Close	75
Policy 34.	Southern Fringe character	78
Policy 35.	William Barnes school site	82
Policy 36.	Hammonds Yard site.....	83
Policy 37.	Rural settlements character: Newton, Glue Hill and Broad Oak	86
Policy 38.	Rural areas countryside character	87
Policy 39.	Rural recreational trails	92
Policy 40.	Land at North Dorset Business Park.....	93
Policy 41.	Land adjoining the Bull Tavern	94
Policy 42.	Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse	95
Policy 43.	Re-use of redundant agricultural buildings.....	95

Maps, Figures and Tables

Map 1.	Spatial Areas	ii
Figure 1.	Extract from September 2015 Unity Article	1
Table 1.	The key milestones of our consultation process	1
Map 2.	Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan Area	4
Figure 2.	Population growth from the Census surveys	5
Table 2.	Town Centre Aims and Relevant Policies	8
Table 3.	Town Centre Strengths and Possible Threats	9
Table 4.	Business Aims and Relevant Policies	10
Table 5.	Housing Aims and Relevant Policies	11
Table 6.	Community Facility Aims and Relevant Policies	12
Table 7.	Movement and Transport Aims and Relevant Policies	13
Table 8.	Design, Landscape and Environment Aims and Relevant Policies	15
Table 9.	Identified Projects for Funding	17
Table 10.	Possible future projects	18
Table 11.	Main housing sites proposed	19
Map 3.	Settlement Boundary, main Housing and other Site Allocations	20
Table 12.	Community buildings	22
Map 4.	Community Facilities and Public Open Spaces	24
Table 13.	Open Space and Play Provision Priorities	25
Map 5.	Key Pedestrian and Cycle Routes	28
Table 14.	Proposed Future Enhancements of Key Routes	29
Table 15.	Residential parking standards	31
Table 16.	Tree Coverage Areas where trees makes a significant positive difference:	31
Map 6.	Map of Significant Tree Coverage	32
Map 7.	Local Green Spaces	33
Map 8.	Town Centre Area	38
Figure 3.	Artist’s impression of a possible future for the Town Centre	39
Map 9.	Town Centre and Shopping Frontages	39
Table 17.	Town Centre Area – Locally Listed Buildings	42
Map 10.	Public Realm Improvement Area	44
Figure 4.	Artist’s illustration of how the area could be developed	49
Figure 5.	Potential use of Clarkes Yard as Public Car Park (alternative option to housing)	52
Map 11.	Bath Road and Old Market Area	53
Table 18.	Bath Road and Old Market Area – Locally Listed Buildings	56
Figure 6.	Concept and Issues Diagram – Market Fields site	57
Map 12.	Honeymead and Northfields area	61
Figure 7.	Concept and Issues Diagram – North Honeymead Field and North of Manston Road sites	67
Map 13.	Rixon and Eastern Fringe area	70
Figure 8.	Concept and Issues Diagram – Elm Close South and Elm Close East sites	74
Map 14.	Southern Fringe area	77
Table 19.	Southern Fringe – Locally Listed Buildings	80
Map 15.	Rural areas map	84
Map 16.	Locally Important Buildings – western zone	89
Table 20.	Rural area – Locally Listed Buildings	90
Map 17.	Network of Important Recreational Trails	91
Figure 9.	Concept and Issues Diagram – North Mills Business Park	93


1 Introduction

The Sturminster Newton Area Neighbourhood Plan began in 2013 as a proposal by SturQuest, embraced and sponsored by Sturminster Newton Town Council and agreed by North Dorset District Council as the Local Planning Authority.

The Town Council is responsible for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for Sturminster Newton. The Town Council appointed a Steering Group to direct the project, facilitate its successful completion, help ensure collaboration with interested parties from every part of the community, and ensure consultations attracted the widest possible audiences. A project manager engaged experts and members of the community, many of whom had knowledge and special interest in specific themes or topics. These groups, in consultation with the wider community, worked together for over two years to produce this Plan.

Community engagement has been central to our activity. Our Plan has been developed through extensive consultation with the people of Sturminster Newton and others with an interest in the town. Details of each consultation have been recorded in a series of reports that are available to download from Sturminster Newton Town Council's website (www.sturminsternewton-tc.gov.uk) or from the Town Council Office and the SturQuest Community Office.

Figure 1. Extract from September 2015 Unity Article



Results of the NP Town Centre Consultation

A short update on the results of the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan proposals for the Town Centre

Why we have produced this summary
Last month in Unity Magazine we asked you to complete a questionnaire about what the Neighbourhood Plan should say about the Town Centre and this month we would like to share the results. There was a really good response, so thank you to everyone who took part. The results indicate broad agreement with our proposals and provide a significant body of comments that we need to address either through the Neighbourhood Plan or, where this is not the right means, a suitable alternative.

The consultation stage
This was the fourth main consultation event on the Neighbourhood Plan, following on from the consultation in November 2015. The consultation centred on a number of topics:

- An idea for major regeneration which would provide guidance and an indicative design for any future redevelopment of the Station Road car park area that also links the historic and new areas of the town centre.
- Creation of a Plaza - improved market, outdoor performance space, and destination on Trailway. This builds on the role of the Exchange as the principal arts venue in North Dorset.


How we consulted
The consultation ran for the majority of July and consisted of the following steps:

- Publication in Unity of the proposals and including a questionnaire. It has a distribution of 3200 copies, is delivered to most households within the Sturminster Newton Plan Area and is also left at key distributor points in the neighbouring villages outside the parish.
- On-line questionnaire available from 27th June for residents to complete.
- Meeting with businesses and retailers on 6th July to present and discuss the proposals.
- Event on 8th July in the Exchange for residents to discuss the proposals with members of the Neighbourhood Plan team. Questionnaires were available for visitors.
- Meeting on 13th July with a small workshop of retailers to gather detailed feedback regarding the proposals.
- Consultation concluded at the end of July.
- 170 residents completed questionnaires on-line and on paper. We did not count the attendees at the display in the atrium of the Exchange, but attendance was significant.

Who responded
Of the 170 questionnaire responses received, most were from local residents, but they also included some businesses and other organisations. Of those completing the questionnaire 75% lived in the town, 17% in Binger and Borebrook and the remainder from other areas of the parish or outside.

Points to address
The results indicate broad agreement with the proposals; however, significant issues were raised in the comments that need to be addressed either by the Neighbourhood Plan or other initiatives in the town. These include:

- Several comments stressed the importance of linking the proposals to creation of a distinct economic purpose for the town that would make it more competitive.
- Some people commented that the existing historic town centre is the Town Centre and that a new development should not move this; although our 2014 consultation indicated the majority considered the town centre to include the area around the Exchange. Concern was expressed about the potential for a new development to attract customers away from the market and the elder shops and undermine their viability.
- Deliveries - concern was expressed about the ability for delivery lorries to navigate the road layouts given the changes to Station Road and the movement of parking in Market Place near to Market's.
- A few responses felt some consideration should be given to the potential over the life of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Shillingstone railway to extend to Sturminster Newton. This was supported by a letter from the North Dorset Railway Trust (NDRT).
- Parking was mentioned many times - the location, signage, price (many wanted free parking) and type. The provision for new residents and the importance of having sufficient parking close to businesses was raised by both retailers and the public, particularly in regard to the redevelopment of the Station Road car park.
- Comments were also made regarding access to parking at Clarke's Yard - disabled/infirm access and distance, safety of access to both Road and safety when crossing the road.
- The changes to the layout of Market Place and removal of parking near the Museum were supported by 76% of respondents, but comments were made about the likelihood of people wanting to sit in the improved spaces given the traffic.
- People were concerned about the treatment of Hanson's, Stewlers and the Original Factory Shop since it wasn't clear on the diagrams what would happen to them, even though the text clearly stated that existing businesses would be incorporated.
- A comment was made regarding lack of clarity over where buses would stop, turn and pick up.
- While there was a majority consensus that there are no buildings of special merit in the Station Road Development Area that should be preserved (67%), there were several comments suggesting retention of Stewlers and improving it rather than replacement.
- Comments were made about the need to provide somewhere for younger people, but to avoid creating spaces that attract antisocial behaviour.
- In the general comments section, there were many supportive comments indicating support for improving the Station Road regeneration area and the historic centre. They included comments about the importance of any design complementing the character of the old town and the sensitive use of good quality materials. The views of Hembledon Mill was also mentioned. The importance of signage was mentioned several times and that it should direct people to the historic centre, the Mill and the Museum from the Trailway.
- Other comments indicate the importance of trees in improving the appearance of the centre and the need to improve the general appearance of the shops in the historic centre along Bridge Street (scruffy exteriors were mentioned several times), security sign boards on the pavement were also mentioned.
- Many comments suggested bringing a better supermarket offer to the town.



SturFit
This month's news...
SAVE £30!
That's right, for the gym you'll love between now and October 31st it's a standing offer for your monthly fee and get your joining & induction fee of \$30 waived!

We still need volunteers to help out with our events! If you're looking for a challenge, please get in touch with us today!

Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/sturfit

Contact: Centre Manager Neil on 07547 40081 or 01302 811111

Table 1. The key milestones of our consultation process

Date	Event / consultation	Outcomes
March 2014	Public launch event. Promoted through Unity Community Magazine, leaflets, posters, Town Council and SturQuest Websites, SturQuest Community office. This Launch event was repeated at the High School	Attended by 195 people Results published and shared at Town Council workshop. Full report on Neighbourhood Plan website www.sturminsternewtonplan.com

Date	Event / consultation		Outcomes
November 2014	Second Public Consultation – included results of Launch plus developing Vision and Aims	Attended by 388 people plus 35 High School	Results published in Community Magazine, and full report on Neighbourhood Plan website
Jan-July 2015	Neighbourhood Plan Working Group undertook focus groups, meetings, presentations, detailed research on a number of topics		
November 2015	Third Public Consultation including more detailed questions for the community on views, open spaces, local buildings, and Town Centre Proposals	Received 205 detailed questionnaire responses with many more attending	Results published in Unity Magazine and full report on Neighbourhood Plan website
July 2016	Town Centre Options Consultation in Unity Community Magazine distributed to all households in Sturminster Newton and dropped off to all local village centres. Consultation also available through Neighbourhood Plan website	Received 170 Returned questionnaires	Results published in Unity Magazine. This and other research led to draft 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan

A large quantity of information was gathered by volunteers in the process of researching and producing the content of each consultation and evaluating the results. This information forms what we are calling the ‘Evidence Base’. A document called Evidence Base Summary is available on the Town Council’s Website or at the Town Council’s Office or the SturQuest Office.

1.1 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan will guide development in the town and its surrounding area until 2031. It forms part of the development plan for the area (which includes the Local Plan for North Dorset). This means it must be taken into consideration when planning applications are assessed. It deals with the specific issues that our community have said are facing our parish now.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be available either in hard copy from the Town Council and SturQuest or online via the Town Council’s website.

1.2 How will it be implemented and reviewed

A Neighbourhood Plan is officially ‘made’ after it has passed the referendum process. At that time it becomes part of the development plan for the area.

North Dorset District Council is the local planning authority (at time of publication in 2016) and it is the Local Planning Authority that makes decisions on planning applications. It is required to take account of this Neighbourhood Plan once adopted as part of the development plan.

Sturminster Newton Town Council’s role is to consider all planning applications within the Parish and to make a recommendation to the Local Planning Authority about them, to suggest they should be approved or rejected, suggest conditions for approval or recommend changes. The Town Council will use the Neighbourhood Plan as a basis for making such recommendations and will consult with local organisations where appropriate.

Local Government Re-Organisation

In 2016 consultation began on the possibility of significant changes in local government. Depending on the outcome, the District and County Councils may be re-structured. If this were to happen, the status of the Neighbourhood Plan would remain unaltered as part of the development plan for the area. However, the Local Planning Authority role, and other roles (such as the County Council’s highways responsibilities) may come under different organisations. Because of this uncertainty we have included their role rather than current name when referring to these organisations

Planning Applications

To obtain permission to develop, alter, or change the use of a site or existing building, landowners or developers will still need to go through the process of applying for planning consent. Some small changes can be made under permitted development rights and applicants should check if their proposals need full consent. As the Neighbourhood Plan sets out policies for deciding whether the proposed development should or shouldn't be allowed, it is advisable to consult this Plan before making an application – although other considerations can still have a bearing on the final decision.

Many applicants follow the good practice of discussing their emerging ideas and plans with the planning authority and the local community, and anyone who might be affected by them. This is particularly important on larger or particularly sensitive sites where there is likely to be a great deal of public interest in the proposed plans. The Town Council welcomes the opportunity to discuss emerging plans for larger scale or potentially controversial developments prior to application. Please contact the Town Council for further details. SturQuest can advise on arranging consultation events or surveys and can suggest where there is a relevant 'advisory group' - like Open Spaces – who can help with your application.

Residents, businesses, developers and new investors can make comments on planning applications, to be considered either by the Town Council in their response, or direct to the Local Planning Authority. If the Neighbourhood Plan is going to be used to guide planning decisions it makes sense that anyone considering making a planning application should consider what the plan is saying and what it is trying to achieve. We have arranged the plan in such a way as to make this as straightforward as possible.

Funding of infrastructure improvements and related projects

Having a Neighbourhood Plan in place means that 25% of the general infrastructure funding from development (the Community Infrastructure Levy - CIL) will be passed to the Town Council to spend on local infrastructure projects. This can cover a range of potential projects, from recreation and sport, training and education, to more general community benefits such as footpaths and community safety. The remaining 75% is spent by the Local Planning Authority on strategic infrastructure projects, as set out in their published Infrastructure Delivery Plan. In Sturminster Newton this part of the District fund is initially likely to be focused on changes to the schools and improvements to the leisure centre and the library.

For more detail of potential projects see section 4.

Reviewing the Plan

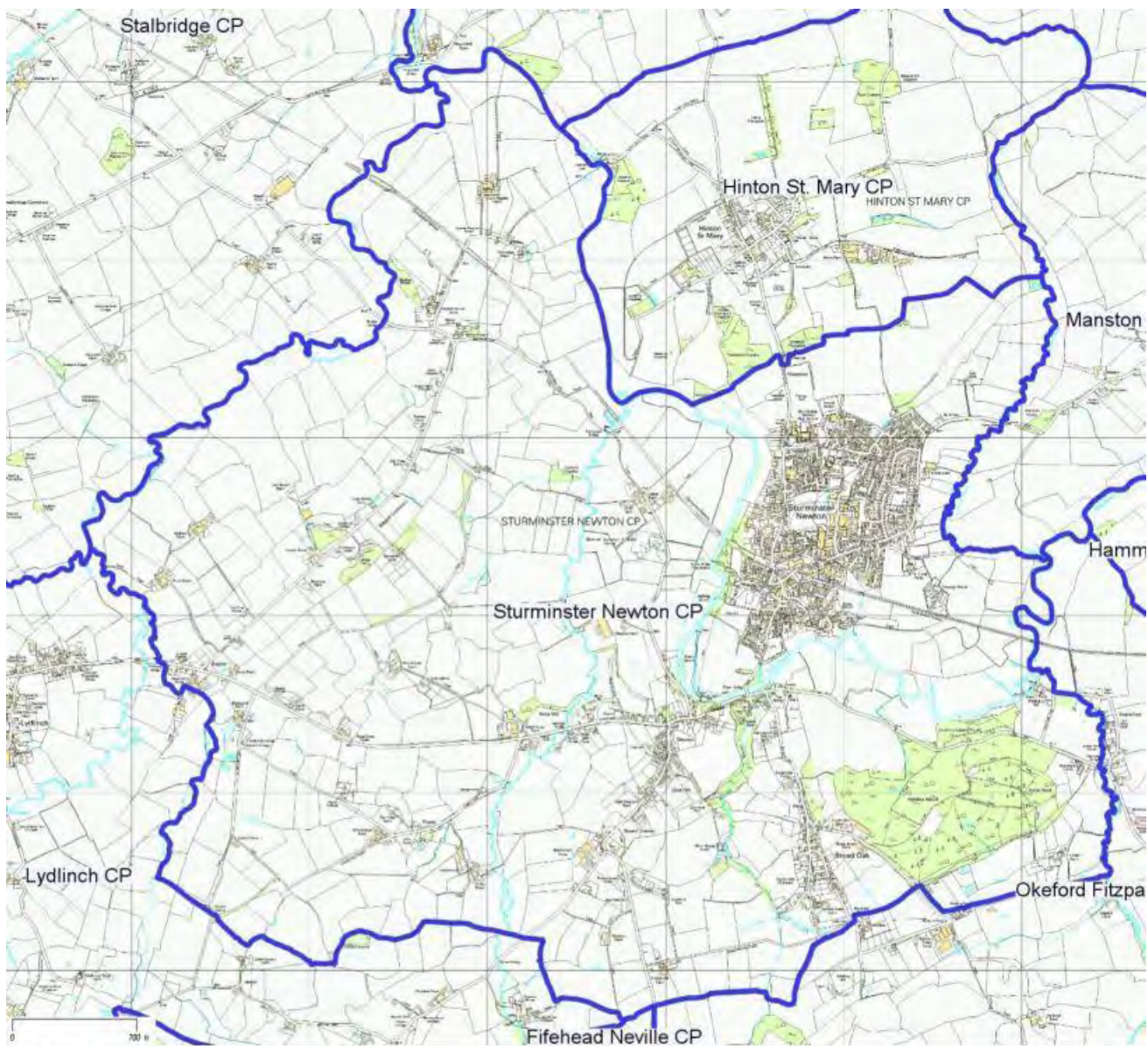
The Plan has an end date of 2031. However, if there are major changes affecting the area, either in terms of national or local planning policy, it is quite possible that the plan could become outdated sooner than this. The Town Council will need to decide if this is the case and schedule work to re-examine the content.

The process of reviewing a Plan is much the same as putting together this first version. It is a long process that requires many months of volunteer time and funding for planning expertise. The exact timing of any future review will depend on a number of factors, including resources, volunteers, the need for development and the extent to which the strength of the Plan may have been weakened by future events or evidence.

2 About Sturminster Newton

2.1 A Short History

Map 2. Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan Area



Date Created: 13-5-2015 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 377604 / 116091 | Scale: 1:35000 | © Contains Ordnance Survey Data : Crown copyright and database right

Sturminster Newton sits in the heart of the Blackmore Vale and has its origins as a crossing point of the river Stour and as a centre for farming activities in the surrounding area. It has been the market town for the area since 1200s and its shape today still reflects this history. Its medieval lanes in the old town, its market square, the bridge built in 1500s over the Stour and the mill also on the Stour, a complete 17th century example that still functions today, all are little changed. The large cattle market and the building of a creamery established the town as a hub for what Thomas Hardy called the 'vale of little dairies'. The coming of the railway in 1863 gave a significant boost to the town. Located near to the large cattle market it enabled the transportation of milk and livestock and enabled



the town's people to travel beyond the confines of the area. The loss of the railway in the 1960s followed by the closure of the livestock market and creamery, have meant that agriculture is less important to the town's economy and function.

Sturminster Newton has important links to Thomas Hardy, who was resident here in 1876 (Sturminster Newton is renamed Stourcastle in his books) and this is where he wrote 'The Return of the Native'. The renowned poets William Barnes and Robert Young who both wrote in the Dorset dialect, were also resident here. It was on these cultural roots that the town began to rebuild after the demise of the cattle market and creamery. The Exchange, a leisure and culture centre was built in 2007 and two nationally renowned festivals – the Cheese Festival and the Boogie Woogie Festival are based in the town today. However, since the dramatic change in its economic circumstances during the 80s and 90s, it is fair to say that Sturminster Newton has struggled to understand its identity and then build on this to strengthen its role in North Dorset.

The Exchange
Often cited as a case study in successful community partnership projects, "The Exchange" was a £2.6M redevelopment to provide a large and impressive community facility, health centre, supermarket and community offices. Run by volunteers, the centre broke even in its first year of operation, and attracts national performing arts to the area, playing a major role in the transformation of the town

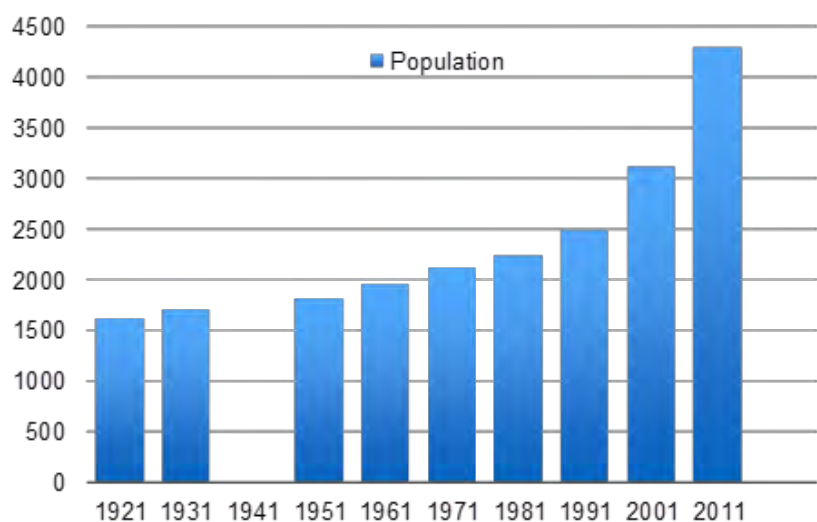
2.2 Socio Economic profile

The population of Sturminster Newton grew slowly up to 1971 after which it increased much more rapidly to 4,355 people by 2011 (ONS Census 2011) as a result of significant house building in the 1990s and 2000s. In recent years there has been a net loss of younger people (in the 16-24 age bracket) represented in the population, as school leavers go elsewhere for further education or to find work. However, this loss is counterbalanced by people moving into the area and residents living longer (Dorset has the highest life expectancy of any county in the UK), therefore population rates have been rising very slowly in the last fifteen years or so.

Figure 2. Population growth from the Census surveys

In line with the rest of North Dorset, the population of Sturminster Newton parish would be expected to rise by about another 280 people over the next fifteen years, but with the level of housing proposed in the Local Plan it could rise by around 800 people.

Just over 80% of our residents enjoy good or very good health (2011 census) whilst less than 5% are limited by bad health. These figures are very much in accordance with those of North Dorset and Dorset as a whole.



The deprivation measures for Sturminster Newton show that it is one of the more deprived areas within North Dorset, but it is still much more affluent than some others areas of Dorset. The ACORN profile of Sturminster Newton residents' economic status shows 49% are considered to be 'comfortably off' and 34.5% are 'wealthy achievers', and a high percentage of these are older residents. In both cases this is above the national average and the average for Dorset and gives the impression of an affluent area. However, 13% of residents both families and individuals, are 'hard pressed' which broadly reflects the number of residents who we know are on benefits of various kinds.

Although unemployment is relatively low (consistently under 1.8% for many years), wages in North Dorset jobs are well below the national average.

2.3 Environmental Qualities

Our Neighbourhood Plan area has many highly valued buildings, open spaces, rivers and woodlands, a number of which are protected through legislation.

Piddles Wood is an ancient woodland and nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest, and there are also locally important nature conservation sites at Butts Pond Meadows and in the wider rural area. Records show the presence of a range of protected species, including bats, badgers, otters, water voles, dormice, various birds (such as Barn Owls, Kingfishers and even Red Kite), rare or threatened butterflies and reptiles (such as the Great Crested Newt).

Although lying just outside the nationally important Dorset AONB (an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), the quality of the local landscape is typical of the Blackmore Vale, steeped in a long history of pastoral agriculture, and characterised by hedged fields with an abundance of hedgerow trees.



In terms of its built environment, the Sturminster Newton Conservation Area (designated in 1976) covers the southern part of the town and parts of Newton. There are 121 Listed buildings or structures in the plan area, the most notable being the Grade I Town Bridge; Church of St Mary; and Fiddleford Mill House, and Grade II* Sturminster Newton Mill and Sturminster Newton Castle. The castle remains and Fiddleford Manor are also scheduled monuments, as is the Medieval cross 200m north west of St Mary's Church.

The River Stour with its tributaries runs through the area and encircles the town, its water meadows not only performing an important function as part of the floodplain, but making a real contribution to views into and out of the town and its overall setting.

3 Current Issues for the Parish, Vision and Aims

This section contains the Aims that have been developed from our overall Vision, and provides some justification and context for the more detailed policies and proposals in Section 5 onwards. It takes account of consultation feedback and draws on other research including the North Dorset Local Plan and the Mary Portas Review.

3.1 Role and identity

While consulting local people, evidence showed there was consensus that the Plan should have as its central premise, a determined role or identity for the town. While in the past it was defined as a flourishing market town serving a local farming community, in the future and towards 2031, this identity and role is much less clear. The changes in how people travel, work, live and shop and the growth in other local towns are factors affecting how Sturminster Newton is perceived and its place within North Dorset.

There are other towns all within about 10 miles, with larger populations, more employment and often better access to roads and the rail network. So Sturminster Newton needs to craft a role that positively differentiates it from these neighbours if it is to thrive.

There were different opinions about what constitutes the ‘contemporary’ market town and also a strong community feeling that ‘traditional’ was not necessarily a bad thing. The key characteristics that came out as important elements in the town’s distinctive identity and role, and which should influence its future development, can be summed up in the following 7 points:

- it is a small town, a safe place to bring up families and has a strong and friendly community spirit, meaning that people are more likely to get involved, and feel more ‘at home’ than perhaps is the case in larger towns or cities.
- the centre of the town, which includes the traditional Market Place and the more modern Exchange, form the heart of the community
- the importance of farming, food production and the railway in the town’s history
- the installation of Superfast Broadband and the potential to attract new types of business as a result
- the rural setting and unique Dorset character (with its fine views and many historic buildings)
- a really good range of facilities providing opportunities for shopping, working and social and leisure interests, so that people can go about their daily lives locally
- the successful events that take place within the town that bring in many visitors - such as the Cheese Festival , International Boogie Woogie Festival and producers' markets

These should still hold true in 2031. And although a role that focusses on ‘small’, ‘traditional’ and ‘local’ runs a risk that our Vision could appear averse to change, this is not the case. The Exchange is one example of how local people have worked together to establish a facility that is the envy of larger towns. Residents are committed to a more vibrant and distinctive community that others want to live, work in and visit, a town centre that is well used and provides good access to a wide range of leisure pursuits.

The livestock market and the railway

Earliest records of a recognised market date back to the 13th century. By the 19th Century the town was trading in a wide range of goods and livestock, boosted by the arrival of the railway in 1863. For over a hundred years the Somerset and Dorset Railway gave local people easy access to neighbouring towns and to the coast, as well as the opportunity to connect with trains to London and further afield. By the beginning of the 20th century Sturminster market had gained the reputation of being the largest calf market in Britain. In 1906 it transferred to its final purpose built site immediately to the north of the railway which covered almost three hectares. The prosperity of the town relied heavily on the success of the livestock market and on the dairy industry which was centred on the milk and cheese factory. The town became a centre for agricultural suppliers and for related legal and financial services. When the railway closed in 1966 the market continued to be served by road haulage until its closure in 1997 when livestock sales were transferred to centres such as Yeovil and Frome.

These characteristics that appealed to the community are therefore at the heart of our Vision:

Vision

The Parish is a place in which people want to live and raise their families, invest, work in and visit. Development here will have been achieved in a sustainable way that has retained and enhanced the strong sense of community. Our heritage will be respected and safeguarded - including the town's attractive historic centre, its beautiful landscape setting and open spaces, as well as the rural character of the rest of the Parish. New housing will be matched by the necessary services and facilities including sports and leisure, community facilities, footpaths and cycleways, healthcare, schools and shops. Sturminster Newton will be seen as a contemporary Dorset market town that has adapted and developed so that by 2031

- > it has a safer, more vibrant and more “user-friendly” town centre
- > it better serves the needs of the surrounding rural area, its residents and businesses, and
- > it has attracted and retained new industries, enterprises and services

From this Vision a number of Aims have been developed, and the following sections examine these, specifically relating to:

- Town Centre
- Businesses
- Housing
- Community Facilities
- Movement and transport
- Design and landscape

3.2 Town Centre

Table 2. Town Centre Aims and Relevant Policies

<p>Town Centre – Aims</p> <p>To have a strong and vibrant town centre, as a place that people want to visit, by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > having reasonably priced and convenient public car parks for shoppers, disabled people, visitors and workers > having welcoming, pedestrian-friendly public areas, that can host the regular market, occasional events and a thriving “street-culture”, with safe and obvious routes that encourage people to move between the various parts of the town centre > having successful, active and attractive shops, places to eat / drink and meet, visitor and other services focused in the centre, from the historic core to the Exchange > supporting the appropriate re-use or redevelopment of underused / disused land or buildings > retaining the key facilities that operate and bring people into the town centre, such as the Exchange, Medical Centre and Post Office 	<p>The new policies particularly relevant for the Town Centre are:</p> <p><i>Policy 4. Important community buildings</i></p> <p><i>Policy 6. Delivering a safe and convenient travel network</i></p> <p><i>Policy 7. The Trailway</i></p> <p><i>Policy 8. Design and character of buildings and their settings</i></p> <p><i>Policy 10. Important local buildings</i></p> <p><i>Policy 13. Town centre uses</i></p> <p><i>Policy 14. Uses in the shopping frontages area</i></p> <p><i>Policy 15. Town centre area character</i></p> <p><i>Policy 16. Shop Fronts</i></p> <p><i>Policy 17. Town centre public realm improvements</i></p> <p><i>Policy 18. Station Road site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 19. Market Hill site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 20. Clarkes Yard site & adjoining land</i></p>
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Why we promote these Aims

Town centres across the UK are changing as shopping habits evolve and Sturminster Newton is no exception. However, Sturminster has a lot to offer, with its unique charm, independent shops, the Exchange and

Museum, the Trailway and events such as the Cheese Festival and Boogie Woogie Festival which draw in visitors from far afield.

The town centre is divided into two distinct areas; the old town to the south comprising the historic market square and high street, and the north town where there has been more development in recent years. This area is situated near the route of the old railway line and includes the Exchange, Medical Centre, a supermarket, some shops and the majority of the towns parking. The two areas are linked by a pedestrianised shopping street, Station Road.

In consultations, residents said that traffic through the High Street and lack of free parking were their key concerns about the town centre. The width of the High Street at certain points and the narrowness of the pavements make pedestrians feel vulnerable. Bridge Street, the southernmost shopping street, is particularly blighted by traffic activity which makes it more difficult to attract people to the shops and businesses located there. The number of parking spaces (with public car parking in the Station Road car park, and additional parking around the Exchange building) more than meets current demand – on paper. However, the parking could be better coordinated and managed (as there is an uncoordinated mix of public charges and private restrictions that adversely affect shopping behaviours and employment parking) and it is unfortunate that the main car park is not particularly obvious to visitors passing through the town centre – the route to it is circuitous and can involve two sets of traffic lights.

A further feature of our consultation was the recognition that people consider the town centre to have shifted northwards with the arrival of the Exchange, Medical Centre and supermarket. Residents appreciated the facilities the north part of town provide but were also concerned that the old town should remain lively and not replaced by the northern area. Lack of some key shops and poor signage were also noted in our surveys. In response to consultations, local residents have generally indicated that they would welcome a better supermarket ‘offer’ in the town – however, our research indicates that although the town could support a slightly larger store it is unlikely that the town would support two supermarkets. It was generally believed that the market held on Mondays, could be improved as attendance has dwindled in recent years and stalls are often split between two different areas of the town, Market Square and Station Road pedestrian area.

A summary of strengths and weaknesses is presented below.

Table 3. Town Centre Strengths and Possible Threats

<i>Key strengths</i>	<i>Possible threats or missed opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > A ‘market town’ with weekly market presence, range of largely independent shops and services, and events such as the annual Cheese Festival attracting a significant number of visitors into the town > An attractive area including the Market Place, Market Cross and wider historic environment in the centre, and an identity linked to the railway and livestock market heritage in the northern part > The Exchange is a major resource to the town, and has significant potential to grow through use as a conferencing as well as cultural performance and community centre > The Trailway brings visitors into and potentially through the Town Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Loss of trade / footfall due to competition (nearby towns and internet shopping), leading to lack of maintenance and potential increase in vacant units > Poor impression of the town centre when passing through the town > Perceived difficulties parking and some visitors not stopping if they are not able to park easily, or not returning if they are unable to move safely around the town > Impact of vehicular traffic on the environment, compromised safety and enjoyment of those on foot in the town centre > The failure to secure a clear and attractive route for the Trailway through the town centre and on to Stalbridge and the west

Looking forward, the town can build on the success of its local businesses, particularly craft, food and drink-based businesses, which meet local needs and attract visitors to the town. With its modest sized population, visitors are important to the local economy, and they are increasingly combining shopping with food and drink

as part of their leisure activities. The outdoor street market in the town has played an important role in its past, and there is scope for this to be strengthened as part of Sturminster Newton’s unique offer in the future.

There are a number of vacant or underused sites in the northern part of the town centre area, along the line of the former railway, which hold the key to the centre’s future growth. The area is within easy walking distance of the historic Market Place via the pedestrianised part of Station Road, via Bath Road and also by the pedestrian route along Lover’s Lane. Development on these sites must be carefully planned, to not only support the existing businesses, but to make the most of the opportunities they bring to make the whole of the town centre a vibrant and attractive destination.

3.3 Businesses

Table 4. Business Aims and Relevant Policies

<p><i>Businesses – main aims</i></p> <p>To provide opportunities for economic growth that create and sustain local employment and investment in the area, without harm to the area’s character or amenity (e.g. heavy traffic on unsuitable roads), by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > directing the main general employment growth to North Dorset Business Park (Rolls Mill), including businesses that are not particularly suited to sites within the town > encouraging smaller office-based businesses in and around the town centre, for example through the re-use and redevelopment of sites. > encouraging the reuse of redundant farm buildings for appropriate tourism and business-related uses. > supporting the growth of the education, training and business-support sectors, > making sure that new and growing businesses have good access to broadband / mobile communications and suitable road access / parking for their needs > supporting projects that strengthen the town’s distinctive identity and role <p>To improve opportunities for visitors to enjoy the cultural and recreational opportunities provided within the town and wider area, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > retaining and supporting good quality visitor accommodation and associated visitor facilities > having accessible and welcoming places and spaces to host cultural events and festivals > completing the Trailway > protecting and improving the wider network of key recreational routes that can be easily accessed from the town 	<p><i>The new policies supporting businesses are:</i></p> <p><i>Policy 4. Important community buildings</i></p> <p><i>Policy 7. The Trailway</i></p> <p><i>Policy 11. Important Open Spaces and Local Green Spaces</i></p> <p><i>Policy 13. Town centre uses</i></p> <p><i>Policy 14. Uses in the shopping frontages area</i></p> <p><i>Policy 17. Town centre public realm improvements</i></p> <p><i>Policy 18. Station Road site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 22. Bath Road and Old Market Area pedestrian and cycle route network</i></p> <p><i>Policy 24. Former council offices at Stour View</i></p> <p><i>Policy 27. Honeymead and Northfields pedestrian and cycle route network</i></p> <p><i>Policy 28. Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub</i></p> <p><i>Policy 32. Rixon and eastern fringe area pedestrian and cycle route network</i></p> <p><i>Policy 39. Rural recreational trails</i></p> <p><i>Policy 40. Land at North Dorset Business Park</i></p> <p><i>Policy 41. Land adjoining the Bull Tavern</i></p> <p><i>Policy 43. Re-use of redundant agricultural buildings</i></p>
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Why we promote these aims

The town has two key employment/commercial estates; Butts Pond in the centre of the town which dates back to the 1960s, and the more recent North Dorset Business Park (Rolls Mill) on the A357, which has serviced plots available for development. There is also a small site on the east side of Manston Road used for

warehousing / storage. Within the town centre there are opportunities for office-based businesses. Outside the town some farms have diversified with redundant farm buildings converted to employment uses.

It is clear from the research underpinning the Local Plan and the relatively slow take-up of North Dorset Business Park that the provision of further general employment sites is not required.

Although the quality of education is good (as demonstrated by the most recent Ofsted reports), the depth and breadth of the education and skills provision in the town is limited, particularly in terms of its 6th form prospectus (with courses shared with the nearby Shaftesbury School) and vocational training to obtain work-related skills (the closest available courses being Yeovil, Kingston Maurward and Poole). Access to high quality apprenticeships in the area is also limited. These factors mean that many talented young people leave the area to further their education or start their careers, and this is reflected in the demographic data.

Superfast Broadband was made available in 2015, and has the potential to make a major difference to the type of businesses that locate here.

Whilst tourism has potential for the parish, much will depend on the town centre, and how the town and wider rural parish promotes and presents itself to visitors.

A separate Economic Development Plan is being developed by the Town Council to help focus work effectively and create the case for investment.

Economic Development Plan Priority Areas

Retail – having a good offer for both local residents and visitors, including the Market

Education and Skills – good facilities that will provide skilled people

Business Development – encouraging and supporting new and growing businesses, and marketing the town’s offer

Tourism – better marketing of what the town and surrounding area has to offer, and better use of events

3.4 Housing

Table 5. Housing Aims and Relevant Policies

Housing – Aims	The new policies particularly relevant for delivering the housing aims are:
<p>To deliver the amount of housing, identified as needed in the adopted Local Plan, with opportunities provided by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > site specific allocations > sensitive infill development within the settlement boundary and > the reuse of existing buildings in the countryside where appropriate <p>To deliver an appropriate mix of housing types catering for the main identified needs, in particular focused on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > housing suitable for the elderly and disabled, in locations with easy access to the town centre > housing suitable for local people who are unable to rent or buy on the open market, including affordable starter homes and opportunities for self-build homes, that when occupied are indistinguishable from other housing types > aspirational housing to attract new households that will bring skilled workers and new, high paid industries to the area <p>To have reserve sites which can be released for development only if needed to cater for future local needs beyond that predicted by the Local Plan, taking into account the limited potential for further growth</p>	<p><i>Policy 1. Housing numbers and locations</i></p> <p><i>Policy 2. Settlement boundary revision</i></p> <p><i>Policy 3. Housing types</i></p> <p><i>Policy 13. Town centre uses</i></p> <p><i>Policy 18. Station Road site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 19. Market Hill site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 20. Clarkes Yard site and adjoining land</i></p> <p><i>Policy 23. Market Fields site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 24. Former council offices at Stour View</i></p> <p><i>Policy 25. Land at Yewstock Fields</i></p> <p><i>Policy 29. North Honeymead Field</i></p> <p><i>Policy 30. Land North of Manston Road: Reserve Site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 33 / 33a. Land off Elm Close</i></p> <p><i>Policy 35. William Barnes school site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 36. Hammonds Yard site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 41. Land adjoining the Bull Tavern</i></p> <p><i>Policy 42. Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse</i></p>

Why we promote these Aims

The age profile of the Parish and other research indicates:

- > the over 65s make up 25% of the local population and this proportion is likely to grow. There have been significant increases in the over 90s, a sector which has increased by 40% in the last ten years. With more people living longer, the number of people with health problems affecting their ability to live independently is likely to rise
- > there is likely to be a net loss of working age people unless we take specific measures to attract people in the 20-50 age group to live here, to help support growth in the local economy
- > one and two bedroom dwellings are needed in both the affordable rented sector and for the open market. Our research also showed a clear need for affordable homes from people with a local connection (either through living here previously, or through having close family or work in the area)
- > Estate agents have told us that three bedroom properties are generally in demand, and there is also good demand for housing (not flats) priced for first time buyers, and good demand for bungalows

House types range from traditional thatched cottages to modern estate type housing, including flats, terraces, semi-detached and detached homes. The housing growth in the town from the 1970s onwards has been mainly to the north and east. This growth was quite rapid and although it brought a new population and vitality to the town, its design and layout were not sympathetic to local character. Many feel that lessons should be learnt from this period.

The future expansion of the town is constrained by the Stour and its flood plain to the south and east, and the capacity of the A357. Due to these factors, the town has limited potential for further growth, and sites to be identified should therefore be prioritised to meet local need and not purely for wider strategic need. If the wider strategic need were to dominate, it would severely limit options to cater for locally-driven growth in the future. The community felt that Sturminster Newton is not a suitable location for significant additional housing growth to meet general needs across county or national markets. The current target for house building in the Local Plan means that green field sites will be needed, although the community had a preference for brown field sites nearer the centre of town if these become available. There was a feeling that the percentage of social rentable housing required by the Local Plan would create an imbalance in the parish. This is one of the reasons underpinning the desire to see some more 'aspirational' housing which would attract an under represented group of higher income families and individuals, and their businesses.

The Local Plan sets a minimum housing target of at least 395 homes to be built in Sturminster Newton from 2011 to 2031, of which about 95 must be affordable homes. By 2015 a total of 18 new homes had already been built, leaving about 380 to be built. This level of house building is likely to result in about 800 more people living in the town (an increase in population of about 18%). The Local Plan is under review and we recognise that the latest housing needs forecast suggest that even more homes will be needed across North Dorset, potentially including Sturminster Newton.

3.5 Community Facilities

Table 6. Community Facility Aims and Relevant Policies

<p>Community facilities – Aims</p> <p>To make sure that the town's community facilities, schools and services can cater for the future projected population, by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">> supporting the Exchange as a community hub that consolidates key services and organisations in its town centre location> ensuring a coordinated approach is taken to development at the school, leisure centre and football grounds as an important education and leisure 'hub' in the northern part of the town> supporting changes to community buildings and	<p>The new policies supporting community facilities are:</p> <p><i>Policy 4. Important community buildings</i></p> <p><i>Policy 5. Open space provision and standards in new developments</i></p> <p><i>Policy 7. The Trailway</i></p> <p><i>Policy 11. Important Open Spaces and Local Green Spaces</i></p> <p><i>Policy 28. Honeymead Lane Education</i></p>
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services where this would benefit the community, and resisting changes that would result in less suitable provision for local people

- > providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and play that focus on improving the main recreation sites at the War Memorial and Rixon, plus the education and leisure ‘hub’ in the northern part of the town, and retaining and providing more informal opportunities on locally valued green spaces closer to all homes

and Leisure Hub

Policy 33a. Land east of Elm Close

Policy 39. Rural recreational trails

Policy 41. Land adjoining the Bull Tavern

Why we promote these Aims

Community facilities can include buildings as varied as community halls, sports, leisure, education and medical facilities, emergency services and local shops. The community felt strongly that services and community facilities should keep pace with new housing and population growth.

The research and consultation for this Plan has helped assess the importance of the area’s community facilities and whether they are at or likely to reach capacity (and therefore may need to expand). Account was also taken of national and local standards. For example, the Fields in Trust guidance sets out national standards for outdoor sport and play to make sure there are sufficient, good quality outdoor recreation opportunities, and the Local Planning Authority use a more locally specific standard for allotment provision.

In most cases our research has shown that there is capacity to accommodate a growing population. However, some facilities, such as the youth centre and library, have been under threat of closure due to public sector funding cuts. Public concerns have also been voiced about the loss of the swimming pool associated with the primary school (which although not open to the public is of educational value in helping local school children learning to swim). Local residents agreed that the appropriate level of protection should take into account whether there is just one or more such facilities, how much they are used, their location in relation to the population they serve and any links to other community facilities in the locality. In all cases the on-going viability of any such asset is likely to be a determining factor in whether it can be retained.

Community Right to Bid

The Localism Act 2011 introduced an important new power for local communities to protect buildings and open spaces they value, known as the “Community Right to Bid”. This allows communities to request certain assets that further the social well-being or social interests of the local community to be listed as being of value to the community. If an asset is listed and then comes up for sale, communities are given 6 months to put together a bid to buy it. The planning system can work alongside this power, by resisting the change of use of such facilities. If you are interested in registering a building for this right, please contact SturQuest or the Town Council for advice.

3.6 Movement and transport

Table 7. Movement and Transport Aims and Relevant Policies

<p><i>Movement and transport – Aims</i></p> <p>To make sure the transport network provides for safe a convenient access for all users, by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > protecting and improving the key pedestrian routes that allow access into the town centre, to the main employment areas (particularly from the town to North Dorset Business Park), to the schools and leisure facilities, so that these routes are safe, attractive and can be used by people with mobility difficulties. > making sure that public / community transport initiatives can operate effectively > making sure new development does not result in roads 	<p><i>The new policies that are particularly relevant to movement and transport are:</i></p> <p><i>Policy 6. Delivering a safe and convenient travel network</i></p> <p><i>Policy 7. The Trailway</i></p> <p><i>Policy 17. Town centre public realm improvements</i></p> <p><i>Policy 18. Station Road site</i></p> <p><i>Policy 20. Clarkes Yard site and adjoining land</i></p>
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becoming congested or unsafe, and that opportunities are taken to reduce existing traffic-related problems in residential areas and the town centre

To deliver traffic management and public realm enhancements to support a strong and vibrant town centre (see also town centre)

To protect and improve the network of recreational routes (such as the Trailway, the Stour Valley Way, and a perimeter recreational route around the town) and make sure these can be easily accessed from the town (see also economy) to all homes

Policy 22. Bath Road and Old Market Area pedestrian and cycle route network

Policy 27. Honeymead and Northfields pedestrian and cycle route network

Policy 28. Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub

Policy 32. Rixon and eastern fringe area pedestrian and cycle route network

Policy 39. Rural recreational trails

Why we promote these Aims

The Local Transport Plan for Dorset sets out a strategy to make roads safer and reduce the need to travel, provide greater choices for active and “greener” travel, and realistic public transport alternatives to the private car. It does not propose any major road building, although aspects such as adequate car parking in new development is clearly recognised. There is no detailed transport plan for Sturminster Newton.

The A357 is the main strategic road route through the area, linking from Blandford westwards towards Wincanton and the A30 / A303. The B3092 branches north through the town towards Gillingham, and the less busy B3091 north-east to Shaftesbury. For many years there have been concerns about whether the A357 is suitable for any significant increase in traffic. The most recent transport model (2010) shows it being close to 80% of its design capacity by 2026, which means there would be localised congestion at times, unless improvements are made.

The Trailway and the Stour Valley Way are two strategic recreational routes, and the wider public right of way network provides numerous routes through the attractive countryside. Our area has been subject to drastic cuts in bus services although we have some vital alternatives, including those such as school buses and services provided by North Dorset Community Accessible Transport (NORDCAT) which provides a door-to-door minibus service.

The difficulties of traffic movement in and around Sturminster Newton was considered one of the most important factors in constraining economic development, especially the issue of free (or cheaper) parking serving the town centre (both for shoppers and workers).

The impact of traffic on the town centre was a key concern especially through the historic parts of the town (most notably where the road narrows between buildings to a single lane either side of Market Cross and the pavement is narrow). There were also comments made about problems arising from poorly parked cars in the more residential areas, particularly where these could give rise to potential safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists.

Our traffic surveys showed that generally traffic flows well through the centre (as most drivers exercise courtesy and common sense). Delivery vehicles do cause traffic delays and confusion where these stop to unload in the central area. Queues sometimes stretched back by a significant length (up to 200m) to enter the town from the south, but usually cleared quickly. Vehicles frequently have to come to a standstill in the centre but are seldom delayed for long. The road design generally suppresses traffic speeds, and future designs should ensure the balance supports those on foot. Pedestrians needed to take great care to avoid large vehicles, particularly when passing through the narrow sections.

Some key walking routes were also identified across the town, which are well used by residents in their everyday business. Some shortcomings were found in these routes, particularly where the routes cross busy roads. A project has been identified in Section 4 to improve these routes so that they are suitable for all potential users given the plans for the town. More information is contained in a separate condition report.

The idea of diverting traffic onto other routes may initially seem like a good idea, but there are no practical alternative routes; any HGV ban on through vehicles could not in practice be policed. There is no affordable or practical relief road solution at this time although this idea might be reviewed from time to time.

3.7 Design, landscape and environment

Table 8. Design, Landscape and Environment Aims and Relevant Policies

<p><i>Design, landscape and environment – main aims</i></p> <p>To safeguard the overall traditional, rural character of the town and its outlying settlements, whilst recognising that there will be opportunities and locations where modern designs can add positively to this character</p> <p>To safeguard the enjoyment of views, trees and spaces that are particularly valued by the community and contribute to the character if the area</p> <p>To protect and conserve the locally important buildings, walls and other features that contribute to the character or understanding of the history of the town</p> <p>To make sure new development is designed to a high standard and positively reinforces local character, by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > recognising the area’s unique character (and the different characteristics of the different parts of the town and wider parish) and how this can be reinforced through appropriate layout and design, including the use of scale and materials, as well architectural details > avoiding standard and too large-scale building types or road layouts that lack individuality and are unsuited to the generally rural or small town context > considering the requirements for adequate parking, storage etc. at an early stage in the design process > taking opportunities to reduce the harm caused by existing poorly designed developments, such as introducing landscaping or more appropriate building designs in the context of the immediate area > where possible use landscaping, materials and technologies (such as renewable energy provision) to minimise environmental impacts 	<p><i>The new policies focusing on design, landscape and environment are:</i></p> <p><i>Policy 5. Open space provision and standards in new developments</i></p> <p><i>Policy 8. Design and character of buildings and their settings</i></p> <p><i>Policy 9. Important views and landscape sensitivity</i></p> <p><i>Policy 10. Important local buildings</i></p> <p><i>Policy 11. Important Open Spaces and Local Green Spaces</i></p> <p><i>Policy 12. Trees in the landscape</i></p> <p><i>Policy 15. Town centre area character</i></p> <p><i>Policy 21. Bath Road and Old Market Area character</i></p> <p><i>Policy 26. Honeymead and Northfields character</i></p> <p><i>Policy 31. Rixon and eastern fringe character</i></p> <p><i>Policy 34. Southern Fringe character</i></p> <p><i>Policy 37. Rural settlements character: Newton, Glue Hill and Broad Oak</i></p> <p><i>Policy 38. Rural areas countryside character</i></p>
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Why we promote the Aims

Our consultations have shown that residents value the characterful old town area but some of the new housing built since 1980 was felt to have done little to enhance the character of the parish. The 2008 Town Design Statement (which was awarded the South West Planning Achievement Award as a good example of a successful partnership between North Dorset District Council and a Community Partnership) set out to assess the different features and character in the town centre, and to identify what makes it unique and attractive. Its purpose was to help guide the design of new development to emphasise and enhance the much-loved character. Other research has added to this understanding; including the Dorset Historic Towns project in 2011.

Producing our Neighbourhood Plan provided an opportunity to add further detail on local character, open spaces, important tree groups, views and buildings. We were particularly interested in those that were not identified within current protections such the Listings or designations, and the work of our Open Spaces Group and other volunteers was critical in this research.

Local people made clear that green spaces are really important and these can include public spaces and private spaces enjoyed from outside their boundaries. It is important that these areas are well maintained and protected from unsightly development nearby. The Local Planning Authority have been asked to review

our list of special trees to ensure the most important are covered by a preservation order. A comprehensive list of these valued assets is contained within our Evidence Base.

Good design depends on a number of factors. For buildings, this includes the interest and detailing in their design, the use of materials and how these relate to local traditions, the extent to which they are prominent or recessive in the street scene, how they relate to other buildings (in particular whether they are seen as a cohesive group), and how their materials and features weather over time. Incorporation of modern requirements for aspects such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and wheelchair access also can have a major bearing on the final design. The space around buildings, and how this is landscaped and maintained, is important, providing a setting to the buildings as well as functioning as amenity space, or more practical space for storage (such as for parked cars, waste bins etc..). These kinds of details are often not given sufficient thought but are so important in making places pleasant to live. General principles on good design were also tested through consultation.

4 Potential projects

The Local Planning Authority have indicated that they will work with partners and developers to ensure that the level of social infrastructure across the District is maintained and enhanced, and that the proposed growth in the local population will require some facilities to be extended or improved, in particular:

- > Expansion of the Sturminster Newton High School which can be accommodated on the existing site
- > Expansion of the William Barnes Primary School, which may need to be relocated
- > Upgrading and expansion of the leisure centre

As part of the work on the Neighbourhood Plan a number of other potential projects were identified in addition to the strategic projects mentioned above. Although this list is not exhaustive and may need to be updated, it provides a clear indication of the type of projects that local residents have agreed would be worthwhile. The scope of any project will be limited by available funds, as they will have to be funded by statutory bodies, developers or other available sources.

Table 9. Identified Projects for Funding

Project	What does this mean?	For more information...
Town centre traffic management and public realm improvements project	The Town Council, in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority and the Highways Authority, will work together to implement a scheme of public realm enhancements in the town centre area aimed at improving visitor experience and enhancing the historic character of the area.	See Section 6.3 Details of the scheme will be subject to public consultation
Town centre parking charges and fees	The Town Council will work together with the owners / operators of town centre car parks, to bring about a more coordinated approach, and fairer and appropriate parking charges, for the town centre	See Section 6.3
Economic Development Plan	A separate Economic Development Plan is being developed by the Town Council to help identify projects and create the case for investment to support the area's economy	See Section 3.3
Improvements to the key foot/cycle paths across the town	The Conditions Report on the key walking routes across the town identified some shortcomings, particularly where the key pedestrian routes cross busy roads. The Town Council will work with the Highways Authority to bring about possible improvements	See Section 5.5
Improvements to open spaces and play provision	The main priorities for improvement include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Sturminster Newton United Football Club (training and all weather pitches) – equipped play for all age ranges at the War Memorial and Rixon Recreation Grounds – allotments on land off Elm Close 	See Section 5.4 Contact the Town Council or Open Spaces Group
Completion of and continuing improvements to the Railway and other rural recreational trails	The Railway route runs along the route of the former railway, and the section east of the town is well used by cyclists, equestrians and walkers (and is suitable for people using mobility scooters and buggies). The Highways Authority has been working with local landowners to complete the route through the town and onwards to Stalbridge. Other important rural recreational trails around the parish have also been identified in this Neighbourhood Plan.	See Section 5.5 Contact the Town Council or Open Spaces Group

Tree planting scheme	There is general public support for some developer funds to be directed towards the planting of additional trees to enhance the area	See Section 5.6 Contact the Town Council or Open Spaces Group
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Inevitably, new opportunities will arise that may come into fruition during the lifespan of this Plan. One long-term potential project (outlined below) is an example that has come to light just prior to finalising the draft Plan, and could offer considerable potential to contribute to the well-being of the parish. At the current time there are no firm plans – but projects such as this may benefit from further consideration.

Table 10. Possible future projects

Project	What could this mean?	For information...
Somerset and Dorset Railway project	<p><i>An enthusiastic group of volunteers has restored and reopened Shillingstone Station and has collected a wide range of rolling stock including several locomotives and carriages, as well as much historic railway paraphernalia associated with the Somerset and Dorset line. The station with its museum and café is a considerable draw for visitors particularly as it is placed on the Trailway. The Shillingstone railway group have an aspiration to reopen the line for as continuous a length as possible (very much like other ‘heritage’ railway lines that operate successfully and profitably throughout the country – a nearby example being the line between Norden and Swanage which in 2017 will extend to Wareham and attracts thousands of visitors each year).</i></p> <p><i>The Shillingstone railway group are close to applying for funds for a feasibility study. Should the feasibility study show that re opening the line would be viable, the short route from Shillingstone (which lies outside the parish) to Sturminster would be an obvious starting project. The prospect of a new heritage railway could make a considerable impact on Sturminster Newton, and if potentially viable and technically feasible it may be supported provided there is clear public support from the local community and it would not have significant harmful impacts on the use of the Trailway as a walking, cycling and equestrian route, on the amenities of residents and other neighbouring uses or on the landscape and other environmental assets.</i></p>	<p><i>Although detailed plans cannot be presented here, we would welcome early feedback from the community about this possible future project.</i></p>

5 Neighbourhood Plan Aims and Policies

5.1 How to use this section

This section carries forward the main aims for development in the area, and contains the general policies which should be used to aid planning decisions alongside what is current in national and North Dorset planning policy. The following sections (6 - 11) contain detailed descriptions of specific constraints and opportunities in each area of the parish. ***It is important that you look at both the general and the specific area sections when seeking information to assist planning decisions.*** All relevant policies in this Plan will need to be taken into account in making decisions. Developers and planners should work with the community to find solutions to problems that achieve the aims and comply with policies, whilst being also commercially viable. The information here will mainly be used by planners and councillors as they carry out their statutory responsibilities in the planning process but it will also be important information for developers and individuals who are planning building or landscaping projects in the parish.

5.2 Town Centre and Businesses

The main Aims that this Plan hopes to achieve regarding the economy focus on the success of the town centre, more traditional employment such as manufacturing / warehouse businesses, as well as farming and employment based on tourism. For our town centre and business Aims see section 3.2 and 3.3.

As most of the policies relating to the above are about the town centre area (which is covered in section 6) or specific areas such as the North Dorset Business Park, there are no general policies.

5.3 Housing

This Neighbourhood Plan accepts that we should find sites to accommodate around 380 houses for the period 2015 to 2031, which together with the houses built since 2011 achieves the target set out in the 2016 North Dorset Local Plan. It also recognises the sites specifically mentioned in the Local Plan to help deliver the housing numbers required, that could deliver in the region of 300 new homes. Research for the Neighbourhood Plan has identified two further brownfield sites (the former Council office, north of Stour View Close and William Barnes Primary School site) that could deliver about 30 more homes. These sites, plus some smaller infill sites and extant permissions, provide sufficient housing for the plan period based on the current Local Plan target, and may even deliver a higher number.

National guidance makes clear that Neighbourhood Plans can identify additional or reserve sites, to ensure that emerging evidence of housing need is addressed and that future development happens on the sites most favoured by the local community (with such decisions being made locally rather than through the district-wide Local Plan). The Local Planning Authority have already started reviewing their Local Plan in light of new housing needs evidence, and will inevitably be considering how much more land for housing will be needed at Sturminster Newton.

Table 11. Main housing sites proposed

Sites specifically mentioned in the Local Plan for housing:

- *land in and around the Station Road area, as part of the regeneration of this site*
- *land at Market Fields (also known as the Lairage Field), north of the town centre*
- *land at North Honeymead Field, to the north of Northfields*
- *land to the east of the former Creamery Site, south of Elm Close*

Additional brownfield sites identified:

- *former Council office, north of Stour View Close*
- *William Barnes Primary School site*

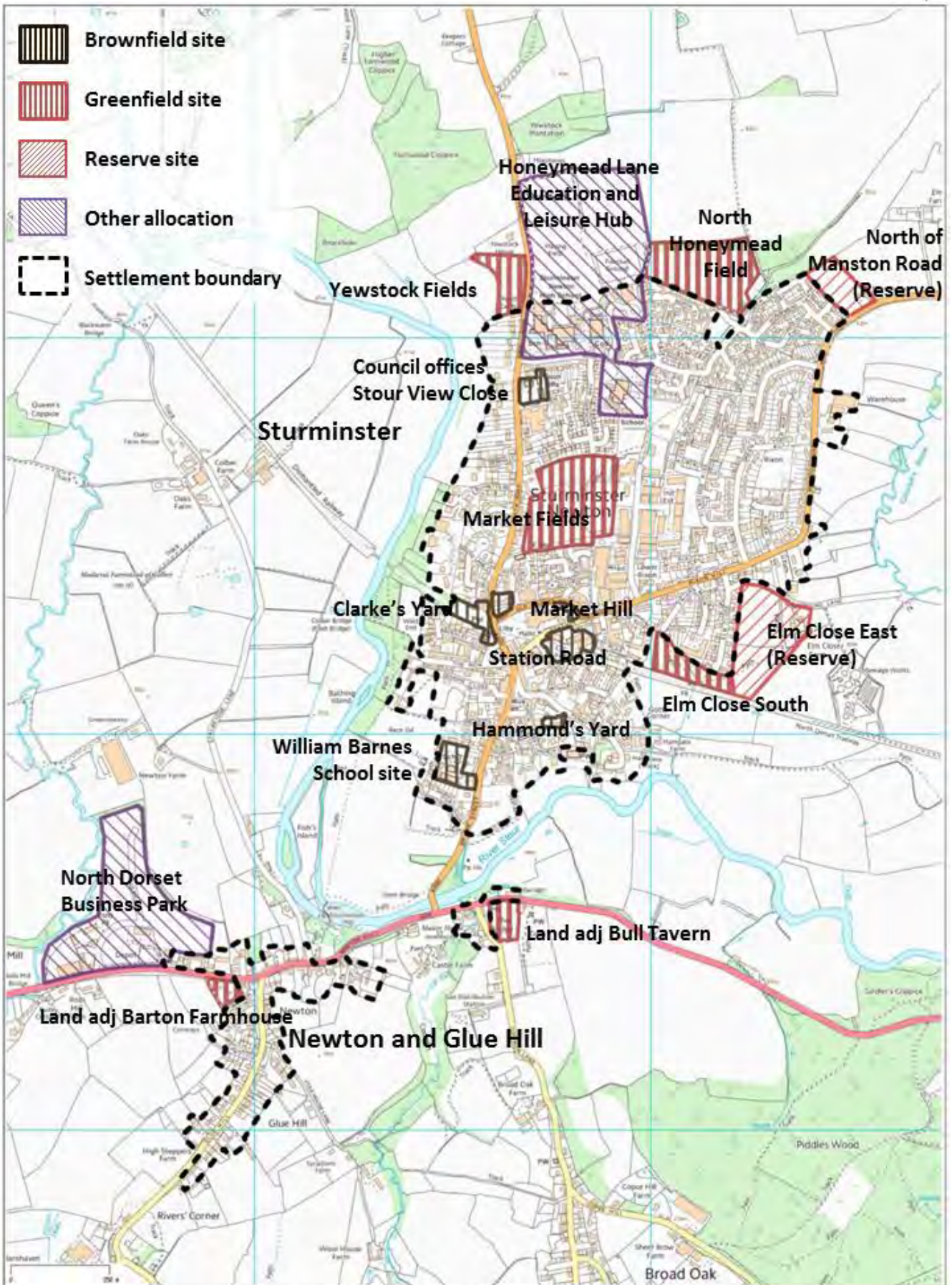
Additional small greenfield sites identified:

- *land at Yewstock Fields, Bath Road*
- *land adjoining the Bull Tavern*
- *land adjoining Barton Farmhouse, Newton*

Additional reserve sites identified:

- *land on the north side of Manston Road, east of Northfields*
- *land south of Bull Ground Lane at Elm Close Farm*

Map 3. Settlement Boundary, main Housing and other Site Allocations



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Four such opportunities have been identified that could provide in the region of 100 further homes. These are:

- > land at Yewstock Fields, Bath Road
- > land adjoining Barton Farmhouse, Newton
- > land on the north side of Manston Road, east of Northfields
- > land south of Bull Ground Lane at Elm Close Farm

The exact number of homes provided on each site, and precise details of layout etc., will be determined at the planning application stage, guided by the policies in the Plan and the Local Plan.

Due to its geography, the town has limited potential for further growth, the reserve sites that have been identified should only be released if there is a pressing local need (ie for local residents and their families, or to attract and retain skilled people where there is clear evidence that these are required by current and potential new employers and local service providers) and not purely for wider strategic need. If the wider strategic need were to dominate, it would severely limit options that would cater for locally-driven growth in the future. Sturminster Newton is not a suitable location for significant additional housing growth to meet general needs across county or national markets.

Minor changes have been made to the settlement boundary, with the new boundary as shown on Map 3 and explained in the area chapters that follow. The settlement boundaries will be extended at a later point to cover the built-up elements of the allocations at the next review of this Plan.

In terms of housing types, research shows that housing development should be focused on providing properties particularly suited to attract older people of all incomes 'down-sizing' from larger family homes, affordable housing and some high quality larger homes in attractive locations (which we have called 'aspirational housing'). The latter should have the potential to attract high-income / skilled working families to relocate to the area to support and invest in economic growth, and therefore should incorporate flexible / adaptable layouts for home working. Bungalows provide one type of housing that is generally desirable to older households, but more innovative approaches to single level living providing flexible and adaptable accommodation could also be explored. Ideally these homes should be suitable for people with mobility problems (this could be achieved through requiring the higher options standards set in Building Regulations, if considered through the Local Plan review). In terms of affordable housing, a mix of one and two bedroom affordable homes for rent, intermediate schemes such as shared equity, and 'starter homes' (introduced in the 2016 Housing and Planning Act), suitable for all age ranges, is likely to meet projected needs. The required proportion of affordable housing is set in the Local Plan (2016) at 25% within the settlement boundary and any urban extensions to these towns, and 40% elsewhere.

It is also apparent that some sites may lend themselves more readily to certain types of housing, and vice versa, and where this is the case this has been highlighted in the Plan. The layout of larger housing developments should also make sure that the different house types are integrated in terms of their design, to avoid stigmatising different sectors of the community. For our housing Aims see section 3.4.

The policies that help achieve this are as follows:

Policy 1. Housing numbers and locations

This Plan makes provision for in excess of 380 new homes in the parish of Sturminster Newton between 2016 and 2031, sufficient to meet the Local Plan target and needs of the community. New dwellings should be located within the settlement boundary (as revised under Policy 2), on allocated sites (as shown on Map 3) or delivered through the conversion of existing buildings (under Policy 43).

The Neighbourhood Plan area has limited potential for further growth, and therefore any green field sites outside the settlement boundary should not be released, other than allocated sites and the reserve sites (as shown on Map 3) that have been identified specifically for this purpose. These reserve sites may be brought forward if the planning authority determines that the housing supply for the area is unlikely to meet evidenced locally-driven need for growth, either through the Local Plan Review or where a clear housing land supply shortfall has been identified.

Policy 2. Settlement boundary revision

The settlement boundary as carried forward into the 2016 Local Plan is amended to more accurately define the existing built up area, as shown on Map 3

Policy 3. Housing types

The type and size of new housing should reflect the need and demand for

- > a broad mix of affordable housing types (including the potential for low cost starter homes) based on up to date evidence of local needs, at the level required by the Local Plan
- > a relatively high number of desirable smaller (i.e. one and two bedroom) homes to cater for older people on a range of incomes, including those wishing to downsize. Consideration should be given to making sure the particular health and mobility issues likely to be associated with this demographic are catered for in the design.
- > some high quality larger homes, incorporating flexible / adaptable layouts for home working

Where open market housing is proposed, affordable housing will be sought in line with the Local Plan. Affordable housing should not be readily discernible from similar market housing by its appearance, and should be integrated with market housing where practical. Priority should be given to housing local people (including those with a connection to the parish through close family or work), followed by those with a connection to adjoining parishes.

Housing specifically designed for older people or people with mobility issues should be focused in locations reasonably close and with level access to the town centre.

5.4 Community facilities

Research for this Plan has identified key community facilities that should be supported, and given protection from changes that would undermine their future provision. For our community facilities Aims see section 3.5.

The main community buildings are identified in the following table. Critical facilities are considered to be the most important because of the impact the loss of such a facility would have on the social well-being of the community. Other facilities are also valued, but due to number of facilities or more narrowly focused benefits, there may be greater scope for change that could still provide overall public benefit.

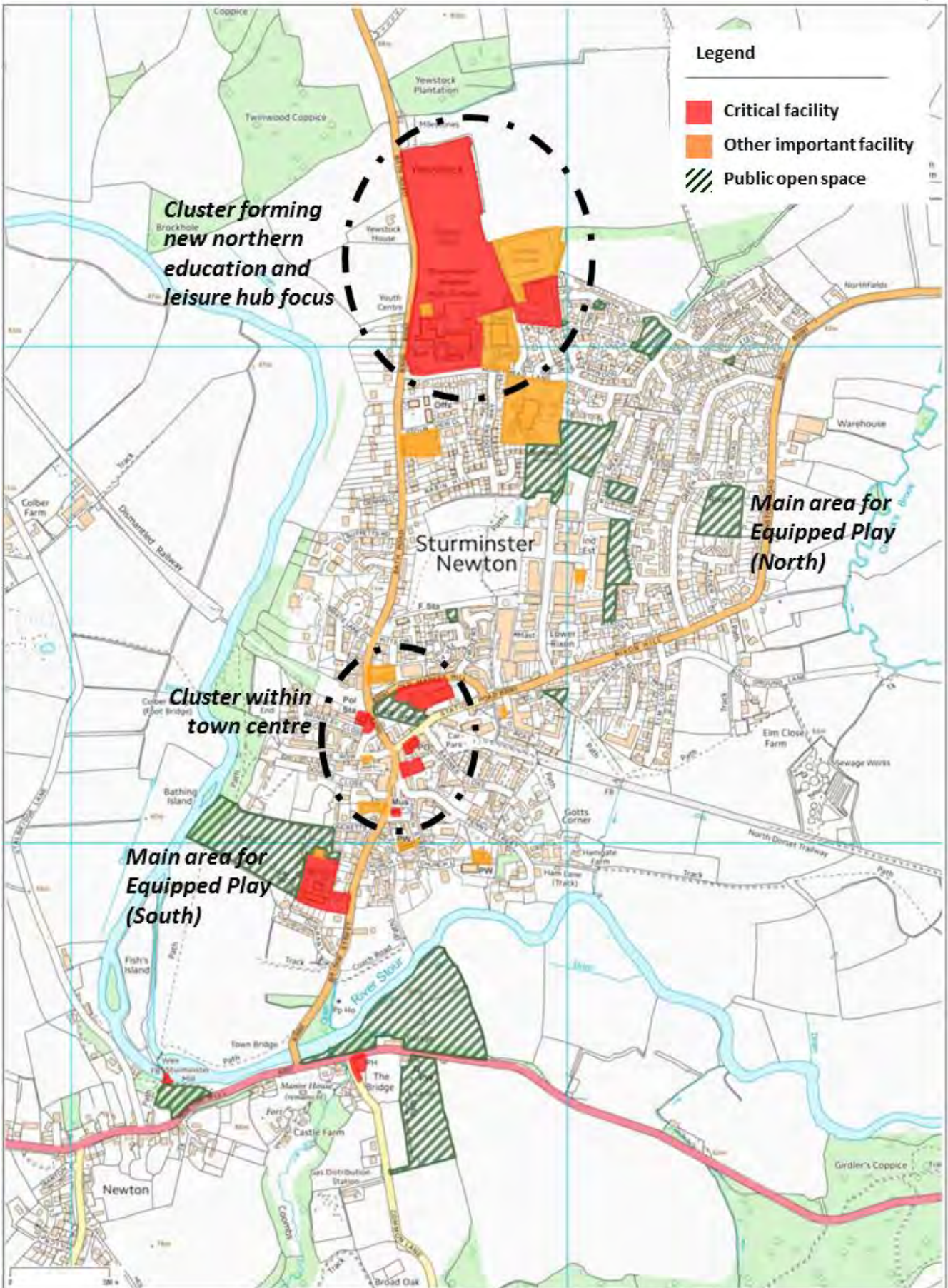
Table 12. Community buildings

Type	Critical (C) & other important facilities	Assessment
Community halls and meeting venues	The Exchange (C) Christian Fellowship Hall Methodist Church and Hall Royal British Legion Club Scout Hall St Mary's Church Hall Stour View Centre The Community Office Town Council Chamber Youth Centre	The Exchange is critical due to its size and central location and multiple roles. The remaining facilities are also important providing a reasonable choice of venues to meet the various needs of local residents, including provision for the young, but there may be scope to consolidate and improve provision.
Cultural facilities	Sturminster Newton Library (C) Sturminster Newton Mill (C) The Exchange (C) The Museum (C)	The Library, Museum, Exchange and the Mill are critical cultural / learning facilities, fulfilling different roles and very much run by community volunteers.

Type	Critical (C) & other important facilities	Assessment
Education and training facilities	<p>Sturminster Newton High School (C)</p> <p>William Barnes Primary School (C)</p> <p>Pre-School provision such as Stepping Stones Pre-School (part of the Primary School)</p> <p>Vocational training such as the Exchange Learning Centre and Stour View Centre</p> <p>Yewstock School and College</p>	<p>The main schools are critical to the education of local families, and there are also wider community benefits from the shared use of facilities that should continue in the future. The schools are currently provided through the Local Education Authority but this could change to a different structure (such as Academy status). The ability to provide a swimming pool either associated with the school or separately is highlighted as part of the strategy for the education and leisure hub in the north of the town</p>
Local centre facilities	<p>Post Office (C)</p> <p>Swan Hotel (C)</p> <p>The Bull Tavern (C)</p> <p>The White Hart</p>	<p>The Post Office is considered critical. All of the public houses are important facilities, particularly The Bull due to its wider role in the rural area, and the Swan due to its visitor accommodation.</p>
Medical / Social Care facilities	<p>Sturminster Newton Medical Centre (C)</p> <p>Old Market Dental Practice</p> <p>Stour View Centre</p> <p>Sturminster Dental Care</p>	<p>The Medical Centre provides critical services for all NHS patients, centrally located in a modern, purpose-built building</p>
Sport and recreation built facilities	<p>Sturminster Newton Leisure Centre (C)</p> <p>Sturminster Newton United Football Club (C)</p> <p>Sturminster Newton Amateur Boxing Club</p>	<p>The Leisure Centre provides a range of sporting activities and facilities for the High School and the community. The Football Club building supports the town's main football pitches. Although of community value the boxing club has a more limited scope.</p>

Where the loss of or reduction in a community facility is proposed, the landowner or developer should involve the local community in discussions to help identify whether the loss could be avoided, for example through community interest in helping run the facility.

Where there may be more than one facility providing similar services, it may be possible that the other facilities could be improved to make sure that the loss is not felt. In assessing the overall impact, information on past levels of use, their location in relation to the population they serve and the extent to which they also support the continued functioning of other community facilities in the local area should be taken into account.



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Policy 4. Important community buildings

The following community buildings and their grounds are protected as locally important community assets, and such facilities should be retained and allowed to modernise and adapt to continue to meet the community's needs (either in their current location or through suitable alternative provision in the Neighbourhood Plan area).

The loss of critical facilities will be strongly resisted. Where there may be more than one facility providing similar services locally, the loss or reduction may be off-set by improvements elsewhere.

Area	Community facility	Importance
TOWN CENTRE AREA	The Exchange, Old Market Hill	Critical
	The Post Office	Critical
	Town Council Chamber, Old Market Hill	
	Community office, Old Market Hill	
	Royal British Legion Club, Bath Road	
	Sturminster Newton Medical Centre, Old Market Hill	Critical
	Old Market Dental Practice, Old Market Hill	
	Sturminster Newton Library, Bath Road	Critical
	Museum, Market Cross	Critical
	Swan Hotel, Market Place	Critical
BATH ROAD AND OLD MARKET AREA	The White Hart, Market Cross	
	Stour View Daycare centre, Bath Road	
	Stour Castle Social and Education Centre, Bath Road	
	Sturminster Newton Amateur Boxing Club, Butts Pond	
HONEYMEAD AND NORTHFIELDS	Sturminster Newton Library, Bath Road	
	Youth Centre	
	Yewstock School and College	
	Sturminster Newton High School	Critical
SOUTHERN FRINGE AREA	Sturminster Newton Leisure Centre	Critical
	Sturminster Newton United Football Club	Critical
	William Barnes Primary (including the pre-school)	Critical
	Christian Fellowship Hall, The Row	
	Methodist Hall, Church Street	
	St Mary's Church and Hall, Church Lane	
RURAL AREA	Scout Hall, Rickets Lane	
	Sturminster Newton Mill, Newton Hill	Critical
	The Bull Tavern Public House, Town Bridge	Critical

The following table sets out how provision of public open spaces meets the standards used by the Local Planning Authority in 2016, and the main priorities for future provision in and around the town.

Table 13. Open Space and Play Provision Priorities

Type	Assessment	Main priorities
Playing pitches / formal sports	Less formal areas such as the War Memorial and Rixon Recreation Grounds provide opportunities alongside the football grounds off Honeymead Lane, but overall provision is below recommended space standards (of 1.6ha per 1,000 people within 1.2km of people's homes).	The main priority is to focus on improvements to the training and all weather football pitches used by the High School and Sturminster Newton United Football Club, for which contributions will be sought
Parks, gardens and amenity	The town lacks these areas when assessed against the standards (1.4ha per 1,000 people within 700 metres of people's homes), particularly in the older areas. They do make a significant contribution to the	Amenity green spaces should be provided on-site in housing developments of 15 or more dwellings in line with the FIT standard, this

green space	new housing areas in the town (such as the North Fields open space)	should be part of a landscaping strategy and designed for informal play.
Equipped play areas	<p>There are toddler play areas in the newer housing areas but these do not appear to be well used, which suggests the generic standards (small play areas for very young children within 100m of people’s homes) may not be appropriate here.</p> <p>The equipped play areas in the War Memorial Recreation Ground in the south of the town and Rixon in the north are well placed to serve most residents (the standards suggest these should be within 400m of people’s homes). There are no facilities for older children e.g. a skate park / multi-use games area (standards for these are for provision within 700m).</p>	The main priority is to provide for older children (potentially in the education / leisure hub or within one of the main recreation areas), and maintain and improve the play offer for all ages at the War Memorial and Rixon Recreation Grounds, for which contributions will be sought, as opposed to a larger number of smaller sites.
Publicly accessible natural greenspace	The town is reasonably well served with Butts Pond, the open space around the Mill and Town Bridge, in accordance to the standards (1.8ha per 1,000 people within 700 metres of people’s homes).	The main priority is to maintain the existing sites and improve recreational trails around the edge of the town and linking out the countryside (see transport strategy). This will be delivered through on-site provision where opportunities arise, or through contributions.
Allotments	There is a shortfall and need for more allotments, against the current local standards (16 allotments (approx. 0.4ha) per 1,000 people) – the standards suggest at least 1.1ha of additional allotment land is needed for the existing population	The larger development sites, and in particular land at Elm Close, should provide the opportunity to deliver much needed allotments to achieve the required standards

The most valued public (and private) open spaces have been identified and designated as Local Green Spaces (many of which were formerly designated as Important Open or Wooded Areas in the Local Plan). These are listed in the Policy 11 in section 5.6. The following policy outlines considerations for future provision of public open spaces in conjunction with new development, mirroring some of the Aims included in the movement and design, landscape and environment themes.

Policy 5. Open space provision and standards in new developments

Housing development will be expected to make provision for outdoor sport and recreation in line with the Neighbourhood Plan priorities (set out in Table 13). Development should not result in the loss or reduction of existing public recreation areas unless there will be a net benefit in terms of outdoor sport and recreation provision in line with these priorities.

The siting and location of public open space, and surrounding development, should ensure that:

- > *the open space is readily accessible from the houses on the development and from the existing footpath network;*
- > *existing trees, hedges and wildlife habitats are retained and new ones planted where appropriate to soften the border of the open space with new housing, and provide wider landscape and wildlife benefits;*
- > *buildings around the space provide natural surveillance and contribute positively to the character of the space through their design - high fences, garage areas or walls, and unshielded back gardens should be avoided*

5.5 Movement around the Parish

Transport issues are a common concern of local residents. The importance of having good road access for the economy is widely acknowledged, but is balanced against the impact of traffic on issues such as road safety and the wider environment, and the value of making services easy to reach without reliance on the motor car. For example some engineered traffic solutions (such as the new road linking Bath Road to Rixon Road) may be effective but have not been in character with that area's historic charm.

There is no single solution, but it is clear that decisions should be based on considering how to improve alternatives to the car, whether the changes would result in a safe network of routes, and the fact that most people and businesses are reliant on cars and deliveries.

As part of the research outlined in Section 3.6, the key pedestrian and cycle routes were identified, as well as projects to improve the transport network. We focused on these routes and improvements in the town centre.

For our Movement and Transport Aims see section 3.6.

The following policy should apply generally, and also in the context of Policy 8 (design and character of buildings and their settings) which aims to reduce problems associated with parking in residential areas.

Policy 6. Delivering a safe and convenient travel network

New developments shall incorporate existing formal and informal rights of way, and create new links connecting to nearby routes where opportunities arise, particularly where these form part of the key pedestrian and cycle route network (see Map 5). Where pedestrian / cycle routes are provided, they should meet the following standards:

- *routes should be safe and reasonably direct, with good surveillance, avoiding sharp turns and confined corridors (e.g. not canyoned behind high fences or walls with no surveillance)*
- *the design (in terms of surfacing, gradients and potential obstacles) should allow wheelchair and pushchair access and use, with surfaces designed to be well-drained and low maintenance;*
- *the useable width should be at least 3m wide to allow users to pass easily and safely,*
- *where appropriate the routes should be landscaped to create attractive 'green corridors' with use of grass, shrubs and other appropriate planting and boundary treatments, that will provide added wildlife benefits*
- *within the built-up areas of the town, energy-efficient lighting shall be provide to facilitate safe use at night by pedestrians, provided this can be achieved without significantly adding to light pollution*

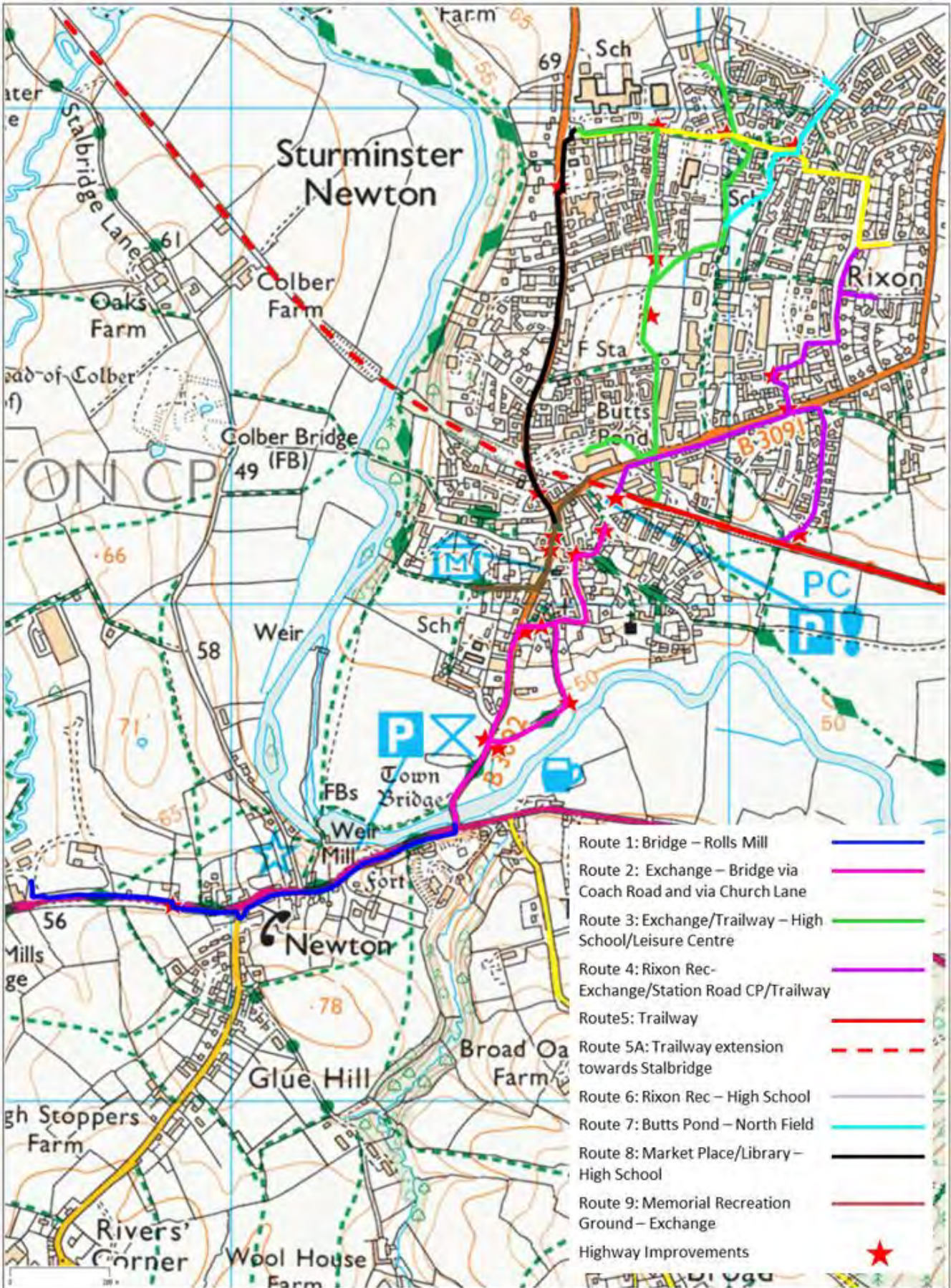
Development likely to generate significant traffic movements requiring a transport assessment will be expected to consider the potential impact of the development on the key pedestrian / cycle routes, and fund improvements that may be necessary to mitigate any adverse impacts.

The design of new roads and areas of parking should respect the character of the area and avoid large areas of hard surfacing and clutter from poles, signs etc.

Policy 7. The Trailway

The Trailway route as indicated on Maps 5 and 17 should be protected and opportunities taken to secure its provision through redevelopment and other means. The alignment should follow the route of the former railway, insofar as this is practical, and its layout configured to provide a path suitable for cyclists and all pedestrians (including those using mobility scooters and buggies), and for equestrians where possible, and segregated from vehicular traffic where possible. This is likely to mean a minimum width of 3m, all-weather surface, inclusion of landscaping along the verges and a clear and direct route through any development.

Map 5. Key Pedestrian and Cycle Routes



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The routes shown on Map 5 have been identified as key routes suitable for everyday journeys across the town taking users away from traffic wherever possible. The objective is to bring them up to the standards described in Policy 6 as funds become available. Following a survey of these routes in 2015, the proposed enhancements are detailed in Table 14 below.

Table 14. Proposed Future Enhancements of Key Routes

Route	Proposals
Route 1 (Blue) Town Bridge to Rolls Mill,	A safe crossing is required where pavement changes sides around the entrance to Orchard Close. This could be done in conjunction with traffic calming measures.
Route 2 (Pink): Town Centre Exchange to Town Bridge via Coach Road or Church Lane	Ensure route across Station Road site is integrated into comprehensive design to redevelop this area
	Lovers Lane requires additional lighting, widening, resurfacing and its alignment adjusted. May be improved as part of the redevelopment of the old gas works.
	Renew road surfacing along Penny Street & Church Street to indicate shared surface
	Install dropped kerb at bottom end of Church Street
	Replace kissing gate at end of old Coach Road with a more accessible barrier
	Upgrade path across the meadow so that it is suitable for wheelchair use.
	Provide accessible barrier at exit onto Bridge Street, and provide raised crossing (ie level with pavement)
	Renew road surfacing along Church Lane to Bridge Street to indicate shared surface
	Provide raised crossing on Bridge Street (ie level with pavement) or road narrowing
Route 3 (Green): Town Centre Exchange to Leisure Centre / High School	Ensure route across Market Fields is integrated into comprehensive development of this area, including level access onto Badgers Way
	Insert raised crossing (ie level with pavement) or road narrowing / traffic calming to provide clear and safe crossing point of Honeymead Lane opposite Badgers Way
	Insert raised crossing (ie level with pavement) or road narrowing / traffic calming to provide clear and safe crossing of Honeymead Lane opposite Dashwood Close
Route 4 (Purple) Exchange / Station Road Car Park / Trailway to Rixon Rec	Ensure route across Station Road site is integrated into redevelopment
	Provide a safe crossing over Rixon Hill to Rixon Close using traffic calming and building out Rixon Close pavement to improve sight lines.
	Widen (to 2m) and make up pathway across Filbridge Rise play area
	Ensure route from Trailway to Elm Close is integrated into housing development
Route 5 (Red) Trailway & future extension	Ensure route from existing end of Trailway across Station Road site and Railway Gardens is integrated into comprehensive design to redevelop this area
	Ensure route through Clarkes Yard is protected in housing development
	Support extension of Trailway towards Stalbridge
Route 6 (Yellow) Rixon Rec to High Sch	A safe crossing over Honeymead Lane near the sharp bend is required using traffic calming possibly funded by new primary school transport plan.
Route 7 (Light Blue) Exchange to N Field	A safe crossing over Honeymead Lane at same point as for Route 6
Route 8 (Black) Market Place to High School	Pavement surface needs improvement between zebra crossing and Brinsley Close
	Brinsley Close junction with B3092 needs to be narrowed to slow traffic to 20mph and dropped kerbs provided so pedestrians can follow their desire line.
	A proper crossing of Bath Road is required near Stour View Close in conjunction with traffic calming where the pavement crosses from one side to the other
Route 9 (Brown) Memorial Rec to Exchange	Slightly widen (150mm) pavement between Goughs Close and Candys
	Consider modest widening of pavement on west side of Market Place as part of enhancement scheme.

The project of completing the Trailway is particularly significant, due to the major economic and social benefits to the area this brings. The project will also need to involve the landowners whose cooperation will be needed, as much of the proposed route along the line of the former railway is in private ownership, and there is currently no public right of way. Work to date indicates that a route through the town centre is unlikely to be suitable for equestrians, and as such an alternative route for these users (ie to bridleway standard) is being investigated.

Another important route is the link to the North Dorset Business Park, and this is contained in Policy 40

There are numerous pavements and paths feeding into these routes whose maintenance will continue as normal. Further information about these routes can be found in the Area Sections of Neighbourhood Plan, and in the separate Conditions Report. Where the proposed enhancements may require use of private land, any scheme will need to be subject to the landowner's agreement.

5.6 Design and landscape and environment

Our main aims for design focus on recognising and protecting the distinctive character and attractive built and landscape features of the various areas in the parish. This doesn't mean slavishly replicating past building styles – although some areas may well lend themselves more to traditional designs and some areas may well suit contemporary styles that provide interest and character and take Sturminster Newton into the 21st century. But whatever is developed, it should be done with the aim of creating good design that lasts well and engenders a real sense of pride.

Later in the Plan, in chapters describing each spatial area, we highlight the important characteristics that should be taken into account when development is considered on sites in those locations. The overarching principle is that development should be in keeping with the best character features that predominate in an area. In reality there is rarely a clear distinction on the ground between one character area and the next, and as such some degree of flexibility can be applied on the edge of each character area, to provide a softer transition, with design cues potentially reflecting either area depending on the local circumstances.

In this section we focus on the general design principles that should apply across the whole of the Plan area, wherever the development is located. This includes general principles such as making sure that extensions and alterations are carefully considered, as they can have a much wider impact on character than just the building which they alter. Done well, they can add interest to the street scene, or help reinforce the distinctive character of an area. Experience has also shown that more modern materials such as coloured plastics (e.g.: imitation coloured wood panelling) or painted rendering can degrade and become unsightly, and so should be avoided. Similarly, sites on the edge of the town, or in otherwise prominent locations where they will be seen in wider views, will need very careful consideration. Large scale farm or industrial buildings, and large scale renewable energy schemes can be particularly intrusive in wider views unless carefully sited, designed and potentially screened with landscape planting, and as such will not be appropriate in certain locations. In assessing potential harm to local landscape character, any visual impact assessment should identify and consider the impact on the enjoyment of views from the routes and spaces identified in Maps 5 and 16.

It is also important that new buildings are designed with aspects such as energy efficiency and the efficient use of water in mind, not only to reduce running costs but because of the wider impacts of development on our environment. There is support for innovative designs that show real commitment to these principles, and opportunities to include more renewable energy schemes for housing and other commercial and community buildings. No specific requirements are set in this Plan, as nationally Building Regulations are being updated to drive forward this agenda, but given the flexibility of how these requirements may be met, where they do not include (for example) the use of roof space for solar panels, it makes sense for the designs to allow future occupants to retrofit these where possible.

The space around buildings, and how this is landscaped and maintained, is important, providing a setting to the buildings as well as functioning as amenity space, or storage space (such as for parked cars, waste bins etc). Where appropriate, well managed communal bin areas can reduce the need for rows of bins that can otherwise clutter and detract from the street. Where there is a risk that individual gardens may not be maintained, alternative solutions such as attractive communal open green spaces may provide more acceptable solutions. Where such arrangements are proposed, it will be important to establish a management company or similar mechanism to pay for maintenance. Boundary treatments should generally reflect the character of the area, with stone boundary walls and native hedges (wooden fences should be avoided as these generally detract from the character of the area and do not age well). Similarly, roads should be in keeping with the character of the area, therefore the best 'engineering' solution may need to be adapted to avoid large expanses of tarmac or too many poles and signs (see Policy 6).

Parking guidelines derived from the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Residential Car Parking Study should be applied as indicated in Table 15. It is important that these standards are kept as a minimum, to provide sufficient parking, and that the parking spaces are well-related to the buildings they are intended to serve, in order to reduce clutter and congestion

Table 15. Residential parking standards

No. of bedrooms	Parking spaces	Visitor parking
1	1	}
2	1 to 2	} At least 1 visitor
3	2	} space per 5 homes
4 or more	2 to 3	}

on local roads. For example, data behind these standards clearly shows that even 3 out of 4 one bedroom flats in the town centre are likely to have a car. However, it is accepted that some buildings, particularly Listed Buildings in the town centre, may not always have sufficient on-site parking, and in such circumstances a pragmatic approach to parking standards may need to be taken to secure an appropriate re-use.

In addition to Listed Buildings, locally important buildings were identified, and these are the Locally-listed buildings referred to in Policies 8 and 10 and the relevant area chapters that follow. It is important that these, and other buildings of similar local value, are retained and respected in new development. In some cases where more recent changes have detracted from character of the building, opportunities should be taken to remedy this harm.

The open spaces within and on the edge of the town and some of the rural settlements are particularly valued, for their recreational use, their historic significance, their wildlife value, or simply because they make such a positive contribution to the character of the area. This may be through their quality and that of associated buildings, trees etc. within their setting, or because of the importance placed on the enjoyment of views from that site. The most valued spaces have been designated as local green spaces, and effectively replace the Important Open and Wooded Area policy areas that were carried forward from the previous Local Plan. A similar degree of protection should be considered for sites delivered as part of the provision for outdoor sport and recreation associated with new development. Consideration should also be given to sites that may not have been assessed due to their location outside of the settlement boundary or where their size would have meant they were unsuited for local green space designation at the time of preparing this Plan. It is also clear that the enjoyment of open spaces is affected by the use of the land that surrounds it.

Trees can be important for a number of reasons, which may relate to their quality or rarity, their contribution to local character (notable in key views, sometimes as a tree groupings), historic associations, or because they provide screening or otherwise soften or reduce the impact of intrusive development (for example planting on the skyline behind a development can soften its impact on the landscape). Certain areas are particularly notable for their tree coverage. Piddles Wood is the most obvious (and just outside the plan area, Yewstock Plantation / Twinwood Coppice are notable wooded areas). Other key areas where the extent of tree coverage makes a significant positive difference are listed in Table 16 below.

Table 16. Tree Coverage Areas where trees makes a significant positive difference:

1. Along the River Stour and its tributaries, particularly:

- a) to the west, from the Recreation Ground north to beyond the old railway bridge – important when viewing Sturminster from the west and from the recreation ground;*
- b) to the south and southeast near the Mill where trees provide an important backdrop to the Mill and the river from the route into town and help soften more recent developments; and*
- c) on the southern fringe of the town bordering the river and including trees in Beech House, Stour Grange and Ham Gate, and those in the church yard;*

2. Along the Trailway / dismantled railway line

3. Within the Conservation Area – particularly trees in some gardens such as Lindens

4. Trees and hedgerows in the Market Fields and along the green corridor running from the Market Fields through Butts Pond out to the north

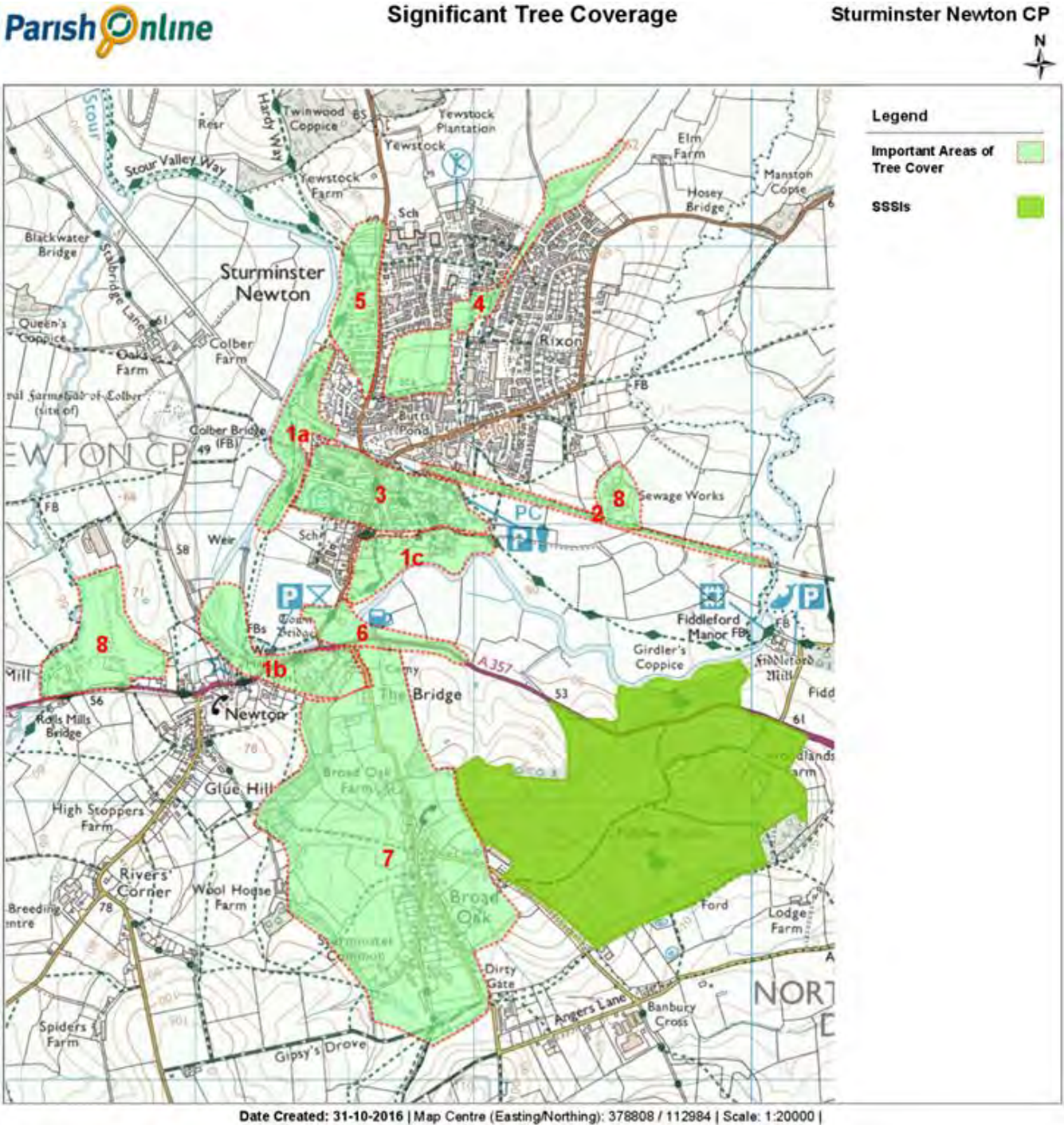
5. Along the elevated ridgeline of Bath Road given their importance in the landscape and role in softening the skyline of the town as you approach from the east

6. Around the Town Bridge which has a notably treed character

7. In Broad Oak – particularly important are those trees which are remnants from field boundaries, those bordering the stream leading down to Bridge Cottages, those bordering the field next to the Bull and the Cemetery.

8. Around the Sewage Treatment Works and the rural edges of the North Dorset Business Park (Rolls Mill) – in a screening capacity

Map 6. Map of Significant Tree Coverage



The idea to enhance tree planting through a locally run project has emerged from the work on this Neighbourhood Plan.



Date Created: 31-10-2016 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 379075 / 113795 | Scale: 1:12500 |

Policy 8. Design and character of buildings and their settings

Development should be of a sympathetic scale and design that complements the character of the area, and respects the character and significance of Listed and locally-listed buildings and important open spaces. Buildings should not have bulky facades lacking detail and interest. Rows of identical or frequently repeated designs should be avoided. Any new development should acknowledge the road frontage and adjoining open spaces positively and in a manner appropriate to the character of the area. Landmark buildings (either due to their use or location) should be designed to be worthy of admiration and future protection

Materials used shall be of good quality with a view to long-term durability and should reflect the local vernacular for the area wherever possible. Examples are: flint, local brick, local stone, high quality timber partial cladding on some elevations, thatch using local Dorset techniques and materials, stone or slate tiling

Extensions and alterations should be in-character and of a scale complementary to the current architecture of the property and its neighbouring properties, especially where the consistency of architectural design is an important characteristic

Designs should allow for the future incorporation of renewable energy solutions where possible, if not included in the original building (e.g. a roof capable of bearing solar panels). Service metering cabinets should be sited discreetly, on the ground, the side or rear building elevations, so as to minimise the adverse visual impact from the street

The inclusion of landscaped areas visible from the street or wider views should take into account both future maintenance issues and permitted changes that might significantly impact on the character of the area. In locations where a clear historic building line has been established, new development should generally follow the existing line of development

Development should include sufficient externally accessible storage provision (including waste) and sufficient parking (residential car parking standards are as set out in Table 15). These features should be designed in to be both convenient and unobtrusive, to reduce clutter in the street scene. Sufficient space shall be allocated to dwellings so that residents can dry clothes outside, sit outside and socialise, and their children can play within a safe distance from their home without crossing busy roads. Where communal spaces are provided, consideration should be given to their future maintenance arrangements where this could otherwise adversely impact on the character and amenity of the area

New and altered boundaries between properties should reflect the traditional treatment of similar boundaries in the locality and be of high quality

Policy 9. Important views and landscape sensitivity

Where potential development on a site is likely to be clearly visible and prominent in views from well-used routes or important open spaces in the town or its surrounding landscape, the following principles should be applied

- > avoid light coloured rendering and bright or highly reflective materials*
- > retain views of key landmarks*
- > avoid notably high or massive buildings (including unbroken terraces or similar uniform layouts)*
- > reduce landscape impact by careful siting and orientation, and by making the most of the existing landform*
- > use existing tree cover, hedgerows and/or new landscaping that will be maintained to minimise the impact or reduce any remaining adverse impacts to an acceptable level*

Development should not be allowed if it would, either alone or cumulatively, lead to substantial harm to an

important view or the local landscape character

Where feasible, opportunities should be taken to reduce the harm caused by existing intrusive development that is clearly visible in an important view

Policy 10. Important local buildings

Where feasible, locally important buildings that are of clear local value due to one or more of the following criteria should be retained, and development should respect their contribution to the historic and architectural character of the area:

- > The building is of historic importance in the development of Sturminster Newton and the surrounding parish*
- > The building makes a very positive contribution to the character of the town or a particular locality, based on its design (due to outstanding craftsmanship, use of materials, architectural design etc.)*
- > The building is particularly prominent in the street scene or wider landscape due to scale and/or location (in a key view), so as to be a recognisable local landmark*
- > The group as a whole has a significant collective value due to common elements (either in terms of homogeneity or variety) of design, materials and/or scale*
- > The building is particularly notable for its architectural or engineering interest*

This policy will apply to the Locally Listed Buildings contained in each of the Spatial Chapters of this Plan, as these have already been assessed as meeting one or more of the above criteria.

Policy 11. Important Open Spaces and Local Green Spaces

Development should not undermine the open nature or importance of the following designated local green spaces (as shown on Map 7):

<u>Area</u>	<u>Local Green Space</u>	<u>Importance</u>
TOWN CENTRE	1. Railway gardens	Small well-maintained park for informal recreation and part of a through route for pedestrian journeys within the town. Provides views across to Hambledon Hill. Often a location for town events
BATH ROAD AND OLD MARKET	2. Wooded river bank from west of the Memorial Recreation Ground heading north (also in Southern Fringe)	Wooded sloping river bank, crossed by footpaths giving access to Colber Bridge and bathing island, views along paths and through trees to open farmland of Blackmore Vale, and forming the setting of Grade II Colber Bridge (and also Thomas Hardy's villa)
	3. Green at Stourcastle	Grass area used for amenity and as an informal play area, bordering the Trailway
	4. Chinnocks Allotment Gardens	Well-used allotment plots
	5. Butts Pond Estate entrance	Treed area marking the transition between more urban centre and Rixon
	6. Play area in The Gavel	Well-used equipped play area
HONEYMEAD	7. Butts Pond Local	Local nature reserve. Three grass fields including pond and

AND NORTHFIELDS	Nature Reserve	<i>large open ditches separated by hedgerows, and crossed by footpaths. Home to great crested newt, smooth newts, bats and wildflowers. Amenity and educational value. Peaceful natural green space within heart of the town</i>
	8. Field Close Play area	<i>Small grassed play area – the planting here provides an important green oasis on this very visible corner</i>
	9. North Fields Open Space	<i>Area of informal public open space providing opportunities for informal play, quiet reflection and enjoyment within a largely built-up residential area, part of wildlife corridor linking from Butts Pond local nature reserve to Green Lane and countryside beyond</i>
	10. Green Lane	<i>Thought to be an ancient byway – much used footpath (although not part of the official public right of way network) along ancient hedgebank with mature trees and brook leading out to the wider countryside, part of wildlife corridor linking along an old hedge line to Butts Pond Local Nature Reserve</i>
RIXON AND EASTERN FRINGE	11. Long Close Green	<i>Informal planted open area within this more modern estate</i>
	12a. Filbridge Rise allotments and 12b. play area	<i>Valued and well-used recreation areas used for allotments and informal play</i>
	13. Hambledon View green	<i>Small grassed triangle area, well used for informal play by local children despite close proximity to Rixon Recreation ground</i>
	14. Rixon Recreation ground	<i>Recreation ground with equipped play area, heavily used for play and organised games by young and adults, focus for play in east of town</i>
SOUTHERN FRINGE	15. Filbridge Rise and Riversmead Green	<i>Amenity green space within housing development</i>
	16. Memorial Recreation Ground, Ricketts Lane	<i>Recreation ground also popular for exercising dogs and as part of through route for walkers. Home of town shows, Cheese Festival and carnival. Lovely views to south to the ancient mill and east along river to ancient bridge</i>
	17. Open land in front of West End Cottages, adjoining Linden Park.	<i>Open field/paddock abutting popular footpath to Colber Bridge and access to riverbank and footpath network. Key view to Hardy's Cottage and across to ancient Sturminster Mill</i>
	2. Wooded river bank from west of the Memorial Recreation Ground heading north (also in Bath Road and Old Market Area)	<i>Wooded sloping river bank, crossed by footpaths giving access to Colber Bridge and bathing island, views along paths and through trees to open farmland of Blackmore Vale, and forming the setting of Grade II Colber Bridge (and also North House, Thomas Hardy's villa)</i>
	18. St Mary's Churchyard	<i>Peaceful area for quiet contemplation, setting of the church and crossed by connecting route between some of the older streets in the town</i>
	19. Land at Barnes Close Green	<i>Informal open area, well maintained and attractively planted, in front of houses, forming an intrinsic part of the character of this more modern estate</i>
20. Watermeadows south of the town	<i>River banks and watermeadows forming the setting of the main entrance into the town across the historic bridge. Large parts of which are used for informal recreation and for major open air</i>	

		<i>events such as the carnival and the Cheese Festival</i>
RURAL AREA	21. Riverside meadows opposite Bull Tavern	<i>Unspoilt wildlife and quiet recreation area (for fishing and walking) close to centre of town, with river, meadows and car park</i>
	22. Sturminster Newton Town Cemetery	<i>Cemetery on rectangular sloping site incorporating Chapel of Rest and car parking. Quiet and peaceful area. Some significant trees and hedgerows, and attractive views towards the town and Piddles Wood</i>
	23. Land around Sturminster Newton Castle	<i>Setting of Iron Age hillfort with later manor ruins overlooking river – partly farmed, part private garden. Crossed by footpath between bridge and Coombe Valley</i>
	24. Land around the Mill	<i>Provides setting to the historic Mill, and used for picnicking, annual Boogie-Woogie Festival and Museum and Mill Society cream teas</i>
	25. Dorset Lavender Farm	<i>Care Farm where lavender and other edible and bee friendly plants are grown and harvested near Fiddleford Manor, with fine views across to Hambledon Hill. Several Open Days held throughout the year</i>
	26. Broad Oak Community Orchard	<i>Managed orchard with ancient and new apple trees owned and managed by Dorset Wildlife Trust – local events include apple pressing and hog roast</i>
<i>Development should not undermine the open nature, character or importance of open spaces delivered as part of the provision for outdoor sport and recreation associated with new development.</i>		
<i>If development is proposed on an open space outside of the settlement boundary, consideration and, if appropriate, protection, should be given to the existing value of this space in terms of its:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <i>Public access for informal recreation including the enjoyment of the space and views out</i> > <i>Positive contribution to local character of the area</i> > <i>Historic significance and associations</i> > <i>Wildlife interest, as an important habitat or wildlife corridor</i> 		

Policy 12. Trees in the landscape

The likely impact of development on trees should be considered at the very start of the development process.

Trees that contribute to the character of the area or its key views, or provide a critical role screening otherwise intrusive developments, should be protected. Landmark trees, due to their prominence in the street scene or their historic / cultural associations, should also be retained

Opportunities for tree planting should be taken to reinforce local character where this is a notable feature of the character area, or where the character of the area would be improved by more tree planting. Areas where trees are noted to make a significant positive difference are listed in Table 16.

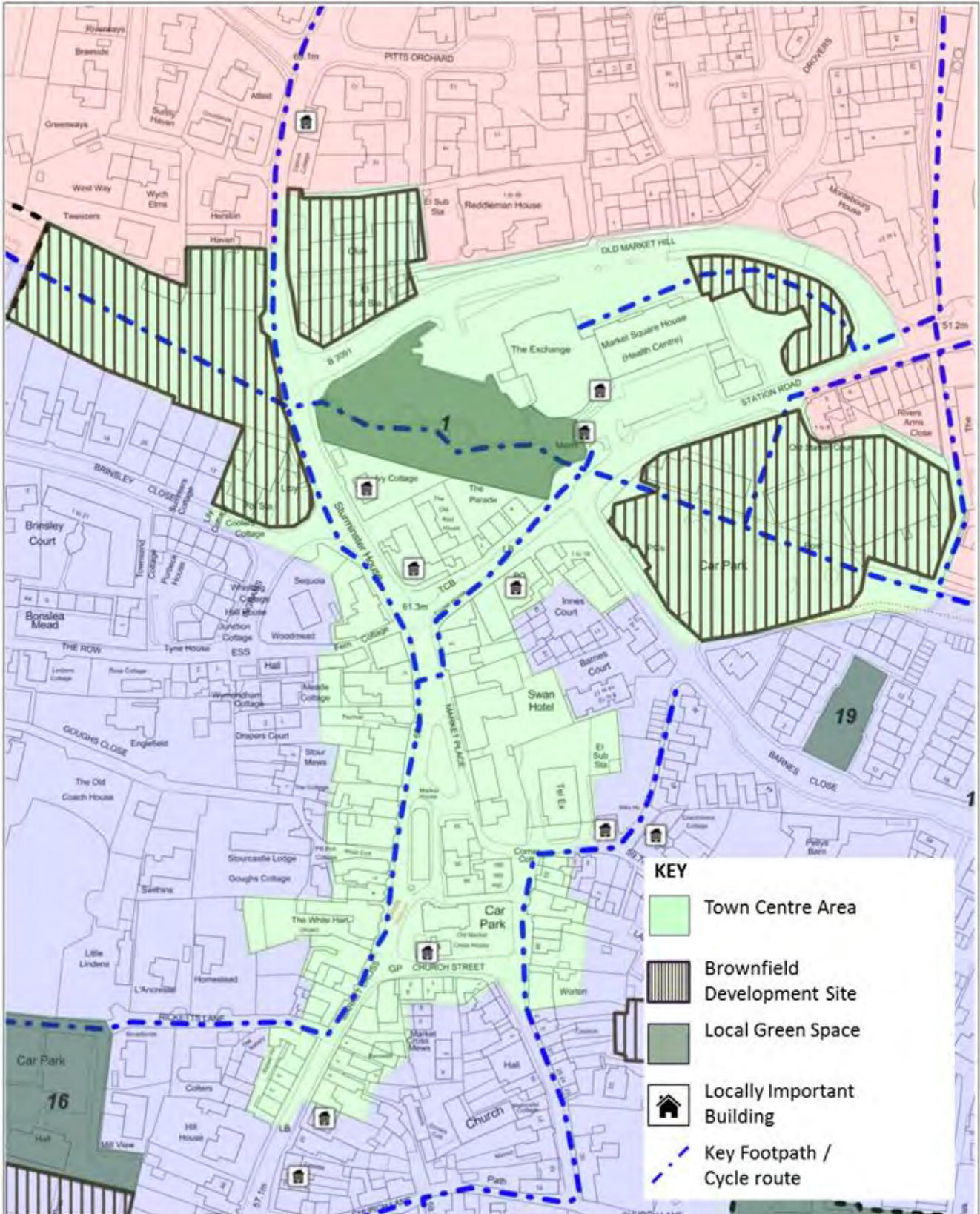
6 Town Centre area

Map 8. Town Centre Area



Town Centre Area

Sturminster Newton CP



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This section of the Neighbourhood Plan covers the town centre area and its immediate surrounds, both the historic core, and the more modern extension beyond the line of the former railway. The policies and principles presented here will guide planning decisions aimed at ensuring the town centre remains a vibrant, welcoming place, as the commercial and community heart of the town, in a way that is appropriate to its rich history and charm. This section lays down the general principles to guide this development and we provide a ‘masterplan’ for the eventual shape and nature of the town centre.

Figure 3. Artist’s impression of a possible future for the Town Centre



6.1 The Town Centre area: an overview

The Town Centre area is the heart of the parish, and the main destination for most visitors. It contains the mix of town centre uses that you would expect in a small market town. It also contains some of the oldest buildings and spaces, as well as some contrasting modern buildings that show how the town is moving forward in the 21st century. All of the area south of the former railway line is within the Conservation Area, which means that there are stricter controls on development and over the protection of trees. The line of the former railway runs through the northern area, skirting around the northern edge of the historic core, and reinforcing the connections this area has with its wider hinterland and the town’s long association with the historic Somerset and Dorset Railway.

Map 9. Town Centre and Shopping Frontages



Concentration of town centre uses

The town centre area defines the area within which main town centre uses should locate, subject to certain criteria. We have also defined the frontages where the loss of shop fronts and change away from retail and similar uses should be resisted.

Shopping frontages were previously defined in the 2003 Local Plan, but the town centre has changed significantly since that time, with the opening of the Exchange, Co-op and other shops in the Station Road area shifting the town centre's focus in this direction. The area of Bridge Street south of Church Street is not now included as a main shopping frontage, as although shops and other main town centre uses can and should operate successfully here, other uses such as housing or offices may be equally appropriate. Although the town has not seen many long-term vacant units, even one or two vacant or poorly maintained premises can have a marked impact on people's impression of the centre. So rather than differentiating between primary and secondary areas, this plan simply defines the main frontages where it is important that the ground floor remains in a use that maintains footfall.

The town centre needs to embrace new challenges affecting high streets by accepting different, but appropriate new uses which make the most of the town's strengths. Some changes (such as turning a restaurant into an estate agents) do not always need planning consent; and applying flexibility in change of use can reduce delay and costs for businesses that want to locate here and for existing businesses, and minimises the potential for premises standing empty.

Main Town Centre Uses

These have been defined in the national planning policy framework. They include retail; leisure / entertainment (such as cinemas, pubs and restaurants) and the more intensive sport and recreation uses (e.g. indoor bowling); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including museums, hotels and conference facilities).

Policy 13. Town centre uses

Main town centre uses will be supported within the town centre area (as defined on Map 8). Development proposals within this area should help support and must not detract from (or undermine) the following:

- > a strong and vibrant retail presence within the town centre area, including the continued presence and expansion of the street market*
- > a range of services and facilities including cultural/arts/community venues which support the enjoyment of the town for residents and visitors – including attractions, overnight accommodation and food / drink establishments*
- > opportunities for office-based employment, which complement and support the town centre's vitality and viability*
- > opportunities for housing on otherwise underused upper floors*
- > the area's historic and architectural charm*
- > a safe and pedestrian friendly public realm*
- > sufficient public and private car parking serving the town centre to cater for likely needs*

Policy 14. Uses in the shopping frontages area

Within the main shopping frontages, the use of ground floor units should fall within one or more of the following use classes:

- retail (A1)*
- financial and professional services (A2)*
- restaurants and cafes (A3), pubs and wine bars (A4) or hot food takeaways (A5)*
- assembly and leisure uses (D2 - e.g. cinemas and sports halls), or non-residential institutions (D1 -*

e.g. day nurseries, libraries, art galleries, training centres)

Where the above uses are not practical or feasible, the change of use to another main town centre use may be considered favourably. In all cases, the design and layout should include a clearly visible reception area on the frontage and should not result in large areas of inactive or blank frontage. The loss of shop fronts, or alterations not in keeping with the character of the area and guidance in Policy 15, or the introduction of security shutters that would have a similarly detrimental impact, will be resisted.

6.2 The character of the town centre area

The town centre contains a large number of historic buildings and features. The majority date from the mid 18th to 19th centuries following the significant fire of 1729. These buildings present a most attractive and distinctive townscape, and make a significant contribution to the town centre's enclosed and tightly knit urban character.

The course of the former railway broadly defines the boundary between the old and new parts of the town, and marks a clear break in townscape character. The area to the north has begun to create its own 21st century character but with styles and materials taking cues from the local area. Some aspects have worked well, though other aspects have not quite found the organic rhythm and charm that is inherent in the historic core. This is particularly the case with the more massive and bulky structures along Old Market Hill.

The following policy has been drafted to guide new and infill development across the whole area

Policy 15. Town centre area character

Development should be in keeping with the predominant character of the area, respecting the positive features it contains (see character description), the attractive views through and enjoyment of the public realm. The form, style and materials should complement the surrounding character of the area and its buildings, taking opportunities to enhance the understanding of the area's unique history.

Character description

Predominant character of the area and positive features:

Layout:

Town centre layout has changed very little since late Medieval period. One principal central space (Market Place) and two irregular secondary spaces (including Market Cross)

Network of narrow lanes and shared surface roads radiating from the town centre which reflect the historic layout and development pattern of the old town and create enticing entrances to side streets. Plot shapes creating a dense urban grain fronting onto Market Place and principal adjoining streets with traditionally limited depth of development

Building fronts are near continuous and well defined, facing directly onto the street at back of pavements. Backland areas have often remained intact and provide a charming environment with extensions creating irregular and varied spaces, service yards and gardens

Scale and form:

Historic high density development around central spaces. Buildings face predominantly onto the street and are generally 2-2.5 storey with occasionally 3 storeys. Roofs are a simple pitched form with gable ends, and dormers are common. Rooflines and eaves are generally consistent with only small variations

Built styles and features:

Northern part substantially Georgian or Neo-Georgian, while southern part has a strong vernacular influence

Materials:

Walls:

Predominantly render, generally painted white, red brick or local limestone

Roofs:

Generally slate or red/brown tiles and thatch in the southern area, tile and slates in the northern area

Fronts and boundaries:	<i>Mainly edge of pavement development but generally free from extensive signage and clutter</i>
Landscaping:	<i>Noticeably very little green landscaping in the town centre. Some secluded back gardens have trees, shrubs and hedges but the principal frontages present a tight, robust urban form. At the fringes of the centre, as the density of building reduces, the connecting lanes add a more leafy feel</i>
	<i>Massive or bulky buildings should be avoided, and where large scale buildings are appropriate for a town centre use the form of the building should be designed to break up their mass through appropriate changes in material, storeys and roof lines.</i>
	<i>Any new development or redevelopment should not result in frontages being dominated by parked cars; site entrances should be designed so as to be as discreet as possible.</i>

Important public spaces and views

The Market Place is an important urban space, although the level of traffic and parked vehicles can make it appear unattractive and detract from its enjoyment. The harmonious use of vernacular materials such as limestone and brick, together with thatch, stone slates and plain tile reinforces its special qualities.

There are not many green spaces within this central part of the town. The main one is the Railway Gardens, close to the Exchange from which the view of Hambledon Hill can be enjoyed, providing a central open meeting place with many events taking place throughout the year. This is protected under Policy 11. The provision of the Trailway (under Policy 7) will also provide an important green and attractive corridor through this area.

The views into and through the historic core are particularly important, with glimpses from the core area through to the back streets adding to this local character.

Important character buildings and features

There are many Listed Buildings within this area, from public buildings such as the Market House, Market Cross House and the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, to buildings constructed for commerce such as Lloyds Bank, The Swan Hotel and The White Hart Hotel, and 18 - 19th century Houses such as The Town House and Worton. A number of additional buildings have been highlighted for the local interest and contribution they make, as described in the table below. Due to their local contribution to the history or character of the area, these will be protected under Policy 10. Over the next fifteen years it is likely that some may need to find different uses, and where this is the case any alterations should be sympathetically carried out with regard to retaining the historic character of the building whilst making it fit for modern-day requirements.

Table 17. Town Centre Area – Locally Listed Buildings

Ivy Cottage, Bath Road	<i>Two storey cottage, attractive single dwelling in a prominent position. One time home of William Henry Owen, Stationmaster at Sturminster Newton Railway station for 41 years</i>
Post Office, Station Road	<i>Unassuming building with a long history of serving the town. Current shop front design is not in keeping with its heritage</i>
Symonds and Sampson's, corner of Bath Road and Station Road	<i>Prominent building just off Market Place. The old police station constructed c 1859. County police sign still visible in stone on front wall, and the clock is a prominent feature</i>
Town Museum, Market Cross	<i>Although constructed in the 1940s this period looking building adds to the attractiveness of the Town Centre in a prominent location</i>
The Exchange, Station Road	<i>Important hub in the town, containing key civic and cultural functions, sited on the heart of the old cattle market dating back to 13th century</i>
Market column outside the Exchange	<i>Sculpted column commemorating Sturminster Market</i>

Shop fronts

Many of the older shop buildings are listed, and incorporate traditional elements and materials that reinforce their Georgian / Victorian character. The use of appropriate signage, designs, paint finishes, inviting entrances and window displays, whether alterations, replacements or new, all influence the character of the area and can make the town centre and individual businesses attractive to potential customers.

Retailers may need some flexibility to adapt their shopfront designs to meet evolving customer and market trends, and the guidance is intended to strike an appropriate balance between flexibility and the need to protect and retain the town centre's overall historic character and appearance. In the design of all shopfronts, whether early, traditional or modern/non-traditional, the following general considerations should be taken into account:

The streetscene: consider the effect of an individual frontage on the rest of the street, neighbouring businesses and the immediate area. Do the proportions, materials, colours and details maintain the variation and hierarchy of the buildings and not dominate them unnecessarily?

The building as a whole: consider the effect of the design on the whole building, and on the adjoining shopfronts. Does the design sensitively enhance the individuality and character of the building? Is the structural integrity of traditional frontages maintained?

The details: consider the visual interest. Do the selected colours, materials used, lettering and signage, and the general design of windows and entrances enhance the building as well as the whole street, and aid access for people with disabilities?

COLOUR: within the historic core, a 'traditional' colour palette and finish should be used - rich, dark colours (or white/cream) for woodwork and detailing, combined with traditional contrasting pastel shades (e.g. cream, white) for already-painted walls, leaving window displays and lettering to provide accents. Whatever the context, colour schemes adopted should be subtle and blend harmoniously with the historic environment. Illuminated signs, highly reflective or luminous colours and materials, which may be the hallmark of some corporate brands, are unlikely to be acceptable. Painting of unpainted bare stone or brick is discouraged.

MATERIALS: Materials used in shopfront construction should be of good quality, durable and in keeping with a building's existing character. In general, the number and type of materials and colours used should be kept to a minimum. Materials traditionally used in Sturminster Newton are wood, glass, brick, stone, bronze and painted iron. Fasciae made of acrylic sheeting, Perspex, aluminium or plastic will not generally be supported. Painted timber is preferred to stained hardwood, and tropical hardwoods are discouraged.



Example of sensitive colour scheme, retention of architecture detailing good use of signage and raised lettering



Example of sensitive colour scheme, high quality signage



Example of sensitive colour scheme, high quality hanging signage, motifs and lettering



Example of poor colour scheme, inappropriate signage, materials and design. Inappropriate painting of brickwork.

LETTERING AND SIGNAGE: Lettering upon the fascia should preferably be traditionally sign-written, although there are good examples in the town of raised lettering. Lettering should normally be easily contained within the fascia (as a guide a ratio of 60% fascia height for lettering, with 20% spacing above and below, and the wording no greater than 75% of the fascia length, should work well). Traditional projecting signs can provide a useful form of advertising within the town centre, but only one projecting sign for each shop unit will be supported.

Original or traditional elements should be repaired or re-established, with reference to photographic evidence or nearby examples where appropriate. The removal of good quality original or early fabric will be resisted. A more modern, complementary style may be appropriate on other buildings subject to suitable scale / proportions, materials, colour palette and architectural detailing.

It is recognised that some businesses may require security measures to protect their premises, but such measures can wrongly create the appearance that the area is susceptible to crime, harm the character of the building and the surrounding area, and make the area unattractive to residents and visitors outside normal opening hours. Traditional shop front features such as stallrisers, mullions and glazing bars can provide a good level of protection. If shutters are needed, open-style grilles can maintain interest by allowing some window shopping, whilst providing increased security.

Policy 16. Shop Fronts

The design of shop fronts should:

- > *be in keeping with the character of the building and its immediate surrounds (and the variation and individuality within this, including the general colour palette and the proportions of adjacent units and upper floors), and not dominate more than the status of the building and intended use merits*
- > *retain traditional fascia signs and hanging signs, and other elements and materials that reinforce the Georgian / Victorian character of the historic core*
- > *ensure interest throughout the day and night – solid security shutters and other measures which would create a ‘dead frontage’ or otherwise severely decrease interest when viewed from the street will not be permitted*
- > *allow for ease of future maintenance - the materials used should be durable and would be likely to weather well*

Consideration should also be given to the broader guidance contained in the North Dorset Guide to Shopfront Design.

6.3 Town centre traffic management and public realm improvements project

Town centre public realm improvements – key objectives

Create an attractive, traffic free open space for pedestrians and visitors in the Market Place immediately outside the Swan Inn, with the current parking and access reconfigured, to facilitate a café-style culture. The layout should retain at least 8 short-stay disabled / shopper spaces and allow for deliveries

Make the area immediately west of the Museum an attractive open space for pedestrians and visitors to linger

Improve the ability for pedestrians and visitors, including those with buggies or young children, to move around the town centre area safely through shared surface, crossing points and adequate pavement widths

Improve Station Road as an attractive pedestrian thoroughfare linking the historic centre to the Exchange, whilst allowing for deliveries

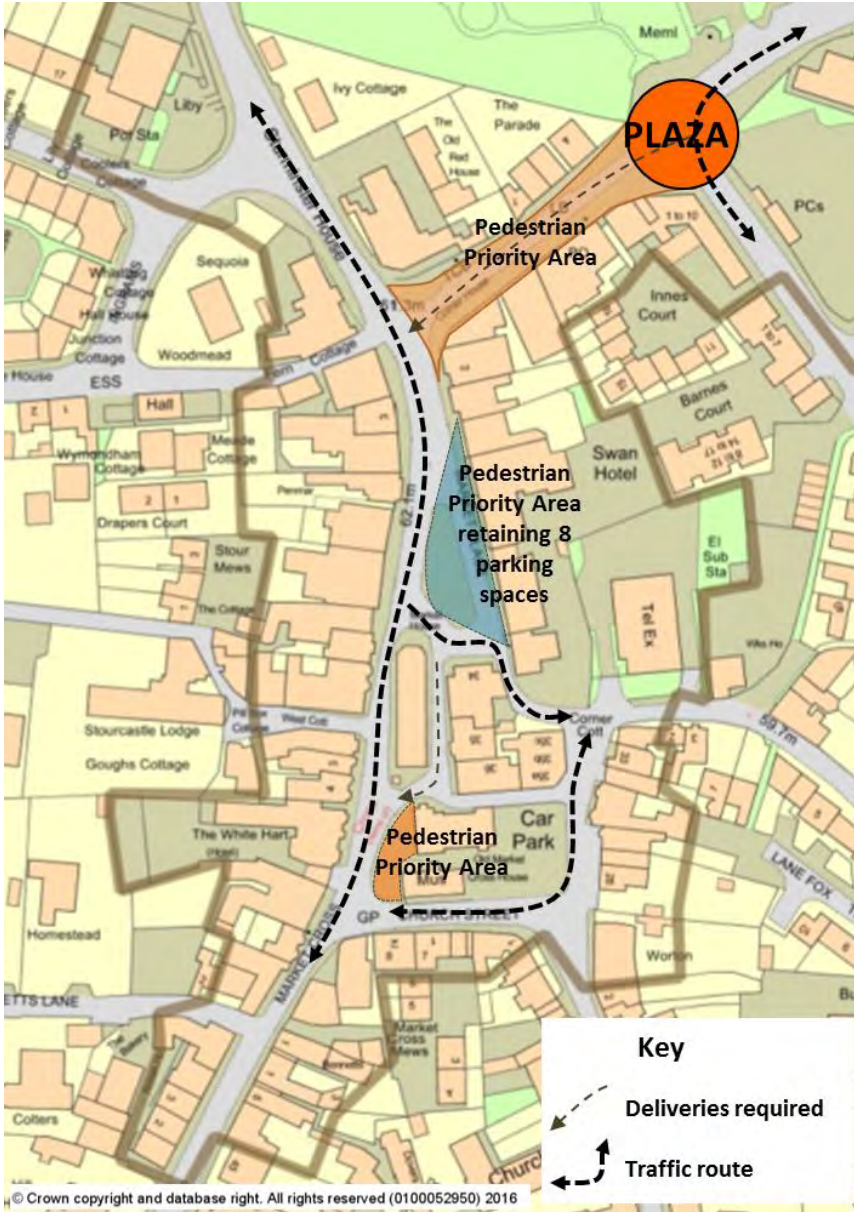
Retain the historic charm of the town centre, reducing clutter and using good quality materials

Having welcoming, pedestrian-friendly public areas –where people walk, linger and socialise outside – is one of the key components supporting the aim of having a strong and vibrant town centre. Consultation

highlighted the negative impacts of vehicular traffic passing through the town centre as a significant problem and a deterrent to those on foot. At times the road carriageway "pinch points" and on street parking create conflict and congestion. Traffic speed and volumes make it difficult to use the narrow pavements or to cross the road easily. Observations suggest these factors create a feeling of a vehicular movement being prioritised at the expense of pedestrians.

Sturminster Newton's town centre has some really attractive buildings and spaces – but they may not be noticed if the visitor can't find where to park, or if the places they come to see are obscured by parked cars and delivery lorries.

Map 10. Public Realm Improvement Area



Initial feasibility work carried out as part of the Neighbourhood Plan suggests that a scheme for remodelling the centre of the town is possible and would improve the character and appearance of the historic core, greatly improve the visitor experience and create a safer and more welcoming environment for all users.



The Market Place is the focal point of the historic town centre, and could be readily enhanced by considered environmental improvements such as some planters or small trees in tubs and seating, and pedestrian-friendly traffic management. By realigning the existing short-term and disabled parking spaces, the area outside the Swan pub could be made a much more useable public space for

sitting out and socialising. The link through from the Market Place to the Museum would still need to be used for delivery vehicles, but would provide an alternative route to the narrows for pedestrian (though the western pavement through the narrows could also be widened very slightly to make it safer for buggies and the like).

The area outside the Museum could also be much improved. At the moment this space is often cluttered by cars parked haphazardly, blocking views of the attractive Museum and making it more difficult to walk through. This area should be free of cars, landscaped for pedestrians to enjoy and to show off the Town's Market Cross and Museum. It should also be possible to make it easier for pedestrians to cross the main road here.



The Town Council, in conjunction with other relevant public bodies, will work together to implement a scheme of public realm enhancements in the town centre area aimed at improving visitor experience and enhancing the historic character of the area. Details of the scheme will be subject to public consultation. It is important that this project is done in conjunction with or prior to the Station Road development and includes improvements to the linkage along Station Road as a pedestrian route to avoid the risk that new development would attract customers away from the market and the older shops and undermine their viability.

As a potentially separate project, the Town Council will work with other car park operators to devise a parking strategy for the town centre to help achieve the aim of having reasonably priced and convenient public car parks for shoppers, disabled people, visitors and workers. Detailed car park usage surveys show that the overall number of parking spaces needed in the town centre should remain at around the current level. Additional residential and other developments in the town centre may increase the demand for spaces, so it will be important that further provision is made when new development is planned, otherwise this could have a detrimental effect on the town centre economy.

Policy 17. Town centre public realm improvements

The remodelling of the public realm in the town centre should accord with the following principles:

- > designs should be based on encouraging a low speed environment (ie 20mph) – without the need for this to be reinforced by a formal 20 mph speed limit. The inclusion of pedestrian barriers would be a sign of failure. The opportunity to re-think over-engineered roads in the northern section to provide an environment that is more pedestrian friendly and appropriate to the town’s Conservation Area status should be investigated*
- > a co-ordinated palette of materials should be used throughout the town centre area. The choice of paving materials will play an integral part in the character of the area. The use of materials should reflect the type of space and the proposed usage. Particular materials should indicate, for example, vehicular or parking areas within the street. The use of more locally distinctive stone should be applied in the main public spaces. Utility covers (e.g. manholes) should be integrated into the street surface with the use of the same material*
- > kerbs and footways should be designed to incorporate additional tactile and physical guidance to add clarity and assist blind or partially-sighted people. Wherever practicable, a minimum of 2 metres clear footway should be provided*
- > a co-ordinated range of bollards, seating, litter bins, finger post signage, cycle racks and lighting columns should be used, appropriate to the Conservation Area status and character. The involvement of local artists and crafts persons in their design would add creativity and local distinctiveness*
- > street clutter should be reduced – including poles and painted directions and markings on the road surface. Consideration should be given to whether all signage is necessary, and the extent to which it could be more discreetly placed (e.g. by wall mounting or shared poles)*
- > sufficient seating should be provided to allow for people to enjoy the main spaces, and planting (such as planters, hanging baskets, small street trees in tubs) included to provide visual interest and shade*
- > provision will need to be made reasonably close to the shops and the Exchange for deliveries, disabled parking, and short-stay shopper spaces, prioritised over and above other users, and taking into account the size of vehicles likely to be used. Consideration should also be given to the provision of cycle parking, to allow visitors to stop and enjoy the town centre*

6.4 Important infrastructure, routes and connections

Community facilities

There are a wide range of community facilities within this area appropriate to a town centre location. These include the modern facilities found in the Exchange, community halls, the museum and library. The post

office and bank are run as commercial ventures, and although much valued by the community a degree of realism and flexibility is needed where there are clear changes to how some of these services operate at a local level. As such, the retention of such commercial facilities in the area, although welcomed, will be considered under Policies 13 and 14. The White Hart and Swan Hotel both provide useful meeting and socialising venues, as well as attracting visitors to the centre. The following lists the community buildings in this area that will be protected under Policy 4:

- > The Exchange
- > Town Council Chamber
- > Community office
- > Royal British Legion Club, Bath Road
- > The Post Office
- > Sturminster Newton Medical Centre Old Market Hill
- > Old Market Dental Practice
- > Sturminster Newton Library
- > The Museum, Market Cross
- > Swan Hotel
- > The White Hart

Important Pedestrian Routes

The town centre is a key destination and as such is also a place from which a number of important routes radiate out. The most obvious one of these is the Trailway, which currently emerges from the Blandford / Shillingstone direction into the Station Road car park. It is an important recreation trail and also highlights the railway in the town's history. Its route should continue along the line of the former railway, crossing Station Road just outside the Exchange, and then through the Railway Gardens, across Bath Road and on through Clarke's Yard (formerly Snook's Yard) and across a new bridge on the former railway arches before carrying on to the west. The design of the Trailway also provides the potential to introduce planting along this route corridor, bringing the countryside through the town. As this key route crosses through a number of areas, a general policy on its protection and future extension is included (Policy 7).

The north south links through the town centre include the B3092 on the western side of the town centre (running from Bath Road through to Bridge Street), and on the eastern side the Jubilee Path, running across the junction of Old Market Hill and Station Road to the north end of the Butts Pond nature reserve. The western route runs on pavements alongside the main road, and there is scope for improvements where the pavement is particularly narrow and where there are crossing points over back lanes running off to the west. The most difficult to negotiate is where the path crosses the excessively wide junction with Brinsley Close. Narrowing Brinsley Close at this point and providing a level surface would enable pedestrians to follow their desire line and also reduce the speed of turning traffic. The section of the Jubilee Path south of Station Road is currently closed off but this connection needs to be resolved to join it up to the Trailway.

In terms of the routes through the centre, there is a 'missing link' from Market Hill to Lover's Lane, which should be secured through the development of the Station Road area. Lover's Lane itself, although a vital pedestrian link in the town, is narrow, hemmed in by high fences and poorly lit. There may be an opportunity to improve it when the old Gasworks and adjoining land is redeveloped or in the longer term rerouting it through the land currently used for the BT exchange.

6.5 Areas of change

The main area of change will be within the northern section of the town centre. There are also likely to be some limited development opportunities within the historic core, as individual sites change hands. For example, although there are no current plans to develop the telephone exchange site, it could become available for redevelopment towards the end of the plan period.

The regeneration area in the northern part of the town centre

The various vacant or underused sites in the northern part of the town centre area, along the line of the former railway, hold the key to the centre's future growth. The main sites with development potential are:

- Land south of Station Road, including Streeters, Hansons, The Original Factory Shop and the Station Road car park
- Land around the junction of Bath Road and the B3091 (the main site known as Clarkes or Snook's Yard), but there is also potential on the adjoining land currently occupied by the Police Station / Library, and on the opposite corner by the Royal British Legion Club)
- Land at the eastern end of the Medical Centre / Exchange site on Market Hill

The area is within easy walking distance of the historic Market Place via the pedestrianised part of Station Road, via Bath Road and also by the pedestrian route along Lover's Lane. Being on the edge of the Conservation Area, the sites are less constrained by existing historic features than the area around the Market Place. The main constraints in this location relate to the extension of the Trailway (along the line of the former railway) and potential ground stability issues associated with the made-up nature of the land where the railway was in a cutting, west of Bath Road and near the former Station Road bridge site close to Streeters.

Previous development here has established the Exchange, the town's modern and successful cultural hub, the Medical Centre and a small supermarket in the ground floor of the complex, facing onto Station Road.

The following principles are considered to be the main drivers that should guide the regeneration in this northern part of the town centre. These go into more detail on how the main aims for the town centre can be delivered here:

Regeneration area – key objectives

Retain the same number of parking spaces for shoppers, disabled people, visitors and workers, with the main public car park/s laid out, accessed and managed in a way that makes them attractive and convenient to use.

Provide an attractive open space (or plaza) for outdoor functions and activities. The space should be able to be closed to traffic as needed, reasonably level and of sufficient size for holding events using gazebos, marquees or market stalls etc.

Create a more continuous and attractive 'high street' running between the historic core and the Exchange, the main public car park and supermarket, and coordinating the design and layout of the public street environment.

Extend the Trailway through the centre, reflecting the line of the former railway.

Support the continued functioning and success of the Exchange and Medical Centre.

Allow the existing businesses to continue, and accommodate a range of town centre uses, including offices, leisure/tourist facilities and some housing.

Station Road

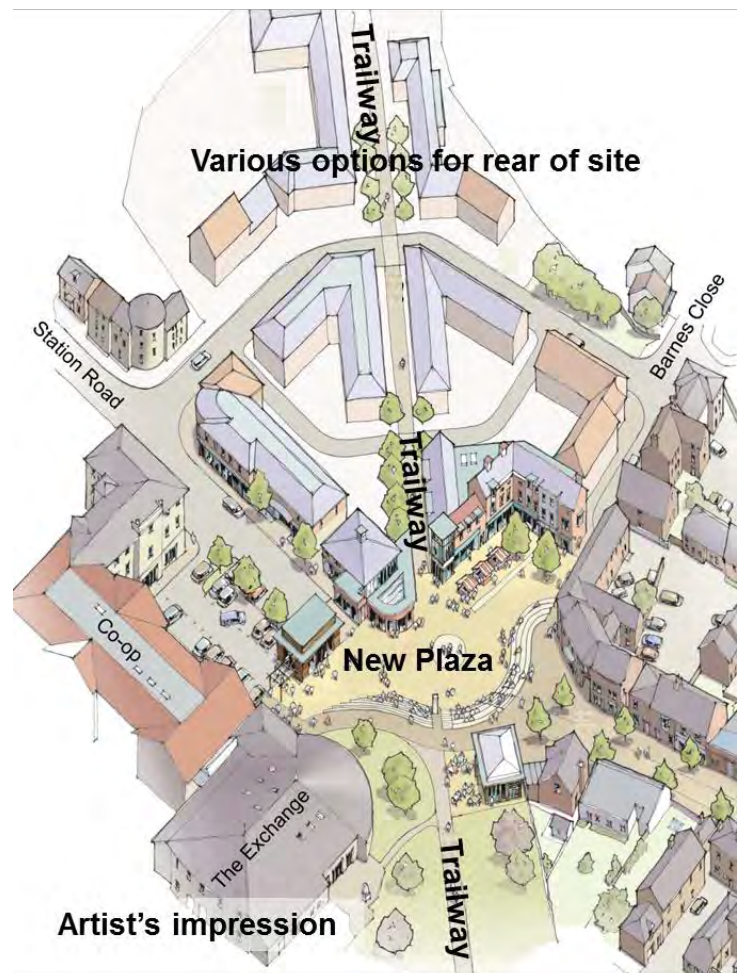
The Station Road area has been subject to previous consultation, and a design brief was prepared in 2008 to guide its development. The Creamery site to the east has been completed, but a potential scheme for the remaining western end has not yet progressed, possibly due to a range of factors, including the national economy (which may mean that some elements like decked parking may not be affordable) and the more complex mix of landowners. The principles underpinning the brief have therefore been re-visited, and the following guidance is proposed, replacing the 2008 design brief as the main policy consideration for the future development of this area.

The timing of any scheme will depend on the plans, aspirations and cooperation of the various landowners, and the re-development of the area may not all happen at once. However, a better end result should be achieved by everyone understanding the local community's vision for the area which will be used to guide

future development and influence investment decisions. It is envisaged that any redevelopment would retain or provide suitable premises for the existing businesses to continue.

Figure 4. Artist's illustration of how the area could be developed

What is particularly special about the site is its link to the railway (and its role in the development of the town), and its potential to accommodate some of the larger uses outside the more finely grained pattern of development within the historic core. The former grain store (Streeter's) has some local historic and architectural interest, being the last remaining building directly associated with the railway. However, as a building it is not so remarkable that its retention should be the primary consideration in how this area is redeveloped. It is also difficult to adapt to meet future needs. It occupies a potentially prime site facing onto the area at the end of the pedestrianised section of Station Road, the entrance to the Railway Gardens and the area in front of the Exchange, where buildings with more active shop fronts could link the area together in a positive way. As such the proposal in the 2008 brief for this building to be retained has not been carried forward as a requirement. Other aspects, such as the design and detailing of the route through the site, and any buildings facing onto it, could certainly express the railway heritage as part of the design rationale for this area.



The view looking east from Railway Gardens, out to the landmark of Hambledon Hill in the far distance, is important. The extent to which this view is retained will depend on the scale and positioning of buildings on the Station Road site. Certainly it is feasible to retain a view of the hill from the top of the gardens, by keeping the Trailway corridor along the line of the railway, and this would also help in highlighting this important route through the town (the trees just north of the public toilets currently obscure the potential view along this route, and may be better replaced by landscaping either side of the route). Buildings could also be designed to frame the view, through the appropriate orientation of roof slopes etc.

One of the key objectives in the 2008 brief was to remove as much traffic as possible from the western end of Station Road so that a new focal, public space (or plaza) can be created. This is considered to be a really important potential benefit from the regeneration of this area, and recognition has been given to the potential of the space to allow the development of an expanded outdoor market and the holding of special events. To make the most of this space it will be important that it is well located at the 'node' where Station Road, the Railway Gardens and the Exchange come together, and that a sufficiently large part can be free from vehicular traffic. Careful consideration should be given to alternative ways of routing traffic through to serve the new development and beyond to Barnes Close. Consideration should also be given to whether the buses need to stop here as there are other places that are equally convenient for passengers to be picked up or dropped off.

The retention of the overall number of parking spaces at their current level (about 150 spaces including customer parking) is also a key consideration. The number of spaces provided on site should be sufficient to serve the uses located here; but it is feasible that some of the spaces serving the town centre could be provided using land elsewhere in this northern regeneration area. Therefore, some flexibility can be included in the policy providing that the overall number of spaces is retained. Similarly, the existing public

conveniences could be retained on the site or rebuilt in an equally accessible location to serve the town centre.

The bottom end of the existing car park needs to be designed to provide an arrival point for the Trailway and consideration should also be given to whether it could also allow the creation of a stopping point for the potential heritage railway line (see Section 4).

It is considered that in the region of 1,250m² of retail space would be appropriate and facilitate a continuous and attractive 'high street' running from the historic core to the new site, the main public car park and supermarket. Whether the new site could include a supermarket will depend on the local economy; the following policy would not rule out this possibility. It does make sense that the retail uses are in general located in the north-western part of the site where they connect with Station Road and the Exchange. Appropriately designed shop fronts should face out onto this area, to create positive street frontages, with service yards located unobtrusively to the rear, so they do not detract from the enjoyment of the public realm. The site would benefit from some residential development particularly smaller units for older people.

Because of the range of previous uses and infilling associated with the railway, there is potential for contamination that should be considered as part of any planning application, and effective measures secured to remediate the site if required.

Policy 18. Station Road site

Proposals for the mixed use development of the Station Road area (as identified on Map 3) will be supported provided they will deliver all of the following key outcomes. If comprehensive development is not possible, the design and layout of any partial scheme of redevelopment must not prejudice the development potential of the remaining land to achieve the remaining outcomes.

- *Creation of a large outdoor traffic-free public plaza in the area where Station Road, the Trailway and the Exchange are located, to provide a focus for town events and other functions and to assist the further development of the town as a social and cultural destination. This should be designed so that it could provide an alternative location for a larger outdoor market*
- *A mix of retail and service uses, particularly at ground floor level, in classes A1-A5, to provide a new shopping frontage facing onto the Plaza, Station Road and the link with Barnes Close, with residential, office or business uses on upper floors, to provide a degree of public surveillance at all times*
- *Public conveniences and at least the equivalent amount of publicly accessible car park spaces as there are today to meet the needs of visitors and businesses operating in the town centre and to ensure there is no detrimental impact on its viability. These should be provided within the site, although an element may be relocated (provided these would be conveniently sited where they would continue to serve the town centre)*
- *The extension of the North Dorset Trailway through the site, along the line of the former railway, and a link connecting the Jubilee Path with Lovers Lane*

The general mix of uses may include other main town centre uses or residential uses, where these would be compatible with neighbouring uses and not undermine the above outcomes.

The layout of the development should provide positive street frontages with ancillary areas and functions such as service yards to the rear, to avoid detracting from the public realm. The design and layout should also enhance the legibility of this area (how it is understood and navigated around), particularly focusing on visual and functional links with the historic part of the town centre and emphasising the 'arrival points' for visitors. Connections between the main car park areas and the town centre should be safe, convenient and attractive.

Building heights will be generally 2-2.5 storey with occasional 3 storey buildings where appropriate to provide architectural emphasis. The positioning, scale and design of buildings should ensure a view of Hambledon Hill can still be enjoyed from the majority of the Railway Gardens. The design of buildings facing the Exchange and the public plaza should be of suitably high quality materials and detailing. The public realm and buildings fronting onto the line of the former railway should also indicate the importance of the site as the former railway station area, and its role in the town's development in the past.

Market Hill

Land on the north side of Station Road on the eastern end of Market Place House has outstanding planning consent (2/2006/0987) for ground floor commercial (A1 shops or A2 offices) with 28 residential flats over.

The site is the last remaining parcel of land to be developed from the livestock market area developed as The Exchange, Medical Centre, supermarket and offices complex that was completed in 2008. It had become an eyesore which local residents have been keen to see improved. The Community Partnership SturQuest decided to engage with local individuals and organisations to explore possibilities for improvement, and in 2016 the landowner agreed that the land could be used as a community garden until such time as it is permanently developed.

The community garden project, 2016

A local landscape designer produced a plan for the community garden. Monies were raised through donations and 33 trees in planters have been 'adopted' by families, groups and businesses. These will be redistributed in and around the town when the site is brought forward for development.

Although the garden will be maintained by Sturminster Newton Town Council, the labour and plants are provided by enthusiastic local groups and individuals

It is a relatively small site, with frontage on three sides and parking / servicing area for the supermarket retail store to the rear. It is a visually significant site in terms of the approach to the town centre from the east along Rixon Road, and how it relates to the adjoining Market Place House. The introduction of some landscaping in the foreground (similar to the landscaping incorporated in the Montebourg House site opposite) would help introduce softer elements into what would otherwise be a very urban street scene.

The existing planning application comprises high density housing and although changes in the market may mean that an alternative scheme will come forward, it is desirable that a new application should provide a similar level of housing. Its proximity to the town centre makes it ideally suited for more elderly persons' accommodation. However, as a town centre site, other appropriate uses would be considered.

Policy 19. Market Hill site

The redevelopment of Market Hill Site as shown on Map 3 will be supported, provided:

- it is for housing or main town centre uses that would be compatible with existing uses in the immediate locality*
- the design allows some soft landscaping along the road frontage junction, with any servicing or parking areas placed out of site to the rear*
- the scale of development respects and is generally subservient to the adjoining Market Place House, and includes a mix of heights, which together with its design, avoids an overly massive or block effect. The eastern end of the site on the junction should be designed as a high quality landmark building appropriate to its location at the visual entrance to the town centre from the east.*

Clarkes Yard (formerly Snook's Yard) and adjoining land at the Bath / Rixon Road junction

At the western end of the Railway Gardens, the area around the junction with Old Market Hill has development potential. A comparatively large site has been vacated with the relocation of Sturminster Building Supplies to the North Dorset Business Park. This site has extant planning permission for 15 dwellings and 2 offices with associated parking (and at the time of writing a new planning application for a higher number of houses was under consideration). The potential site area could also include the adjoining police station and library (subject to their retention or relocation). Opposite, on the north side of Old Market Hill there is a small parcel of land that could also be developed, including if appropriate the separately owned Royal British Legion Club.

The road frontage on all of these sites is particularly prominent in the street scene, due to the more elevated nature of the land in comparison to Old Market Hill and Bath Road as it descends into the historic part of the town centre, and their position on a junction.

Clarks Yard was created following the land filling of the former railway cutting. This may pose potential issues regarding ground conditions and land stability, which should be considered as part of any planning application, and effective measures secured to remediate any contamination and stabilise the site if required. Land beyond to the west is part of a regionally important geological site, due to the cross-section of geological layers exposed in the cutting when the railway was built in 1877. There are trees along the western edge of the site, and an attractive and possibly old stone boundary wall along the southern edge, backing onto houses. This site also provides the most direct potential route for the Trailway through the town, following the former line of the railway and linking to the west.

Figure 5. Potential use of Clarks Yard as Public Car Park (alternative option to housing)

Although Clarks Yard has consent for housing, if the landowner is willing, an alternative option would be to instead provide public car parking here to replace some of the car park spaces if lost in the Station Road scheme, or any other main town centre use.

Access into these sites will require careful consideration, given their proximity to a junction and the long-term strategy of routing the Trailway (used by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians) along the line of the former railway that will cross Bath Road at this point. A creative approach to the redesign of this junction, that will slow traffic speeds without the need for excessive engineering and signage, should be explored.



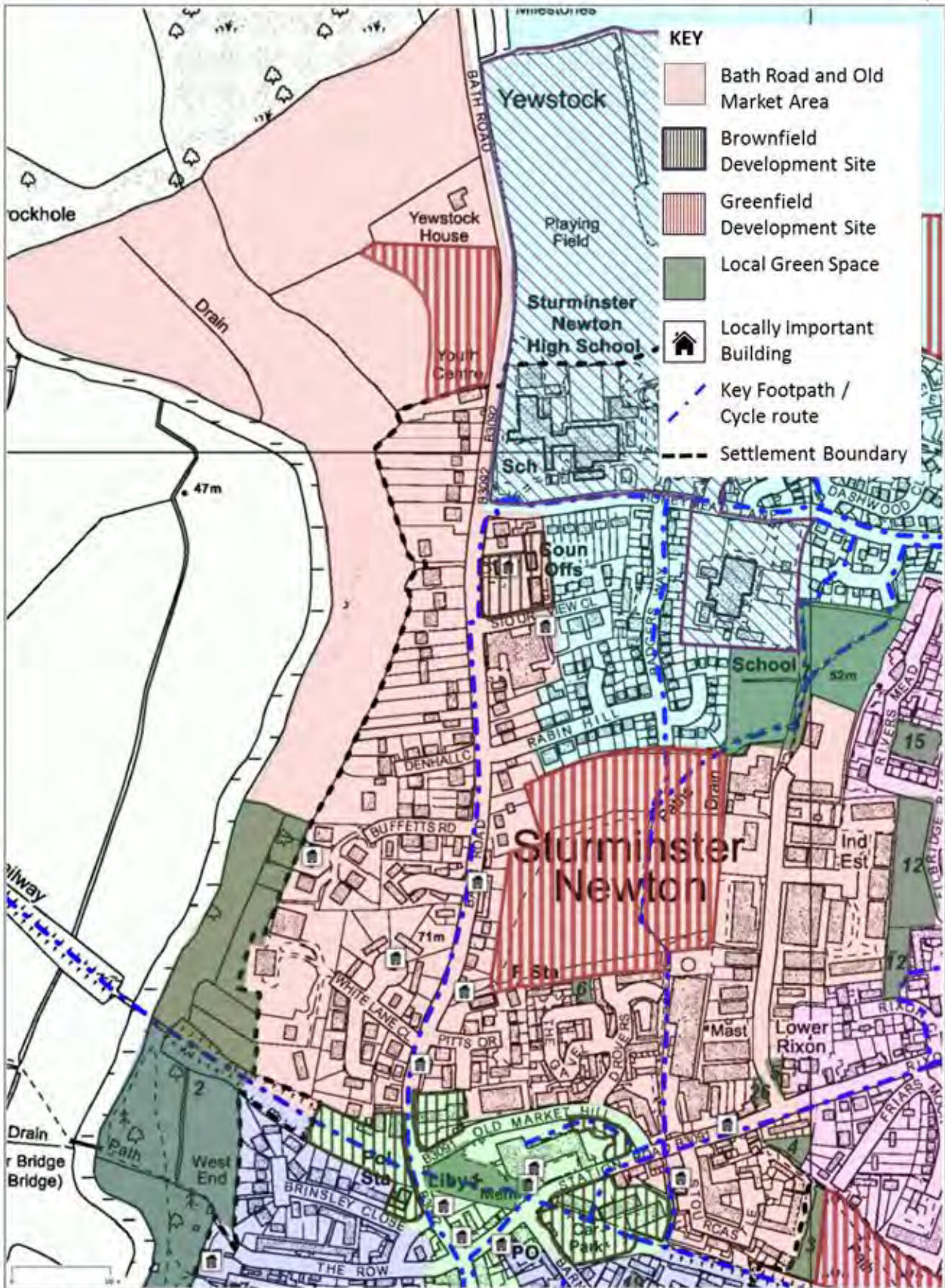
Policy 20. Clarks Yard site and adjoining land

The redevelopment of Clarks Yard and adjoining land as shown on Map 3 will be supported, provided:

- it is for housing or main town centre uses that would be compatible with existing uses in the immediate locality
- there is some soft landscaping along the road frontage
- the scale of development is no more than 2½ storeys due to the elevated nature of the site, particularly on the road frontage, and should include a mix of heights. The quality of design facing onto the main roads (Bath Road and Old Market Hill) should reflect the importance of the junction in the town, focusing on visual and functional links with the historic part of the town centre, and including suitable interest and variation in the building design. The design of the frontage onto Bath Road should take account of the potential future redevelopment of the Library and Police Station site so that the contiguous block of development presents an attractive and consistent frontage to Bath Road and Brinsley Close
- the layout of the development should enable the continuation of the Trailway through this area, in line with Policy 7
- community buildings should be either retained within the development or relocated to a suitable alternative site, in line with Policy 4

7 Bath Road and Old Market Area

Map 11. Bath Road and Old Market Area



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7.1 The Bath Road and Old Market Area: an overview

This section of the Neighbourhood Plan covers the area stretching around the north side of the town centre, including Stourcastle and Butts Pond, Drovers and The Gavel, and along Bath Road.

Bath Road on the B3092 running north along a slight ridge, with the River Stour to its west, is one of the earlier 20th century expansions of the town. This area contains some of the town’s more recent housing developments, as well as Butts Pond industrial estate which provides an important source of local jobs. The industrial buildings are largely hidden from view, on the lower ground between the Bath Road and Rixon ridges, but the employment uses generate considerable vehicular movements from its single access close to the town centre.

The main area of open space within the town, the Market Fields, formerly used as lairage for holding animals for the Livestock Market, is earmarked for development in the Local Plan. Other changes expected in this area over the plan period will be the re-use or redevelopment of the former council offices at Stour View and possibly extending development further up Bath Road on the west side, to provide some custom and self-build opportunities. In the future, should the main business users on Butts Pond choose to relocate, this may create potential for further redevelopment, and the area of the industrial estate lends itself to a variety of alternative uses including the possibility of housing, appropriate to its location close to the heart of the town. However, at the current time the industrial estate performs a valuable role as an employment area.

7.2 The character of the area

Along Bath Road there is a mix of individual building styles, with most buildings set back from the road in generous plots, giving the impression of a largely residential area that is leafy, spacious and relatively prestigious. The fire station, former municipal offices and workhouse, create further interest in the overall mix. There are glimpsed views over the surrounding countryside, and Twinwood Coppice provides a strong landmark to the north. Because Bath Road is on an elevated ridge, development here is clearly visible in views into the town from the river corridor and further west, making the spacious, leafy setting a critical factor in the character of this area. Some acceptable infill has taken place on the more level ground closer to the town centre, but the more recent infill on the west side, further north, has begun to erode the character, with garages too close to the road, and development extending down the slope. It is important that this is not seen as a precedent for future development.

The Old Market Area, which is around the northern fringe of the town centre, contains a greater mix of uses and includes the relatively high density residential development on the site of the former cattle market, north of Market Hill, and the residential development of Stourcastle on the site of the former creamery. Because of its relatively recent development and generally high density there are unlikely to be significant changes here, within the plan period. If changes do occur, because this general mass and scale has not previously been characteristic of Sturminster Newton care should be taken to make sure any changes have a positive impact and are of high quality. This is particularly important on the main road approaches to the town centre.

Policy 21. Bath Road and Old Market Area character

Infill development, and new development adjoining the settlement, should be in keeping with the predominant character of the area, respecting the positive features it contains (see character description). The single-depth building line and large landscaped front gardens along Bath Road should be respected, and in the more visually sensitive area west of the main road the scale of buildings should remain generally 1 to 2 storey and be subservient to the landscape, using design and materials to avoid being prominent in views from the west (see Policy 9) and not located below the 65m AOD contour. Garages or other ancillary buildings should not be a dominant feature in gardens at the front of houses. Where opportunities arise, the tree coverage along the elevated ridgeline of Bath Road should be reinforced.

Character description

Predominant character of the area and positive features:

	<i>Bath Road Area</i>	<i>Old Market Area (excluding Butts Pond)</i>
Layout:	<i>Ribbon development in comparatively generous plots along Bath Road with relatively spacious</i>	<i>Relatively dense developments accessed by a series of twisting culs de sac. Buildings front positively onto the roads.</i>

	<i>cul de sac development on level ground closer to the town centre. Buildings avoid the lower slopes west of Bath Road</i>	<i>The traditional layout of the Gavel is considered a good example, although off-road parking needs to be sufficient to avoid street clutter</i>
Scale and form:	<i>Generally 1 and 2 storey (with more 1 storey bungalows on the western side of Bath Road, and some more prominent buildings on the eastern side)</i>	<i>A variety of building heights of 2 to 3 storey, but with some 3 and a half storey, creating a strong enclosed urban feel, becoming lower and more domestic in character further from the town centre. In places larger buildings sit alongside smaller scale cottages, and this type of uncomfortable juxtaposition should be avoided</i>
Built styles and features:	<i>Some older traditional houses but mostly Edwardian and inter-war. Building character is mostly individual but there are examples of Arts and Crafts influences</i>	<i>A variety of house styles and types, including neoclassical styled buildings, more traditional domestic cottages, and more contemporary industrial-style buildings reflecting the history of the area. The overall palette in any one area makes for a cohesive group</i>
Materials:	<p><i>Walls:</i></p> <p><i>Various materials including painted render, local stone, exposed timber frame, but generally red brick.</i></p> <p><i>Roofs:</i></p> <p><i>Mostly red-brown tiles</i></p>	<p><i>Walls:</i></p> <p><i>Predominantly a variety of colours of brick, but also render and stone. Wood-effect panels, rendering and extensive glazing are also employed at Stourcastle, but these materials appear not to be weathering well</i></p> <p><i>Roofs:</i></p> <p><i>Red/brown tiles and slates</i></p>
Fronts and boundaries:	<i>Often set well back from the road, particularly at the northern end. Lack of pavement in the cul-de-sac areas helps create a quieter, more intimate character</i>	<i>Properties generally front the pavements with very limited front garden areas. Some railings and elevated pathways add further variety to the scene</i>
Landscaping:	<i>The mature leafy setting is an important and cohesive character element and makes a positive contribution to the street scene and views from the river and countryside beyond. This is particularly notable on the ridge, and the transition with the countryside</i>	<i>Vegetation is very limited as there is little opportunity for any substantial planting; however, the little that exists helps soften the urban feel</i>

Important green spaces and views

The river corridor forms an important green space along the western edge of this area, through which the Stour Valley Way passes. There are no large public green spaces, although the Market Fields have been used informally by local residents, and it is anticipated that any development here will incorporate an element of public open space. There are some smaller but much valued local green spaces, such as the small play area in the Gavel, the Chinnocks allotments and the planted grass bank adjoining Stourcastle. The cluster of trees on the green verges at the entrance of Butts Pond provides a soft entrance to this industrial area and marks the start of the more rural character of the road as it runs east towards Manston, although the current use of the

verges for parking does detract from this impression. The following lists the local green spaces that will be protected under Policy 11. These can be seen on Map 7.

- Butts Pond Estate entrance
- Chinnocks Allotment Gardens
- Green at Stourcastle
- Play area in The Gavel
- Wooded river bank from west of the Memorial Recreation Ground heading north

The main views of this area are the long-distance views from the wider countryside to the west of the town, across the river. This edge, and the ridge that runs along Bath Road, are therefore particularly sensitive to development.

Important character buildings and features

There are three Listed Buildings within this area, Bonslea House off White Close Lane, Stour View House and the Workhouse Chapel off Bath Road. A number of additional buildings have been highlighted for the contribution they make to local character, as described in the table below. These will be protected under Policy 10.

Table 18. Bath Road and Old Market Area – Locally Listed Buildings

Buffets House, Bath Road	<i>Very attractive and unique arts and crafts house. Was built as the dower house to Bonslea House (Listed)</i>
Cyprus Cottage, Bath Road	<i>Former farm house, that reflects the farming presence and history of this area</i>
Former Council Offices, Bath Road	<i>Brick built office complex dating from the 1930s. Good quality detailing and materials. For many years the seat of the Sturminster Newton Rural District Council</i>
The Beeches, Hinton Way	<i>Best example of Edwardian Houses in Bath Road, reflecting the development of the town northwards in that era</i>
The Fernery, Pilgrims Close and Wood View, Bath Road	<i>Original farmstead - The Fernery was the old farm house) adjoining Pilgrims Close was probably a farm cottage and Wood View former farm buildings. The grouping is one of the earliest settlements in Bath Road</i>
Stourcastle Centre, Stour View Close	<i>Modern brick and tile building with very attractive arched entrance and curved atrium, associated with the old workhouse and chapel (both Listed)</i>
1-6 White Lane Close	<i>Circular close of six semi-detached houses with spacious setting, built around a circular green. Grouping forms an attractive high quality example of architecture from the inter-war period. Good detailing windows and door surrounds</i>
Old Stone Cottages, Butts Pond	<i>Row of old cottages at Butts Pond , built in traditional local stone, and representative of Sturminster's historical market town status</i>
The Creamery, Station Road	<i>Sensitive redevelopment of the old cheese factory which blends with old industrial building with new glass fronted offices. Maintains a link with Sturminster's past as a major cheese manufacturing industry</i>

7.3 Important infrastructure, routes and connections

The main community buildings within this area are the Stour View daycare centre, which provides vocational training opportunities, and across the road from this, the Stour Castle Social and Education Centre, which

provides a day service for people with learning disabilities. There is also a dental practice and amateur boxing club. A local education and training facility (EQ Skills base) on Butts Pond Estate closed in 2016. As such, the following lists the community buildings in this area that will be protected under Policy 4. See Map 4:

- > Stour View Daycare centre
- > Stour Castle Social and Education Centre
- > Sturminster Newton Amateur Boxing Club
- > Sturminster Dental Care

The Gavel play area and Chinnocks allotments are both managed by the Town Council for the benefit of the wider community, and protected as local green spaces under Policy 11.

There are two well-used pedestrian routes radiating out of the town centre that pass through this area, linking north to the cluster of community facilities around the High School. These are the pavement along Bath Road, and the Jubilee Path. The former is generally satisfactory except that it requires Bath Road to be crossed in the vicinity of Sturminster View as the pavement changes from one side of the road to the other in this vicinity. As this is a route from the centre of the town to the main schools, there is an urgent need for a pedestrian crossing. We expect this issue, together with any traffic calming measures, to be addressed in the traffic plan for the relocated junior school. The Jubilee Path provides an important alternative and largely off-road route, between the town centre and Honeymead Lane, and how it connects through the Market Fields is discussed later in this chapter. There is also an opportunity through the proposed development at Yewstock Fields to connect the Stour Valley Way up to and across the Bath Road, linking to the proposals for a rural, recreational trail around the northern perimeter of the town.

Policy 22. Bath Road and Old Market Area pedestrian and cycle route network
Proposed developments should include retention of the Jubilee Path and the provision of a pedestrian and cycle link from the Stour Valley Way to the northern Perimeter (as part of the key pedestrian and cycle route and main rural recreational trails network, as shown on Maps 5 and 17) will be sought.

7.4 Areas of change

Market Fields site, east of Bath Road

The Market Fields site has an interesting history as the lairage fields for the livestock market, which explains why such an area in the centre of town has remained undeveloped for so long. The site is relatively large, sloping and divided into two parts by a hedgerow. It is bordered by housing, an industrial estate and a wildlife area. Because it has not been intensively farmed, it is also home to a number of protected species. The old overgrown hedgerow that bisects the site is species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations, and there are records of protected species; Badger and Great Crested Newt.

The site has a number of potential access points, but the main vehicular

Figure 6. Concept and Issues Diagram – Market Fields site



access is likely to be off Bath Road into the north-west part of the site, although an alternative access point for emergency vehicles only (which could be kept closed to normal vehicular traffic) should be made if possible. The Jubilee Path crosses the site linking from the NE corner to the path alongside Drovers, and there is an informal path joining from Badgers Way providing a link from the Town Centre to the schools. There is a public footpath along the southern edge of the main field linking from the Butts Pond industrial estate to Bath Road, and an informal footpath running from Badgers Way to Bath Road. These paths are well used and the loss of this green space has raised local concerns.

There are opportunities, through good design, to make sure some of these site qualities and features are retained. For example, the historic interest could be reflected in the site design. Spaces and green corridors can be provided to allow a continued wildlife presence (including provision for protected species) and informal recreation, and located and designed to provide pleasant and safe off-road pedestrian and cycle links, with houses and other uses overlooking to provide natural surveillance of these routes.

The land slopes quite steeply down from Bath Road, and this change in levels means that the area close to Bath Road is much more prominent in wider views from the east. For this reason any development on this higher ground should be no more than two storeys (or equivalent) and should use materials that are not bright or reflective. The inclusion of tree planting here would not only help soften the visual impact of development on the skyline, but would reinforce the natural and green character of this ridge.

The flood maps show a very small area where surface water flooding may occur in the south-east corner of the site. There is a small grouping of trees here, and it would be of benefit to increase the copse using native trees.

There may also be noise and disturbance from the industrial uses at Butts Pond, and therefore a buffer may be needed between this area and any housing.

At about 4.6ha in size, the site should be able to accommodate in the region of 100 dwellings (although the exact number will depend on the type of housing and layout configuration). A site of this size would normally be expected to include a mix of housing types, including affordable homes. The area closest to the town centre would be particularly suited to providing accommodation attractive to older people or those with more restricted mobility.

Policy 23. Market Fields site, east of Bath Road

The development of the Market Fields (as shown on Map 3) will be supported provided:

- It is for housing and other uses that are compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. A mix of housing should be provided, and accommodation suited to elderly / less mobile residents would most appropriately be located in the southern part of the site where there is reasonably level access to the town centre*
- Green spaces are created within the site designed to provide multiple benefits in terms of
 - suitable wildlife mitigation including the creation of wildlife corridors through the site linking to Butts Pond LNR and retention of species-rich hedgerows where practical*
 - informal recreation opportunities in line with the adopted standards*
 - an attractive setting for pedestrian / cycle routes*
 - tree planting along the western ridge, with sufficient space for these to develop into large-scale mature specimens in order to soften the impact of built development in distant views**
- Safe, reasonably direct, landscaped and overlooked footpaths are provided linking through the site to Butts Pond local nature reserve (in the NE corner), Badgers Way (to the north), Butts Pond Industrial Estate, the Town Centre (via the footpath east of Drovers and also linking to the Gavel play area) and Bath Road (in the SW corner). The Jubilee Path and its link to Badgers Way and the Butts Pond Industrial Estate should be suitable for cyclists*
- The layout appears organic in character, with cohesive housing groups / areas, and avoids the appearance and feel of a large suburban-style estate*

- Any buildings over 2 storeys are located within the lower part of the site (generally below the 65m AOD contour), and the design of and materials used in buildings on the higher ground take into account their potential prominence in more distant views from the east
- The location and design of residential buildings and other noise-sensitive uses should provide protection from disturbance from the continued functioning of the Butts Pond Industrial estate

Former council offices at Stour View

The Council no longer require the use of the buildings on this site, although some of the parking area may be kept to serve the day-care centre and offices south of Stour View Close. The site therefore is being made available for re-use or redevelopment.

The site would be suitable to continue as offices, but could equally lend itself to housing. The main office on Bath Road is considered to be a locally important building, having good quality materials and detailing, and a cultural / historic landmark as the seat of the Sturminster Newton Rural District Council. As such its retention is desirable, and any development should respect its character and significance in the street scene. The scale and layout of any new development will need to take into account the character of this area, and that the site is also a potentially prominent site in wider views, being on the ridge that runs along Bath Road.

Policy 24. Former council offices at Stour View

The re-use of the main building and re-development of the remainder of the former council offices site at Stour View (as shown on Map 3) will be supported for housing or employment use compatible with a largely residential area, provided it is in keeping with local character

Land at Yewstock Fields

Opposite Sturminster High School, the current ribbon development along Bath Road peters out, with a field creating a gap between the last house and Yewstock House. The elevated nature of this field means development here would be quite visible and the gap allows for pleasant views across the Blackmore Vale. The roadside hedgerow is species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations. There is some limited potential for development in this location, if it is in keeping with the low-key character of existing development along Bath Road. The provision of suitable landscaping should provide mitigation for any biodiversity loss, and overall biodiversity gains.



The land is unlikely to be suited to school expansion, which is better provided on a single site rather than split by the B3092 main road. However, it could be suitable for some limited residential development, continuing the existing pattern of individual, low density development along Bath Road, interspersed with tree planting. The site provides a good opportunity for custom and self-build units, that could come forward incrementally over the plan period. Owing to the current speed limit and alignment of the road, care will need to be taken to ensure suitable access points are possible, and a shared access arrangement may be needed in places.

The development of this site also provides an opportunity to provide a link from the Stour Valley Way through to the proposed northern perimeter trail around the town.

Policy 25. Land at Yewstock Fields

The development of land at Yewstock Fields (as shown on Map 3), may be released for custom / self-build housing if monitoring of the statutory self-build register shows that this is required to meet current demand, and provided:

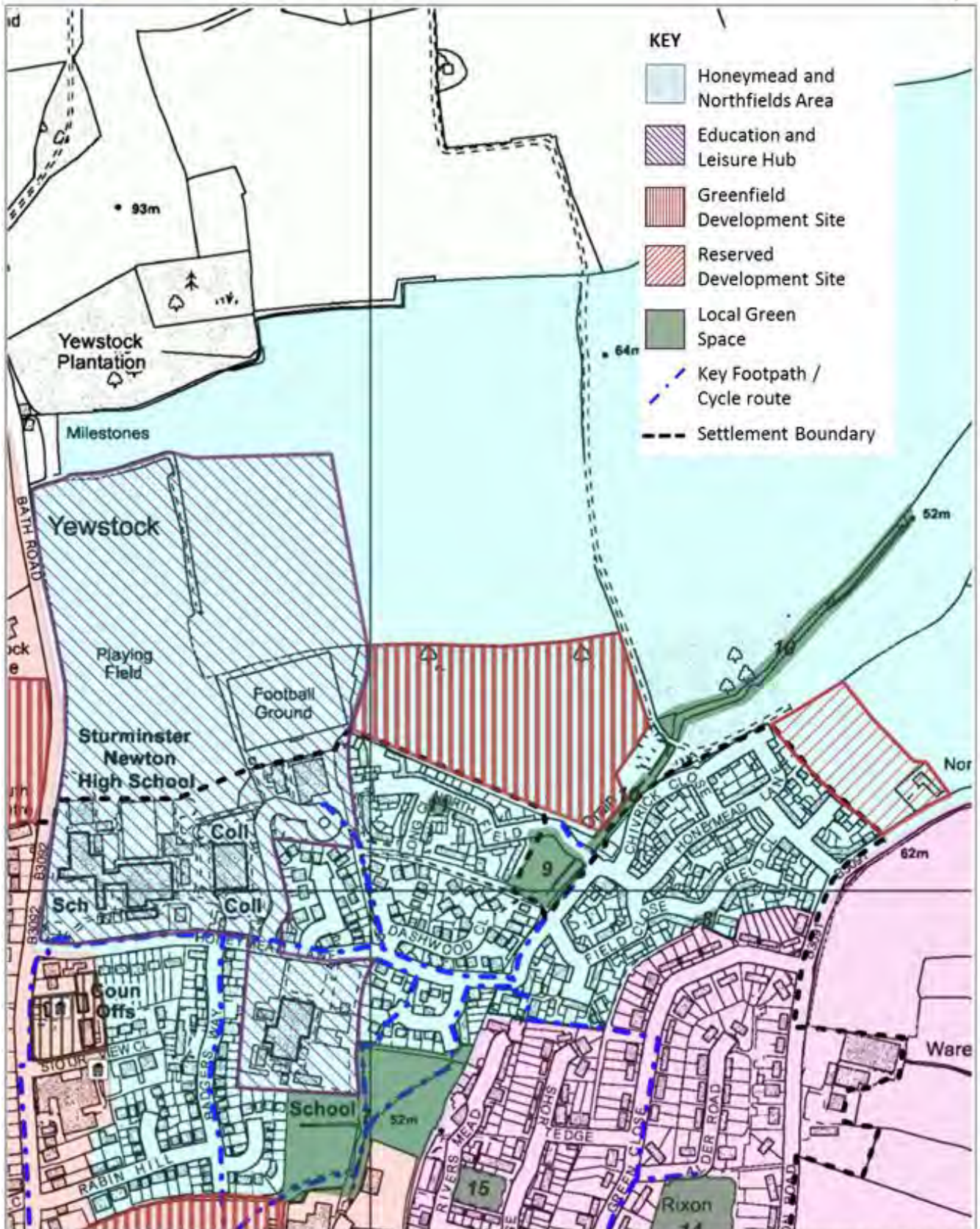
- The layout follows the pattern of ribbon development (generous, single-depth plots with generous front gardens) and set-back building line established along Bath Road*
- No building or structure is permitted on the lower slopes (below 65m AOD)*
- The scale of development is 1 to 2 storeys, and built character is substantially individual, with detailed design and materials that blend sensitively to its environment, to avoid being prominent in views from the west*
- Landscaping is incorporated to produce a leafy, suburban character in keeping with Bath Road, and the roadside hedgerow retained as far as practical (with mitigation for any biodiversity loss)*
- The provision of parking spaces, sufficient to serve the likely future occupants, is located within the site and no built structures project forward of the main house*
- Provision is made for the connection of the Stour View Way through to Bath Road*

7.5 Changes to the settlement boundary

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the settlement boundaries adopted in the Local Plan have been checked to make sure they still provide an appropriate division between the built-up areas and surrounding countryside. No changes are proposed other than to remove the regionally important geological site to the rear of Clarkes Yard (sometimes known as Snook's Yard). This change to the settlement boundary is dealt with under Policy 2.

8 Honeymead and Northfields

Map 12. Honeymead and Northfields area



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8.1 The Honeymead and Northfields area: an overview

This section of the Neighbourhood Plan covers the area stretching around the northern part of the town between Bath Road and the Manston Road, linked by Honeymead Lane. The main road through this area is Honeymead Lane, which links between the northern and eastern approaches to the town. More residential streets, such as Northfields, Field Close, and Badgers Way branch off this road.

The Honeymead and Northfields area is where most of the town's growth took place from the 1980s through to the early 2000s, with the typical estate layouts of their time. It is some distance from the town centre, with a high proportion of family type housing. As a result, there is little opportunity for infill, but there is planned growth and further potential on the fields beyond.

The area is really important in that it is home to most of the town's education and leisure facilities, concentrated around the 1960s High School buildings on the corner of Bath Road and Honeymead Lane.

The area also marks the northern and eastern 'entrance points' to the town, albeit not through quite such a memorable landscape as the bridge and water meadows that mark the southern approach.

The main changes expected in this area over the plan period will be in relation to the new housing sites on the edge of the built-up area, and the expansion and improvements of education and leisure facilities around the High School and Leisure Centre.

8.2 The character of the area

The area's character is mainly that of large residential estates typifying the building styles of the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. What has worked well is where the housing developments have picked up on more traditional local vernacular styles and materials, and included a reasonable degree of variety (even though some of the forms are repeated slightly too often). However, some styles, such as the neo-Georgian town houses, do not sit as comfortably this far from the town centre, where more cottage-style development would be expected. The relatively large number of 3 storey terraces and large, bland apartment blocks are out of character with what one would expect on the outskirts of a small, Dorset town. The lack of attention to the detailing in craftsmanship, and the slightly 'mean' impression given by the small size and number of windows compared to the area of walls on the front faces of buildings (the solid to void ratio), has also detracted from the overall character of the estates.

The irregular nature of the streets in the more modern estates has worked well in creating interest and variety. However, this is undermined in the evenings when most people are at home and the number of cars parked on the streets increases quite markedly, with vehicles parked haphazardly, sometimes halfway onto the pavements. This parking clutter often dominates the character of the neighbourhoods at these times, and creates difficulties for local residents. New developments should address the likely parking requirements in a practical way, accepting that residents may try to park as close as possible to home.

The small, green-planted spaces, together with trees within gardens and the road layout, soften the otherwise very urban feel and is a key characteristic that should be continued in new development. However, the current transition between town and countryside is not particularly a good one, with quite a contrast between the dense residential layouts and the fields beyond, the walls and close boarded fencing of back gardens providing a fairly stark and abrupt edge. This should not be repeated in new developments. .

The following policy has been drafted to guide future development. This should be used with the more site specific design requirements relating to the proposed new areas of housing contained in the policies relating to those particular sites.

Policy 26. Honeymead and Northfields character

Infill development, and new development adjoining the settlement, should be in keeping with the predominant character of the area, respecting the positive features it contains (see character description). Modern architecture and contemporary design will be supported where the form, style and materials would be complementary to the surrounding character of the area and buildings.

Character description **Predominant character of the area and positive features:**

Layout: *More irregular layout of circuitous through routes and cul-de-sac layouts, linked*

	<i>with pedestrian / cycle routes. Building line and orientation is generally varied.</i>
Scale and form:	<i>Predominantly 2 storeys, with some variety in height and scale. 2½ to 3 storey buildings may be located on the more central routes, provided they do not dominate in residential areas. More massive blocks, such as a terrace of 3 storey townhouses or large, bland apartment blocks should be avoided</i>
Built styles and features:	<i>Variety and interest, and integration of local materials and styles, is key. In new housing, these should reflect the area's 'place' as a mainly quiet, residential area of the town. Designs have worked well where they have incorporated an appropriate richness of detail (porches, lintels, decorative combinations of different materials such as flint and brick etc.), and generous window to wall ratios, and used good quality materials</i>
Materials:	<p><i>Walls:</i> <i>Red brick, pale bricks and painted brick</i></p> <p><i>Roofs:</i> <i>Generally red and brown tile or slate</i></p>
Fronts and boundaries:	<i>Frontages vary from edge of pavement to small front gardens (more common in the slightly older estates)</i>
Landscaping:	<i>The inclusion of verges, planting and trees provides a really positive contribution to the streetscene. Street furniture and lighting is fairly typical of residential urban areas</i>

Important green spaces and views

Butts Pond Local Nature Reserve, on the southern edge of this character area, is a key open space accessible from many parts of the town. It provides an oasis of natural greenspace that is beautiful, peaceful, and of important wildlife interest. There is a green corridor linking north from this, through the North Fields Open Space before becoming a Green Lane, which has retained its character as an ancient byway. These and the other spaces considered worthy of special protection under Policy 11 are (see Map 7a):

- Butts Pond Local Nature Reserve
- Field Close Play area
- North Fields Open Space
- Green Lane
- Long Close Green

The main views are in relation to the two approaches to and leaving the town, along Bath Road and Manston Road.



Important character buildings and features

The countryside setting of this part of town is perhaps not as scenic as land to the south, or as well-served with public footpaths. There are no remarkable landmark buildings within this area, and although the high school to a degree performs this function due to its size and location on the junction, its design is not particularly memorable. Just outside the parish, the large clumps of trees at Yewstock plantation / Twinwood copse act as important landmarks in a number of views from the town.

There will be opportunities through the areas proposed for development to provide more suitable landmark buildings on key junctions and at the entrance points into the town, and improve connections and opportunities for enjoyment of the surrounding countryside.

8.3 Important infrastructure, routes and connections

The main community buildings within this area are clustered around the high school and leisure centre; a number of which are critical to the future success of the town. Policy 28 considers the future of this area and the facilities in greater detail. The list of community buildings and their grounds protected under Policy 4 (Map 4) are as follows:

- > Youth Centre
- > Yewstock School and College
- > Sturminster Newton High School
- > Sturminster Newton Leisure Centre
- > Sturminster Newton United Football Ground

There is also a good range of public open spaces within the more modern residential areas offering a variety of informal and equipped play areas, most of which are designated as Local Green Spaces under Policy 11 (Map 7).

Local people have raised concerns about the ability of Honeymead Lane to cater for any increase in traffic. Although this link through to the Manston Road has been designed to reduce the likelihood of traffic 'rat-running' across the north of the town, there is still a considerable level of traffic and parked cars causing problems to local residents, particularly around the schools' start and end times.

There are a number of key walking routes connecting the area to the centre of town and Rixon. The direct route from the centre along Bath Road is referred to in Sections 4 and 7.3. The other routes make use of Jubilee Path to the Market Fields where they split to provide important alternative traffic free routes to various parts of Honeymead Land, Northfields and potentially the new developments. The route from Rixon crosses Honeymead Lane at the same point as the route to Northfields and an enhanced crossing point with some traffic calming would increase safety and security for pedestrians and cyclists (see Section 4)

The generally good width of pavements and presence of street lighting mean that most of the routes within the town are safe and well-lit. However, there are a number of areas where improvements could usefully be made. One is the link between the Market Fields and Badgers Way. Another is where two key pedestrian routes cross Honeymead Lane at the sharp bend, and consideration should be given to provide a level crossing point associated with some traffic calming. As one of the pedestrian routes will be the route from Rixon to the proposed site for the new junior school, this should be considered in the school transport plan.

There is an opportunity through the proposed new development to provide a more rural, recreational pedestrian and cycle route around the northern perimeter, linking the new North Honeymeads site with Bath Road and the western footpath network. This will enhance the enjoyment of the wider countryside, link with other routes and create an alternative off-road route linking to the school and leisure facilities from the east.

Policy 27. Honeymead and Northfields pedestrian and cycle route network

The provision of a recreational trail around the northern perimeter (as part of the key pedestrian and cycle route and main rural recreational trails network, as shown on Maps 5 and 17) will be sought

8.4 Areas of change

The Education and Leisure Hub

Sturminster Newton High School, the youth centre, the town's leisure centre and football grounds, and Yewstock school with its recently completed college complex for age 14-19 pupils, create a notable cluster of larger scale community buildings and playing fields in this north-western part of the town.

The expected increase in the town's population will put pressure on these education and leisure facilities. The service providers are working together to make sure the facilities can expand and adapt to meet the anticipated demand. This will include provision of a site for the relocated primary school and pre-school, as there are obvious potential benefits from their co-location. Other planned facilities include a dance studio / gym at the leisure centre, and improved playing pitches, and potentially a skate park (either here or at one of the other two main recreation areas).

The need for a coordinated approach is clear if these improvements are to be properly planned and linked. There is potential for shared use of a number of facilities, so that they operate much more effectively, meeting both the education and wider community needs. For example: community use of school facilities.

This applies not only to the buildings and playing fields, but also to aspects such as parking and drop-off points, as well as pedestrian access. Careful planning can also help ensure that future opportunities that may not yet have funding could be incorporated in due course. For example, with the closure of the swimming pool at the William Barnes site, the closest swimming pool for local children to learn to swim is in Blandford Forum. Although there is little prospect of funding a new pool in the short term, it would make sense to consider where it could be accommodated in the overall plans, were the funding situation to change.

The proximity to the new housing area north of Northfields also brings with it further opportunities, particularly the potential to improve pedestrian and cycle routes within this part of town. Another less apparent opportunity is in relation to the potential for a district heating system, which could potentially provide both heat and energy efficiently and effectively to homes and the community facilities, benefiting from the different peak load times.

The increase in traffic from concentrating further community uses, if not carefully managed, could simply exacerbate local residents' concerns about road safety. It is therefore critical that the traffic implications of any changes are carefully considered and appropriate solutions found.

Another important aspect of this site is that it provides the first (or last) impression of the town from along the B3092 Bath Road. Due to the land form, which rises up to the north, any new building on the playing fields north of the High School buildings will potentially be quite visible. We should be proud of our community buildings, and therefore their design should be an inspiration to local residents and visitors, celebrating this new chapter in the town's long history. A clear, good quality contemporary design which reflects its role and function may be particularly appropriate.

Policy 28. Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub

A coordinated approach must be taken to development within the Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub (as shown on Map 3) that considers as a whole the appropriate placement and access arrangements of the following facilities:

- Pre-school, primary school, secondary school and sixth form provision*
- Yewstock special school (for pupils with learning difficulties)*
- Leisure Centre*
- Football club changing facilities, clubhouse and grounds*
- Playing pitches and running tracks for the schools' requirements, football club use, and wider community use*
- Youth centre*
- Skate park (if not provided elsewhere in the town)*

This coordinated approach should include:

- *Maximising shared use through careful early consideration of management and security solutions (e.g. gated access, floodlighting etc.) relating to the different potential users, opportunities to share facilities (such as changing rooms) and the location on the edge of the town*
- *Provision of visitor and staff parking and drop-off arrangements within the site, to make effective use of space and avoid creating traffic-related problems in the adjoining residential areas including Bath Road*
- *Enhancement of the key pedestrian routes from the town centre and Rixon to Honeymead Lane and Northfields including improved crossing points over Honeymead Lane (all these routes should eventually be made suitable for cyclists), and other appropriate traffic management solutions*
- *Suitable landscaping and ecological benefits to mitigate any notable adverse impacts*
- *Consideration of how future uses may be accommodated through allowing space in the design and layout that could be put to alternative uses, for instance the future siting of a swimming pool*
- *Exploration of the potential for a district heating system, potentially linked with the adjoining proposed housing development*

Any new buildings should be designed to promote a feeling of community pride and make a clear architectural statement about how the town is moving forward in the 21st century

The provision of flood lighting should be designed to be the minimum required to operate effectively, given the potential visual impact in this relatively prominent location in wider views

North Honeymead Field

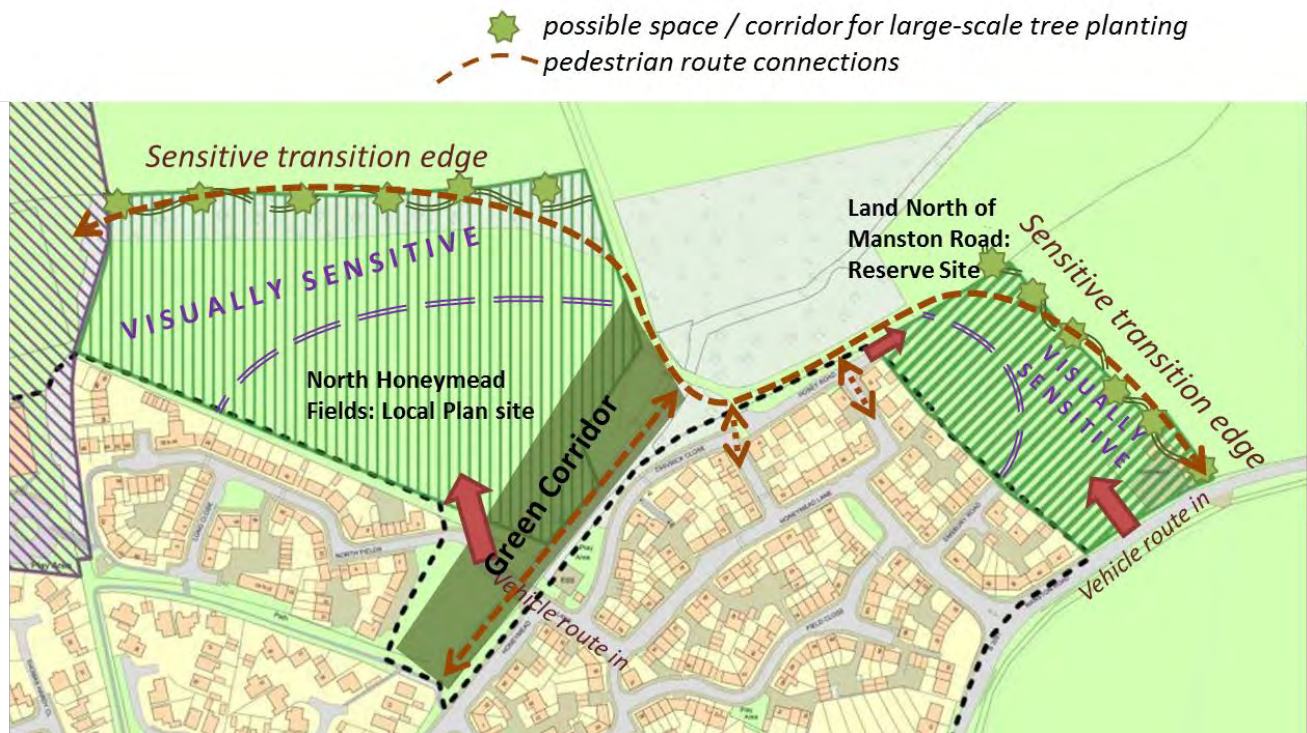
Land on the north side of Northfields has been identified in the Local Plan as one of three greenfield sites that will meet the bulk of the housing needs for the area. The exact extent of the site was not defined in the Local Plan, but a possible area was included in the Local Planning Authority's Strategic Housing Land Availability Report.

The area is relatively level farmland on the edge of the town, adjoining the existing housing estate. The northern extent is defined by a relatively recently planted landscape belt, and the site is unlikely to be particularly visible in wider views. The Green Lane runs along the eastern edge of the site, linking Butts Pond Local Nature Reserve and the North Fields Open Space to the wider countryside. Some of hedgerows are species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations. An area of public open space should be retained between the Green Lane and the new development to provide an appropriate setting to this key feature and reinforce the green link into the town's heart. The flood maps also show a small area where surface water flooding may occur along this edge.

At about 3.7ha in size, the site could accommodate about 100 dwellings, although this will depend on their size. On a site of this size a mix of housing types including a proportion of affordable housing should be provided. Its distance from the town centre, and closer links to the school and leisure facilities, makes it more suited for family homes, and less suitable for older people. The inclusion of other uses compatible with housing would also be supported, such as a small amount of small scale workspaces or a corner shop.

The design and layout should respect the character of the area, as set out in Policy 26. In particular, 2½ to 3 storey buildings will be appropriate only within the lower part of the site closer to the access point. The design should also consider the 'edge' with the countryside, and include lanes that link out to connect with a recreational trail around the northern perimeter. Corresponding planting to soften the transition, would create a much more appropriate boundary to the town than currently exists here.

Figure 7. Concept and Issues Diagram – North Honeymead Field and North of Manston Road sites



The provision of sufficient and convenient parking spaces within the housing area needs careful consideration to avoid repeating the problems inherent in the adjoining areas. The impact of further traffic on the local road network should also be carefully assessed and additional traffic management measures introduced to avoid any significant adverse effects.

There is an opportunity in this location to use a district heating system, potentially providing both heat and energy efficiently and effectively to the homes and to the community facilities in the adjoining education and leisure hub.

Policy 29. North Honeymead Field

The development of North Honeymead Field (as shown on Map 3) will be supported provided:

- It is for housing or other uses that are compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. A mix of housing more suitable to families would be appropriate in this location
- An area of green public open space is provided that extends the North Fields Open Space to the wider countryside (as indicated in the diagram). Other smaller areas of amenity green space should also be provided. Where opportunities arise, the hedgerows and tree coverage in this area should be extended
- There are no 2½ storey or taller or otherwise conspicuous buildings (e.g. through light coloured rendering) on the higher ground to the west or close to the countryside edge
- The layout includes the provision of a landscaped recreational trail around the northern edge linking to the leisure centre, and the retention of species-rich hedgerows. The layout of the roads and buildings should be orientated to lead out to this trail, with landscaping included to further soften and create an attractive edge with the countryside
- The provision of parking spaces, sufficient to serve the likely future occupants, is conveniently located in relation to the dwelling it serves, and the streets and planting, designed to avoid on-street parking clutter
- The permeable layout of the development, together with any reasonable traffic management measures secured for the wider local road network, should ensure that the issues associated with parking along Honeymead Lane are not made worse by the proposed development and avoid any

significant adverse effects.

- *The potential for a district heating system, potentially linked with the adjoining education and leisure hub, has been explored and, if reasonable and viable, provision made for this within the development*

Land North of Manston Road: Reserve Site

Land on the north side of Manston Road could help meet future housing needs if some of the allocated sites do not deliver the amount of housing anticipated, or if there is evidence of higher demand (for example if the Local Plan Review identifies a need for more housing). As a 'reserve site' this land could be released if necessary to meet local needs. However, whilst the allocated sites are available for development, such sites are not expected to be developed.

This site is currently farmed and slopes down north from the Manston Road at the point that it joins the existing modern estate at Northfields. Some of the hedgerows, which are species-rich, may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations. At about 1.8ha in size, the site is appropriate for about 30 dwellings, which would be at a lower density than the adjoining estate. This would allow for sufficient planting appropriate to this more sensitive location. It would also suit the inclusion of what we are calling 'aspirational homes' - high quality larger homes, incorporating flexible / adaptable layouts for home working (see Policy 3 for definition).



The design and layout should respect the character of the area, as set out in the earlier policy. The front part of the site is relatively prominent in the approach to the town and visible in longer distance views, but seen against the context of town edge. Development here should be designed to soften this transition between town and countryside, with the scale and intensity 'stepping down' from the existing built up edge, and be set further back from the road (possibly side-on) to provide a softer, green approach to the town.

There are opportunities to link through to the existing Northfields Estate, as well as to provide a recreational trail around the northern perimeter, linking to the school and leisure centre.

The provision of sufficient and convenient parking spaces within the housing area also needs careful consideration to avoid repeating the problems inherent in the adjoining areas.

Policy 30. Land North of Manston Road: Reserve Site

The development of land North of Manston Road (as shown on Map 3) will only be allowed if it is required as a reserve site in accordance with Policy 1, and only if:

- *It is for housing or other uses that are compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. The inclusion of aspirational housing as part of this mix would be appropriate in this location*
- *There are no 2½ storey or taller or otherwise conspicuous buildings (e.g. through light coloured rendering) on the southern part of the site or close to the countryside edge. The frontage with Manston Road should transition to a more loose-knit character set back from the road with significant planting along the front to provide a soft entrance on this side of the town. The architectural design and detailing will be particularly important along this edge*
- *The layout includes the provision of a landscaped recreational trail around the northern edge linking to the Green Lane, and allows for the retention of the species-rich hedgerows. The layout*

of the roads and buildings along the eastern edge should be orientated and landscaped to create an attractive and soft transition edge with the countryside

- *The provision of parking spaces, sufficient to serve the likely future occupants, is conveniently located in relation to the house it serves, and the streets and planting so designed, to avoid on-street parking clutter*

8.5 Changes to the settlement boundary

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the settlement boundaries adopted in the Local Plan have been checked to make sure they still provide an appropriate division between the built-up areas and surrounding countryside. The key changes under Policy 2 (Map 3) are amendments to exclude areas designated as Local Green Space where these adjoin the settlement boundary, as listed here:

- > Exclude the Northfields Open Space and Green Lane which are designated as Local Green Spaces
- > Exclude the school playing fields and football grounds as they are largely open in character, and the policies in this plan and the Local Plan would support community facilities outside of the settlement boundaries

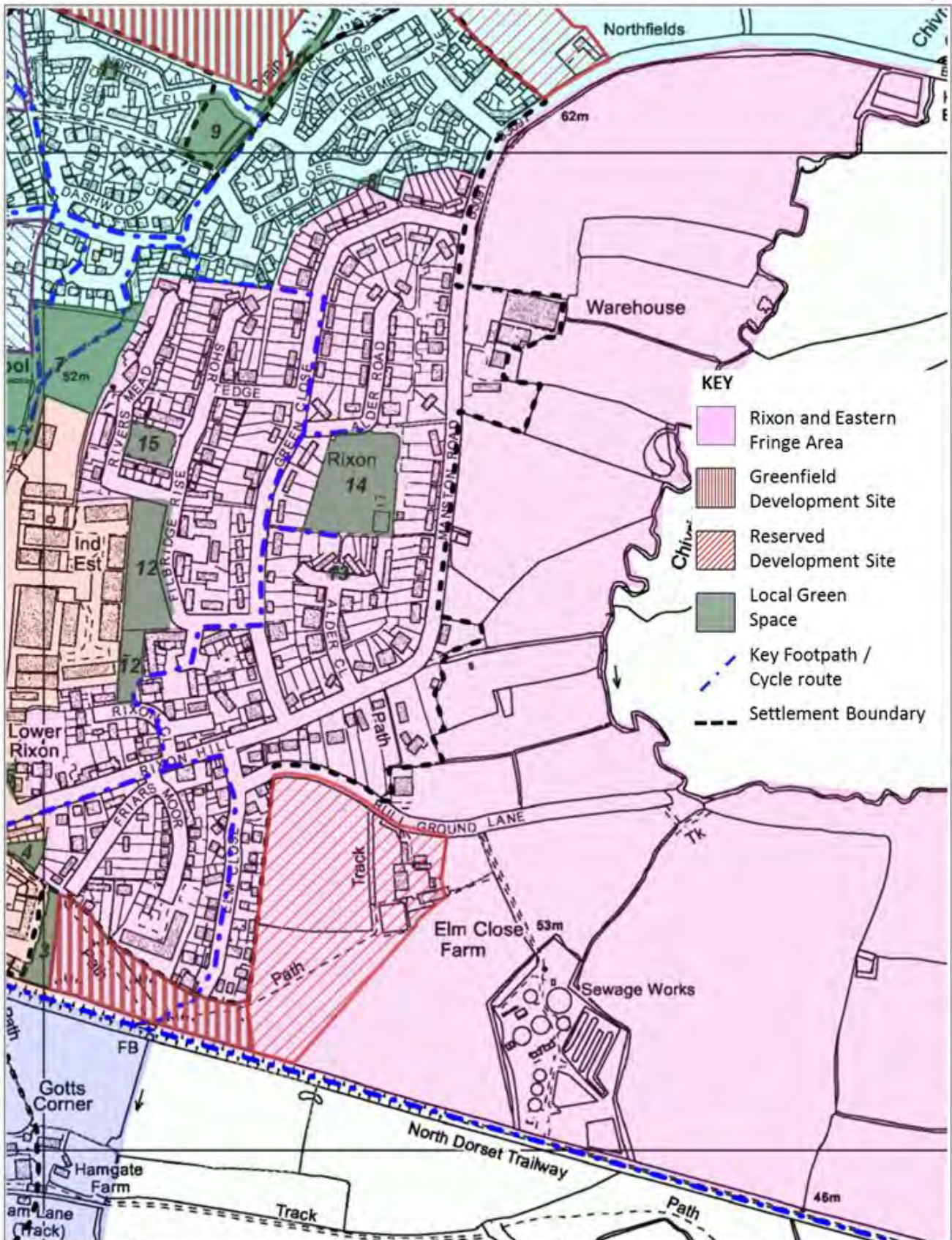
9 Rixon and Eastern Fringe area

Map 13. Rixon and Eastern Fringe area



Rixon and Eastern Fringe

Sturminster Newton CP



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9.1 The Rixon and eastern fringe area: an overview

This section of the Neighbourhood Plan covers the area stretching along Rixon Road and Manston Road on the eastern side of the town, north of the Trailway.

The Rixon area includes large areas of post war housing estate development. Within the older housing estates, the more spacious layouts with large back gardens and garage blocks give rise to possible infill sites, although gardens are no longer considered 'brownfield land' so there is no presumption in favour of their development. On the eastern side of Manston Road, Sturminster Storage provides a small employment area, currently used for storage and distribution. To the south, the green field south of Elm Close has been identified in the Local Plan for housing, and is quite well contained in respect of wider views. The housing area could be extended to include more land (east of Elm Close), and is proposed as a reserve site. The extent of development here is constrained by the sewage treatment works, with its associated unpleasant smells, and impact on the wider countryside.

9.2 The character of the area

Within Rixon the local topography allows many views from different parts of the estate. The relatively plain and homogenous character of various estate developments means that this area perhaps lacks the more interesting character of other parts of the town. Where buildings have been altered and extended over the years this has introduced variety, but some changes have tended to jar with the overall character of the main property or the residential area in general. Tree planting is limited and where it does occur it is principally small scale and confined to gardens, but the relatively few mature specimens are notable and improve the environment.

Manston Road, which runs along a ridge, provides quite a strong demarcation between town and country, with little development on its eastern side, where the land slopes down and is clearly visible from the wider landscape beyond. The main exception to this is Sturminster Storage and the adjoining dwellings. Land east of Manston Road was considered unsuitable for further development, partly because the topography makes it difficult for landscaping to soften the visual impact of building in wider views. The view towards the town centre down Rixon Hill to the south provides a clear sense of arrival and is also framed by trees both in the foreground and in distant views. The more organic development along this stretch of road gives a much greater degree of variety and interest.

Policy 31. Rixon and eastern fringe character

Infill development, and new development adjoining the settlement, should be in keeping with the predominant character of the area, but taking opportunities to further add interest where appropriate. Modern architecture and design will be supported where the form, style and materials would be complementary to the surrounding character of the area and buildings.

Character description

Predominant character of the area and positive features:

Layout:

Ribbon development up Rixon Hill has more individual character and varied plot sizes, with later council estate development to the rear and along Manston Road laid out along contours, and more compact and varied estate development to the south.

Scale and form:

Predominantly 1 or 2 storey with pitched roofs, often with blank end gables.

Built styles and features:

On Rixon Hill building character and form is quite varied but elsewhere there is less variety typical of estate development of its period. Most houses have chimneys. Originally built without dormers, these are more common as many houses now have loft conversions

Materials:

Walls:

Invariably red brick, but also painted render. Some older buildings on Rixon Hill are constructed with limestone

Roofs:

Generally red-brown tile

Fronts and boundaries:

Generally houses face onto roads across front gardens with relatively long back gardens behind, often open in character and backing on to other gardens. Few have driveways so parking tends to be on the street

Landscaping:

Front gardens may have hedges or other planting facing the street, and there are some mature specimen trees; where these do occur they add a very positive feature in the street scene

The development on the ridgeline along Manston Road (including the eastern end of Rixon Hill) is particularly sensitive in wider views. Light coloured rendering, inappropriate (particularly bright or reflective) roof materials and large, unbroken walls would not be appropriate in locations which can clearly be viewed from the surrounding countryside. Similarly it is particularly important that planting and landscaping are incorporated into the design in these areas, and opportunities taken to increase the tree coverage. Three story buildings are unlikely to be acceptable in the area as a whole, and buildings of 2½ story should also be avoided on this sensitive edge

Important green spaces and views

There are a number of relatively large public open spaces in the post-war housing estates north of Rixon Road, which are valued by local residents. The quality of some of these spaces could be improved, particularly given the potential benefits of tree planting to the overall character of the area. Rixon Recreation ground also plays a vital role as a large recreation area, where a wider range of sport and play can be focused to serve residents in this northern area. There are fewer opportunities for play within the slightly more modern development to the south, but this area does benefit from its close connection to the Trailway. The following spaces are therefore designated for special protection under Policy 11 (Map 7):

- Filbridge Rise play area and allotments
- Hambledon View green
- Rixon Recreation ground
- Filbridge Rise and Riversmead Green

There are some attractive views from Manston Road across the countryside and to Hambledon Hill and Melbury Beacon to the east.

Important character buildings and features

The area lacks any notable local character buildings or landmarks. The mixed hardwood and conifer planting around the sewage treatment works do provide an important screening function for this piece of infrastructure.

9.3 Important infrastructure, routes and connections

With the closure of the privately run pre-school in 2016, there are no significant community buildings in the Rixon and Eastern Fringe area of the town.

Local residents have raised general concerns about the speed of traffic along Manston and Rixon Roads, and large lorries turning into Butts Pond. It is a principle of this plan that methods of movement other than cars are encouraged. There are several key pedestrian routes linking from the residential areas to the town centre and also linking to the cluster of community facilities around the High School. Pedestrians using Green Close to gain access to Rixon Hill have to cross the road at the junction (as there is only pavement here on the far side); however, visibility is extremely poor. Also Green Close is one-way from Rixon Hill and cars speed round the corner into the path of pedestrians. One solution would be to provide all-weather surfacing to the pedestrian route through Filbridge Rise play area, making it suitable for pedestrians and cyclists to gain access to Rixon Hill via Rixon Close. This is only 20m longer and much safer. It feels dangerous to cross Rixon Hill to gain the pavement but there is scope to build out into the road to improve visibility and calm the traffic at this point.

The opportunity should be taken, with the development of the land off Elm Close, to provide better access for cyclists and walkers from Rixon to the Trailway. This could be achieved by improving the existing footpaths from the Trailway to the west of Elm Close Farm, crossing Bull Ground Lane to emerge on Rixon Hill just to the east of the junction with Alder Close. The crossing point over Rixon Lane here would need some improvement to provide a safe route.

Policy 32. Rixon and Eastern Fringe Area Pedestrian and Cycle Route Network

A pedestrian and cycle link from the Trailway to Rixon Hill east of Alder Close (as part of the key pedestrian and cycle route and main rural recreational trails network, as shown on Maps 5 and 17) will be sought.

9.4 Areas of change

Land off Elm Close

The area of low-lying farmland south of Elm Close and Friars Moor down to the Trailway was included in the 2016 Local Plan as a potential housing site. Additional land to the east (up to and including the farm building complex) is in the same ownership and also relatively unconstrained, and is likely to be proposed for housing in the future. As such it makes sense for both sites to be considered together, in order that any potential issues and opportunities can be better dealt with, and providing an option for the 'additional' area of land to be brought forward as a reserve site if required in the future. Land further east still has also been suggested for development, but beyond the existing farm buildings the land forms part of the wider, undeveloped countryside to the east, set away from the town, and is not considered suitable for development.

The sewage treatment works lie to the south-east. An assessment of odour levels suggests that development should not come further south than a line running approximately NE to SW from the corner of the field just south of the farm buildings. The flood maps show that surface water flooding may occur along the southern edge adjoining the Trailway, and therefore a more detailed flood risk assessment will be required at planning application stage. There are also sewage mains across the site that may constrain the site layout. Other potential issues that must be considered are the amenity and privacy of existing residents, as a number of houses have very limited back gardens backing on the fields. It may be that planting and sufficient distance (e.g. backing onto housing, potentially bungalows, with long back gardens or a green corridor) could provide a workable solution. The retention of hedgerows, as far as practical, will also provide wildlife benefits. The hedgerow and mature trees along the southern boundary adjoining the Trailway, and along the northern edge adjoining Bull Ground Lane and then turning south (to the west side of the farm buildings) are particularly noted for their ecological interest. The heritage records also note the potential for medieval ridge and furrow earthworks within existing fields in this area. Further ecological surveys and archaeological investigation will be required with any planning application.

The field to the east becomes more elevated and prominent in views from the A357 towards Bull Ground Lane, and although the existing development north of Bull Ground Lane is visible, the cumulative impact of development here must be taken into account. With the inclusion of planting within this northern section of the site, as well the careful landscape treatment of the transition to the countryside, and the removal of the more utilitarian sheds within the farm building complex, the overall impact of development could be improved. Development should generally be 2 storeys, with some lower rise units on the more elevated or sensitive areas, and there is potential for some 2½ storey dwellings to be included within the more visually contained areas closer to the Trailway and town centre.

The inclusion of allotments within this area was highlighted in the Local Plan, and this (together with publicly accessible natural greenspace) would be an efficient use of land closer to the sewage treatment works. The allotments should be brought forward at an early stage.

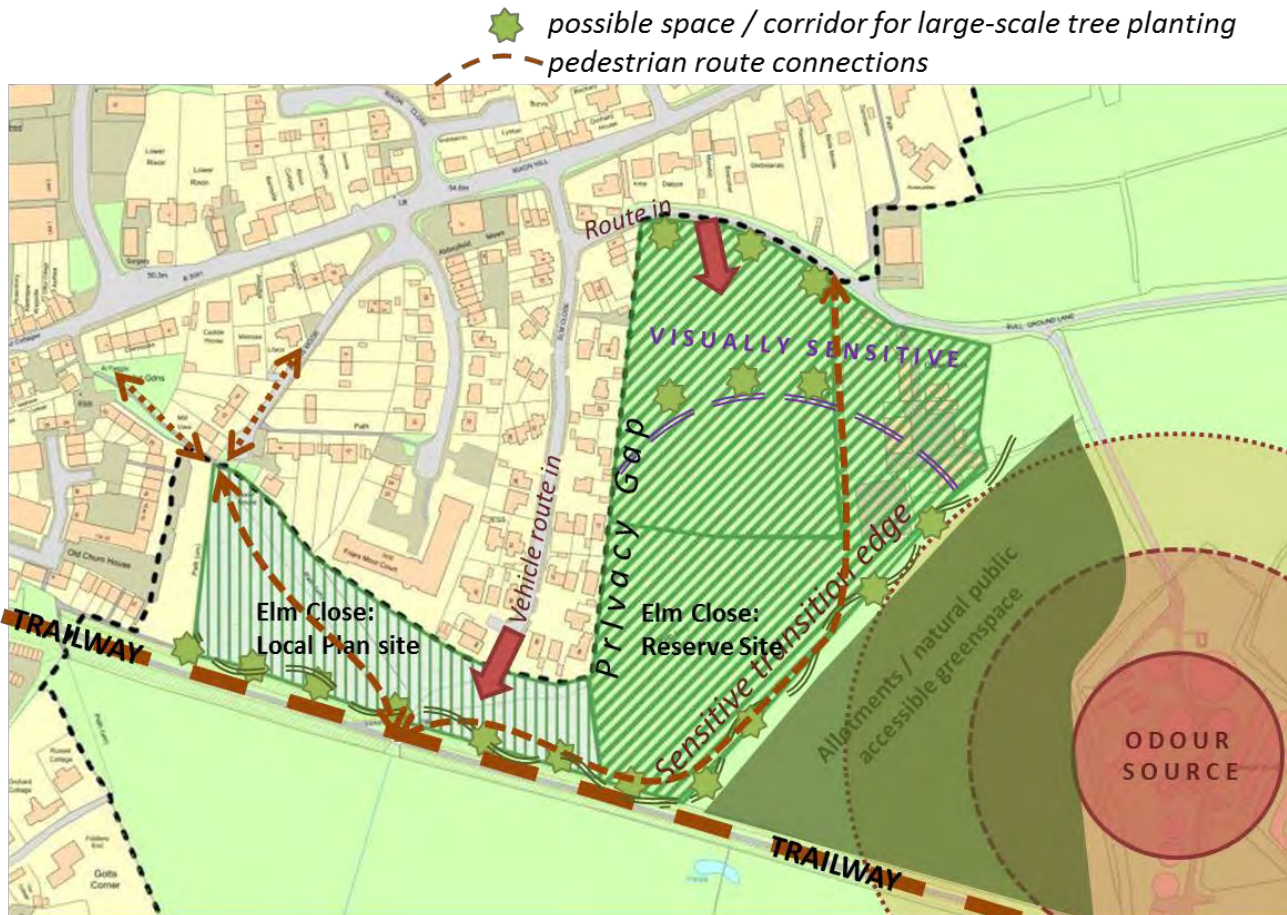
There are potentially good pedestrian / cycle links into the town linking from the north and east of the site to the Trailway (although the current access point onto the Trailway is stepped and this therefore needs improvement). However, vehicular access is through existing residential areas where there is on-street parking, and the implications of increased traffic will therefore need careful consideration, including

- > how pedestrians and cyclists can cross Rixon Hill safely to travel to the education and leisure facilities in the north

- > the volume of traffic emerging onto Rixon Hill from Elm Close
- > the routing of traffic to the new development to minimise disruption to existing residents

The density of development here should be lower than the adjoining built-up areas. At about 4ha in size the whole site, including the farm buildings, should be able to accommodate in the region of 80 dwellings (although the exact number will depend on the type of housing and layout configuration). A site of this size would normally be expected to include a mix of housing types, including affordable homes. The area closest to the town centre would be particularly suited to providing accommodation aimed at older people or those with more restricted mobility.

Figure 8. Concept and Issues Diagram – Elm Close South and Elm Close East sites



Policy 33. Land south of Elm Close

The development of Land south of Elm Close (as shown on Map 3) will be supported provided:

- It is for housing and open space. A mix of housing should be provided, and accommodation suited to elderly / less mobile residents would most appropriately be located in the south-western part of the site where there is reasonably level access to the town centre. Any buildings should be no more than 2½ storeys
- A transport assessment is undertaken and includes a review of the local highway issues identified in this plan (or in consultation with local residents) and is agreed with the highways authority. This should guide traffic routing and management measures, and should include provision for safe pedestrian crossing of Rixon Hill near Rixon Close, and consideration of the cumulative impact of the reserve site east of Elm Close (Policy 33a)
- The green spaces are in accordance with an agreed green space strategy which considers the cumulative impact of this and the reserve site east of Elm Close (Policy 33a), and the spaces and landscape scheme are designed to provide multiple benefits in terms of

- *wildlife mitigation, including the retention of mature trees and species-rich hedgerows*
- *informal recreation opportunities in line with the adopted standards*
- *the provision of allotments and publicly accessible natural greenspace on the land to the south up to the Trailway*
- *an attractive setting for pedestrian / cycle routes, linking from Manston Road / Rixon Hill through to the Trailway*
- *tree planting along the northern edge and within the development, with sufficient space for these to develop into large-scale mature specimens in order to soften the impact of built development in distant views*
- *The layout appears organic in character, with cohesive housing groups / areas, and avoids the appearance and feel of a large suburban-style estate. The design and layout will also need to take into account the generally pleasant views from the Trailway as you approach town, to ensure the visitor experience from this key approach is not undermined by poorly designed, poor quality development*
- *the amenity and privacy of existing residents adjoining the site is safeguarded, through the appropriate design, scale and layout of new development*

Policy 33a **Land east of Elm Close**

The development of Land east of Elm Close (as shown on Map 3) will only be allowed for development if it is required as a reserve site in accordance with Policy 1, and only if:

- *It is for housing and open space.*
- *A transport assessment is undertaken and includes a review of the local highway issues identified in this plan (or in consultation with local residents) and is agreed with the highways authority. This should guide traffic routing and management measures, and should include provision for safe pedestrian crossing of Rixon Hill near Rixon Close, and consideration of the cumulative impact of the site south of Elm Close (Policy 33)*
- *No residential or other odour-sensitive development should be located within areas that may be significantly affected by odours from the sewage treatment works, based on modelling to be agreed with Wessex Water. Odour abatement measures that further reduce potential complaints should be considered and secured if reasonable*
- *The green spaces are in accordance with an agreed green space strategy which considers the cumulative impact of this and the site south of Elm Close (Policy 33), and the spaces and landscape scheme are designed to provide multiple benefits in terms of*
 - *wildlife mitigation*
 - *informal recreation opportunities in line with the adopted standards*
 - *the provision of allotments and publicly accessible natural greenspace on the land to the south up to the Trailway*
 - *an attractive setting for pedestrian / cycle routes, linking from Manston Road / Rixon Hill through to the Trailway*
 - *tree planting along the northern edge and within the development, with sufficient space for these to develop into large-scale mature specimens in order to soften the impact of built development in distant views*
- *The layout appears organic in character, with cohesive housing groups / areas, and avoids the appearance and feel of a large suburban-style estate. The design and layout will also need to take into account the generally pleasant views from the Trailway as you approach town, to ensure the*

visitor experience from this key approach is not undermined by poorly designed, poor quality development

- the amenity and privacy of existing residents adjoining the site is safeguarded, through the appropriate design, scale and layout of new development*

Any buildings over 2 storeys are located within the lower part of the site, but should be no more than 2½ storeys, and the materials used in buildings on the higher ground takes into account their potential prominence in more distant views from the A357

9.5 Changes to the settlement boundary

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the settlement boundaries adopted in the Local Plan have been checked to make sure they still provide an appropriate division between the built-up areas and surrounding countryside. A minor change under Policy 2 (Map 3) has been made at the Sturminster Storage site east of Manston Road to include the existing buildings within the settlement boundary.

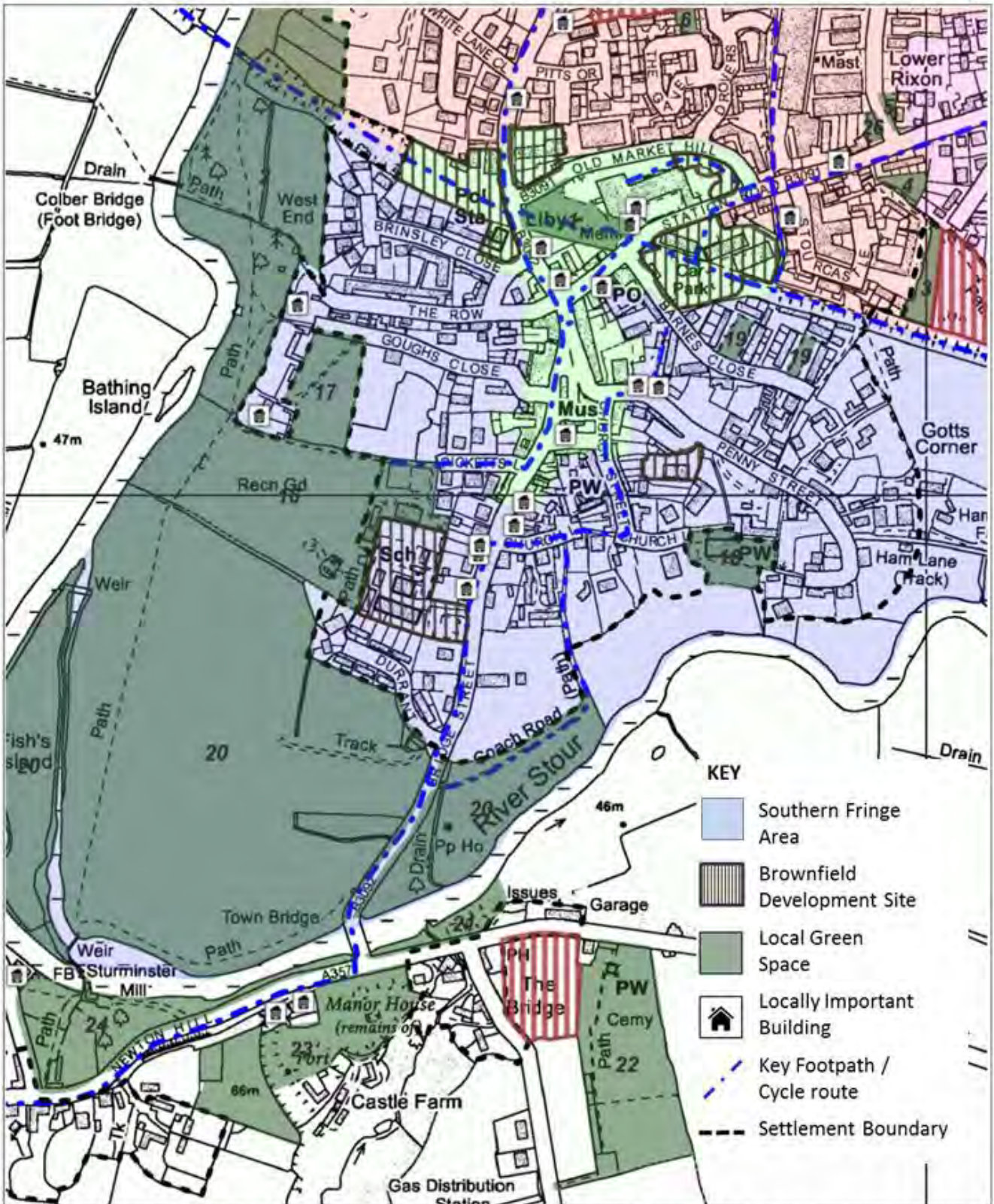
10 Southern Fringe

Map 14. Southern Fringe area



Southern Fringe

Sturminster Newton CP



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10.1 The Southern Fringe area: overview

This section of the Neighbourhood Plan covers the area to the south of the historic core and trailway, as far as the water meadows that lead down to the River Stour. The main streets in the area are Bridge Street, and the side streets leading towards the river, including Penny Street, Church Lane, Ricketts Lane and The Row.

The Southern Fringe area is the 'entrance' to the town from the south. The green areas that surround the town at this part are highly valued. They provide a unique setting for the town, and are also used on occasions for some significant local events, such as the Cheese Festival and the town's carnival.

The built-up area around the historic core is mainly residential in character and mix, reflecting its incremental change and development over many centuries.

All of the area within the settlement boundary, and the water meadows down to the river Stour, is within the Conservation Area, which means that there are stricter controls on development and the protection of trees.

The area is not expected to change significantly over the plan period. Planning consent has been granted for the development of the old Gasworks site (whilst retaining the original building). There are other sites (the primary school and Hammond's Yard) that are likely to become available for redevelopment. Some development could also happen on other infill sites that have not as yet been identified, as well as extensions and alterations to existing buildings. Such changes are likely to be incremental.

Particularly relevant in this area is the Neighbourhood Plan's objective to protect and make the most of our heritage, making sure that development minimises its impact on the environment.

10.2 The character of the area

The approach along Bridge Street is particularly scenic, crossing the Grade I Listed stone bridge with its narrow, six arch span, allowing views across the open landscape of the water meadows. The character changes as it winds its way up into the historic core of the town, with a wide variety of mainly traditional buildings on irregular plots, some on the road, some set back, and some elevated on green banks above the road.

Away from the main road, the narrow, winding character of adjacent lanes reinforces the quiet and relaxed pace of the back streets, where the traffic is naturally slowed and pedestrians share the roadway. The area is not as densely packed as the town centre area, with gardens, hedges, and planted areas providing a leafy landscape setting.

At the fringes of the town centre are quiet, peaceful back lanes which have a more informal but nonetheless traditional feel. Buildings are intimate in scale and trees and shrubs, sometimes in tubs and window boxes, add to their appeal. There is a pleasant organic mix of houses, gardens and landscape, although some larger and more modern buildings sometimes compromise the attractive feel of the area. There has been surprisingly little by way of modern infill on back land plots behind the street frontages; where it has taken place it has tended to be small scale and in keeping with local character.

Although there has been some more modern 'estate' style development within this area, such as Durrant and Barnes Close, this has not been in character with the area in terms of its layout, uniformity or materials, and as such should not be used as a basis for similar designs.

Policy 34. Southern Fringe character

Development should be in keeping with the predominant character of the area, respecting the positive features it contains (see character description). Infill development will only be appropriate if the design can retain gaps and mature trees that are important to the local character. Modern, contemporary or traditional architecture and design will be supported where the form, style and materials would be complimentary to the surrounding character of the area and its buildings

Character description Predominant character of the area and positive features:

Layout: *Narrow leafy lanes predominate, often without pavements. Plots generally rather irregular and dispersed, including some low density plots with houses set in large well-planted gardens*

Scale and form:	<i>Building height ranges from 1 - 2.5 storeys. Although primarily residential (particularly away from the main road), there is a wide variety of building forms, and a general lack of uniformity between neighbouring buildings given the sporadic nature of past development</i>
Built styles and features:	<i>A wide variety of building styles, ranging from medieval vernacular buildings to large Victorian villas and 20th Century bungalows. Pitched roofs and chimney stacks a common feature</i>
Materials:	<p><i>Walls:</i> Red brick, limestone and painted plaster</p> <p><i>Roofs:</i> Generally red-brown tiles, slate and some thatch</p>
Fronts and boundaries:	<i>Frontages vary considerably from edge of pavement development to houses set well back within plots, orientated irrespective of roads and plot orientation. Often substantially defined by walls, hedges and outbuildings</i>
Landscaping:	<i>The mature, leafy landscape setting is the principal unifying feature of the area. Large gardens accommodate many large and mature trees that are significant in wider views of the town. Minimal street furniture and limited lighting</i>
<i>The edge of the built area, where it adjoins the countryside, is critical in wider views when approaching the town. Light coloured rendering, inappropriate (particularly bright or reflective) roof materials and large, unbroken walls would not be appropriate in locations which can clearly be viewed from the surrounding countryside. Similarly, it is particularly important that planting and landscaping is incorporated into the design in these areas, and the generally treed nature of this area retained. Three story buildings are unlikely to be acceptable in the area as a whole, and 2½ story buildings should be avoided on this sensitive edge. Development that would reduce the openness of, or the enjoyment of views across, the visually important river meadows landscape (as shown on the proposals map) will not be supported</i>	
<i>Development facing onto Bridge Street should not detract from the attractive sequence of views experienced from along that road. Similarly, the impact of development on the sequence of attractive views experienced along the winding narrow lanes will be an important consideration in the acceptability of development in this area</i>	

Important green spaces and views

The open nature of the water meadows and the setting they provide are fundamental to the character of this part of the town. Views across these water meadows to and from the town are very important. This not only applies to views from Bridge Street and the other lanes within the built-up area, but also further afield from the A357 (when the town can first be glimpsed as you exit Piddles Wood, and then increasingly be seen across the farmland and river), and from Stalbridge Lane. Other more local green spaces within the built up area that are of particular value to local residents have been identified and listed below (see Map 7):

- Memorial Recreation Ground, Ricketts Lane
- Open land in front of West End Cottages, adjoining Linden Park.
- Wooded river bank from west of the Memorial Recreation Ground heading north
- Watermeadows south of the town
- St Mary's Churchyard
- Old Town Burial Ground
- Land at Barnes Close Green

The area has many notable urban views, formed by the slightly winding nature of the roads and back lanes, the architecture and character of the more historic buildings, and boundary treatments, all of which provide

an interesting sequence of views to the traveller. Particularly notable for this are Bridge Street and Penny Street.

Not all of the private gardens that were identified as Important Open and Wooded Areas in the 2003 Local Plan have been selected as local green spaces; however, any proposals for development will need to be carefully considered due to the need to retain the treed and open character of this area. Examples of this would include the grounds of Beech House , Stour Grange, Ham Gate Farmhouse and Lindens.

Important character buildings and features

There are a significant number of Listed Buildings in this area, primarily along Bridge Street, Church Street and Penny Street. The tower of St Mary’s Church and the white frontage of Stour Grange are particularly notable and catch the eye of the traveller in far-reaching views. There are 16th -17th century buildings (such as Church Farmhouse, Carriage Cottage, The Nutshell, Little Thatch all in Church Street) and 18 - 19th century Houses such as Myrtle House, and a number of buildings associated with the old school on Penny Street, including the old Headmaster’s house in Church Walk.



Tanyard, Ham Gate Farmhouse, Carrann Cottage all form an important cluster on the rural eastern edge. A number of additional buildings have been highlighted for the local interest and contribution they make, and will be protected under Policy 10.

Table 19. Southern Fringe – Locally Listed Buildings

Three Gables, Bridge Street	<i>Location of the town's first county library, and used for various trades dating back to the early 1900s including Henry Lemon's tailors shop and Jesperson and Harris agricultural engineers</i>
The Quarter Jack, Bridge Street	<i>3 storey building in prominent position entering the town. In the late 1800's and early 1900's it was Rose's printers and stationers. It has also been a guest house and an antiques shop</i>
45, Bridge Street	<i>An attractive two storey building that was at one time split into two. The right hand half was once the home of Henry George Bracher who is said to have owned the withy beds at the Bridge, from where he would gather the reeds and make baskets and other items</i>
50, Bridge Street	<i>A plain and unobtrusive looking house. In the mid 1900's it was run as a tea shop by Ron and Molly Weston</i>
70, Bridge Street	<i>Simple two storey building, that used to be Bessie Bartlett's sweet shop in the mid 1900's</i>
Petersham Cottage, Penny Street	<i>Two storey cottage, one of a row of three workers cottages</i>
Gas Works House, Penny Street	<i>Plain but was appropriate for a gas company building, a record of our past reliance on town gas</i>
North House and South House, Riverside off Goughs Close	<i>Elegant designed pair of semi-detached houses with pretty roof facing and exterior colour. Both houses owned by Robert Young and North house rented by Thomas Hardy briefly</i>
The Hive at West End, Goughs Close	<i>Timber clad house and garage, clapper board style. Only one of this type known in Sturminster Newton</i>

Particularly notable tree groupings that would be protected under Policy 12 (see Map 6) include:

- > Woodland along the western fringe from the edge of the Recreation Ground running north
- > Mix of mature trees in Lindens Garden and Little Lindens

- > Border to Beech House grounds along the Coach Road
- > Border of Magnolia House and Stour Grange with Coach Road
- > Grounds of Stour Grange, Church Lane; also some continuation of the tree line through Deep Meadows and along the river bank south-east.
- > Tree groups in grounds of Ham Gate

10.3 Important infrastructure, routes and connections

Key community facilities within this area are the primary school (which includes pre-school provision) and a number of community venues including the Scout Hall (leased from the Town Council) and St Mary's Church and Hall. These are all considered to be community facilities that should be protected. The primary school and pre-school are likely to be relocated to the north of the town as a replacement school is needed and cannot readily be accommodated on the existing site (see Policy 28). The list of community buildings protected under Policy 4 (Map 4) is:

- > William Barnes Primary (including the pre-school)
- > Christian Fellowship Hall, The Row
- > Methodist Hall, Church Street
- > St Mary's Church Hall
- > Scout Hall

The recreation ground is designated as a local green space and therefore protected under Policy 11 (Map 7).

There are a number of important routes that traverse this part of the town.

The Town Bridge acts as a 'funnel' for the many walkers and cyclists approaching Sturminster Newton from the south travelling to the primary school, town centre and also further north to the high school. The narrow pavements and heavy traffic on Bridge Street make this an unpleasant walking and cycling route. A better alternative route to reach the centre of town exists via the Coach Road and Church Street. However, there is no dropped kerb to cross Bridge Street. The first part of the Coach Road across the meadow ideally needs to be widened so it is fully accessible and the gates at either end need to be modified so that they are suitable for all users. A dropped kerb is needed for the step up to the pavement in Church Street.

Church Lane provides a good route between the south and the centre of town but crossing Bridge Street is perilous at the junction. As there is also a visibility issue for cars turning out of Church Lane, the junction would benefit from some remodelling to ease both problems. On this route and others in this area of town, the roadway often has to be shared between pedestrians and traffic. Where this occurs and also where the routes cross Bridge Street, the road surface should be adapted to indicate that pedestrians are likely to be using it. If the site of William Barnes School is redeveloped, then a new pedestrian/cycle route should be incorporated between Bridge Street and the Memorial Recreation Ground which would provide a safer alternative to Ricketts Lane.

10.4 Areas of change

Development that may come forward will be guided by the general policies in this section, especially the requirement that the scale, design and layout is in keeping with the predominant character of the area, respecting the positive features it contains. Additional guidance is provided in relation to the two potential development sites that have been identified and have been subject to public consultation:

The William Barnes Primary School Site

Recent growth in the town's population and anticipated growth in the coming years means that the current primary school is not going to be large enough to cater for local children. The option of expanding the school on its current site has been considered, but there is limited space and it would make more sense to relocate the school to another larger site in the town (ideally close to the high school, so that the two schools can work more closely together).

If the school is relocated, the site will become vacant and could be redeveloped for other uses. It would provide a suitable site for new housing, or other uses that would be compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. It is about 0.8ha in size, which suggests that it could have room for 20 or more dwellings (though the exact number will depend on the type and layout configuration). A site of this size would normally be expected to include a mix of housing types, but being so close to the town centre it would be particularly suited to providing affordable and quality accommodation aimed at older people. It would also suit the inclusion of what we are calling 'aspirational homes' - high quality larger homes, incorporating flexible / adaptable layouts for home working (see Policy 3 for definition).

The site already has a vehicular access off Bridge Street. The existing grass bank provides an attractive green swathe, which together with the hedge opposite introduce a semi-rural character to this stretch of the main road, experienced when travelling out of the town. The retention of a green swathe with some planting along this stretch would help retain this feeling of transition from the town to the countryside.

The site also fronts onto the Memorial Recreation Grounds. There is an opportunity to provide an attractive pedestrian route through the development to improve access to the recreation grounds. It is also important that development adjoining the recreation ground provides a good quality public frontage overlooking the green space (not high fences, garage areas or walls, or the backs of gardens). Some consideration should be given to the frontage towards the Scout Hall and Pavilion/Town Council Maintenance Depot, since these buildings, by their nature, may not outlive any housing development. Some planting would be appropriate along this edge and the proposed pedestrian route through.

The school building is distinctive and adds to the 'story' of the town as the place where many local people started their education. It could lend itself to conversion and re-use; however, it is not so important that it must be retained, and its replacement may allow a better scheme to come forward. The scale and materials of any such replacement, and other buildings located on this southern section of the site, will need careful consideration as the rising ground means that larger buildings would be visible in views from the paths crossing the water meadows, as well as being overbearing in relation to the rear gardens of the bungalows in Durants Close.

Policy 35. William Barnes school site

The re-use or redevelopment of the William Barnes School site (as shown on Map 3), if no longer required for education, will be supported provided:

- It is for housing or other uses that are compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. A mix of housing more suitable to older people would be appropriate in this location*
- The frontage onto Bridge Street includes planting to retain the semi-rural and green character of this section of the road and any buildings should be set back so as to maintain the open feel of the existing development as one approaches the town centre*
- Buildings are orientated to front onto and overlook the War Memorial Recreation Ground (including the existing community buildings) to the west of the site, with high quality design / materials and planting is provided to create an attractive edge to this important green space*
- A new pedestrian / cycle route is created linking Bridge Street through to the Recreation Ground, positioned and designed to provide an attractive, safe route through the development*
- The scale and materials of development fronting onto the west of the site towards the recreation ground and along the southern edge of the site should not be overly prominent in wider views, and the amenity and privacy of adjoining residents should be respected*

Consideration should be given to incorporating the Town Council buildings, car park and the Scout building if this is feasible and would result in an improved overall development while retaining provision for their needs at the time.

Hammonds Yard

Behind the offices of Hammonds on Church Street is its yard, with access off Penny Street. The business is planning to stay in the town, but the mainly residential area (with a residential care home on the adjoining

site) is not an ideal location for a builder's yard. Should this part of the business relocate, the site could be redeveloped, and the opportunity taken to change its use to something more suited to a quiet, largely residential area.

The site is tucked away, with only a small part visible from the access off Penny Street. The sequence of views along Penny Street is an important attribute to local character, and as such the access and treatment of the front of the site will need careful design to avoid creating an unsightly gap in the building line.

The two storey building is of no real architectural merit, and does not contribute to the local character. It is also very close to the boundary of neighbouring properties and would, if re-used, significantly overlook private rear garden areas.

At just over 0.1ha in size, the site when cleared could have room for about 5 dwellings. This is below the current threshold in the Local Plan where a mix of house types including affordable housing would generally be required. Its proximity to the town centre, and nursing home next door, make it ideally suited for more older persons' accommodation.

Policy 36. Hammonds Yard site

The redevelopment of Hammonds Yard (as shown on Map 3) will be supported provided:

- It is for housing or other uses that are compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. Housing more suitable to older people would be appropriate in this location*
- The frontage onto Penny Street is designed to be discrete and to avoid an unsightly gap in the sequence of views along this lane*
- The privacy of neighbouring properties is considered in the siting and design of the dwellings within the site*

10.5 Changes to the settlement boundary

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the settlement boundaries adopted in the Local Plan have been checked to make sure they still provide an appropriate division between the built-up areas and surrounding countryside. The key changes under Policy 2 (Map 3) are amendments to exclude areas designated as Local Green Space where these adjoin the settlement boundary, as listed here:

- > Exclude the War Memorial Recreation Ground and adjoining gap to the north which are designated as Local Green Spaces
- > Exclude the area west of Clarke's Yard (which is a regionally important geological site)
- > Exclude the churchyard surrounding St Mary's Church

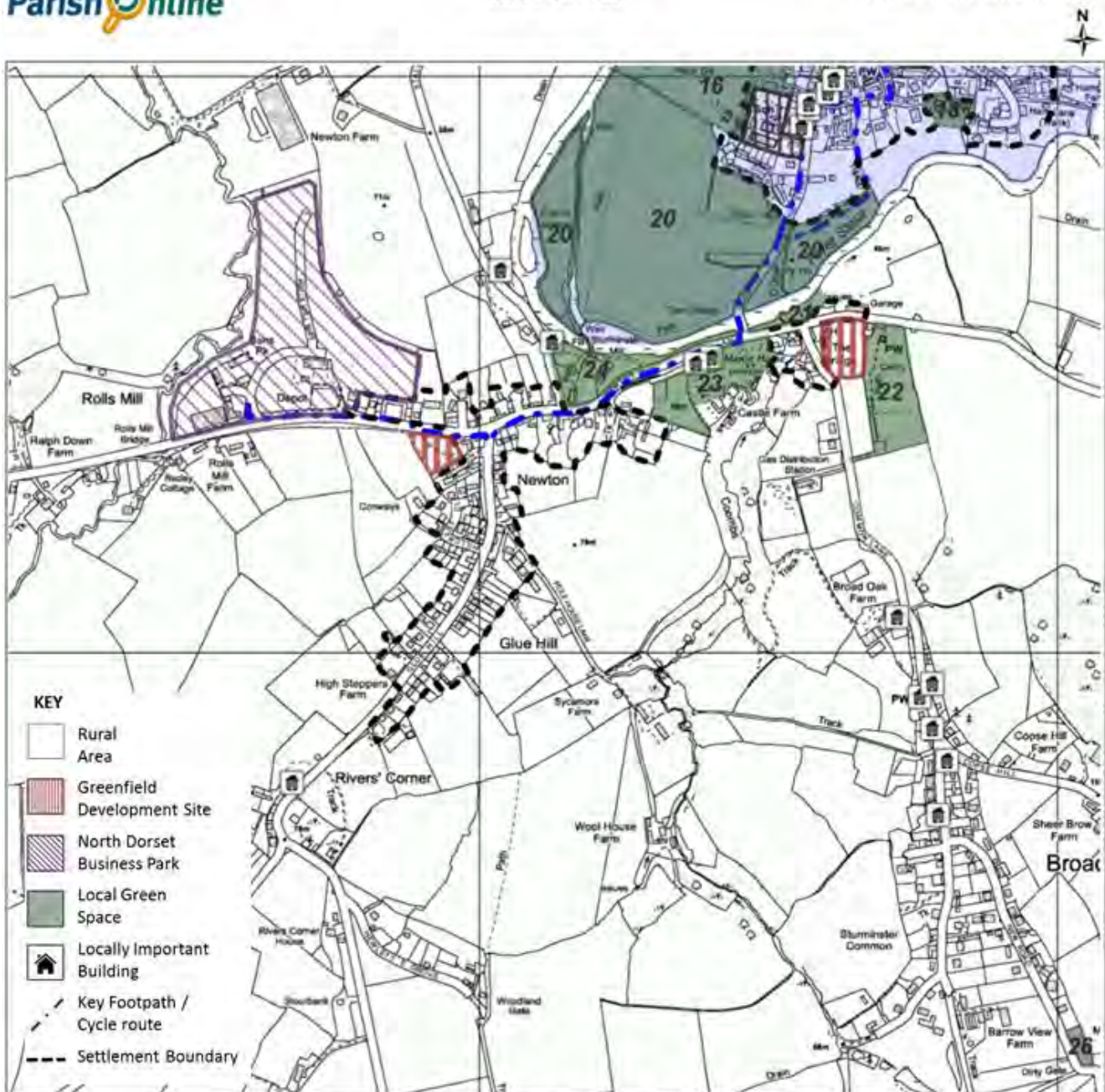
11 Rural areas – Newton, Town Bridge, Glue Hill, Bagber and beyond

Map 15. Rural areas map

ParishOnline

Rural Areas

Sturminster Newton CP



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11.1 The Rural area: an overview

Sturminster Newton Parish lies in a broad undulating area of rich and varied countryside known as the Blackmore Vale. This section of the Neighbourhood Plan covers this rural area and its smaller settlements. These include Newton, Glue Hill and the area around the Town Bridge (all of which are defined by a settlement boundary), North Dorset Business Park (also known as Rolls Mill), together with Broad Oak, Bagber and other smaller settlements that do not have a boundary defined and which are regarded as being part of the countryside for planning policy purposes.

Newton, Glue Hill and Town Bridge are to some extent the 'southern' part of the town, beyond the River Stour. Although within the same Conservation Area and sharing a settlement boundary with the town, they feel distinctively separate from the main built-up area and more akin to a village. The area around the Town Bridge, centred on the Bull Tavern, is separated from the main built-up area of Newton and Glue Hill by the

green spaces around the Mill and Castle. The remains of the Castle (a medieval fortified manor house built on the site of an Iron Age hill fort), to the south of the river crossing, are designated as a Scheduled Monument. There have been concerns that these remains are falling further into disrepair and Historic England are in discussion with the new owners to try to find a solution. On the very western end of Newton is the North Dorset Business Park that, when complete, has the potential to provide a significant source of employment for the area. Other than the business park, the level of growth anticipated is fairly minimal, with one small site allocated for housing development.

To the south, Broad Oak is the other main built up area. This is considered (in policy terms) as countryside, as although there are enough houses in one place to provide a real sense of place and community, there are no community facilities, and the road connecting to the A357 together with the sub-standard nature of the junction with the A357 (due to poor visibility) is unsuited to additional traffic resulting from further development.

The wider area is mostly farmland, and changes in dairy farming (which has been the core business of most of the farms) may impact on how the countryside is managed in the longer term. The potential effect of Ash die-back may also change the well-treed character of the countryside, though this should not affect Piddles Wood (which is ancient oak woodland and hazel coppice). The River Stour and the nearby recreational trails are a significant tourist draw, attracting visitors who want to explore and enjoy the area's beautiful countryside.

The Neighbourhood Plan's objective to protect and make the most of our heritage, making sure that development minimises its impact on the environment, is particularly relevant in this area.

11.2 The character of the main settlements in the rural area

Travelling on the A357 from Lydlinch into the parish there are clear views of Glue Hill and Broad Oak as rural settlements on the higher ground, particularly notable at night when lights can be seen in and around the buildings in an otherwise quiet countryside setting. In the western part of the area Bagber and Bagber Common are very loosely knit hamlets with a variety of cottages, houses and farm buildings in a range of styles.

At Newton the linear village straddles the main road with a variety of cottages and houses employing local materials such as stone, timber and thatch. Their ages generally range from the 17th to 19th century and many are listed. There are three small, relatively recent developments of traditionally designed homes in small closes. The area is leafy and well treed and the transition between landscape and buildings is generally smooth and gentle. The partly built North Dorset Business Park introduces an industrial feel to the village edge, which could be improved and softened with landscape planting in the longer term.

Just beyond Newton is Sturminster Newton Mill. The Mill building dates from the 17th century with 18th century red brick additions and the machinery is regularly operated, powered by the 1904 turbine. It is a popular visitor destination and one of the iconic buildings in Dorset. It is leased by the Town Council and managed and operated by the Sturminster Newton Museum & Mill Society.

To the south a straggling linear development rises up Glue Hill. Either side of this rural road houses are interspersed with small pasture fields with glimpsed views out to the north over the Stour valley. The landscape is quite open with a few mature trees and only occasional high hedgerows. The buildings themselves are mixed in character including Victorian and older vernacular houses standing alongside more modern post war buildings with a more suburban character.

Broad Oak is another scattered linear development, and comprises a variety of building styles, though few houses are of particular historic or architectural merit. Hedges and trees are prominent in views across the river valley to the north. The combination of its layout, its green spaces and open landscape, and its distant views gives the hamlet a quite distinct airy and uncluttered feel. Increasing traffic on the rural roads, particularly associated with the local mushroom farm, has given rise to local concerns and this issue is covered in the following section.

The Town Bridge area centres on the road junction and river crossing point. Buildings are individual and often set back from the road at varying angles. The thatched 17th Century Bull Tavern is particularly characteristic, marking the junction to Broad Oak. The six arched stone bridge was built in the 16th century and widened in the 17th century. The causeway was added in the 18th century to provide a roadway over fields that were liable to flooding.

Policy 37. Rural settlements character: Newton, Glue Hill and Broad Oak

Development should be in keeping with the predominant character of the area, respecting the positive features it contains (see character description).

Character description Predominant character of the area and positive features:

Layout: *Linear development, creating an attractive view corridor, with occasional breaks providing attractive views across the wider countryside*

Scale and form: *In keeping with a rural village, most buildings are modest in scale up to 2 storeys in height*

Built styles and features: *A variety of building styles, with older vernacular and Victorian era cottages mixed with more modern development. Broad Oak and Glue Hill have much less distinctive local vernacular, and draw more of their identity from the individuality of buildings and green spaces*

Materials: *A mix of local building materials, such as stone, timber and thatch*

Fronts and boundaries: *Most buildings front onto the road, being more set back towards the outskirts of each settlement. Broad Oak and Glue Hill in particular have groups of houses set back from the road with large areas of planted front gardens, which gives an open and spacious feel to these areas. There is particular variety in orientation in the Town Bridge area. Boundaries are marked often with stone boundary walls or hedgerows (particularly predominant in Broad Oak)*

Landscaping: *Leafy and well treed, and on the whole the transition between built form and the surrounding landscape is smooth and gentle*

Glue Hill and Broad Oak are particularly visible in wider views. Light coloured rendering, inappropriate (particularly bright or reflective) roof materials and large, unbroken walls would not be appropriate in locations which can clearly be viewed from the surrounding countryside. Larger scale (over 2 storey) buildings are unlikely to be acceptable in the area as a whole. Planting will have a positive role to play in helping reduce the impact of new building in these rural settlements

11.3 The character of the countryside

The town's surrounding countryside comprises gently undulating pasture with scattered farmsteads, twisting lanes with thick mature hedgerows, and small bridges over a network of brooks, streams and drainage ditches feeding into the Stour. The landscape contains a mosaic of copses and small wooded areas, as well as many distinctive mature oaks and other native trees. Although development within the rural areas of the Parish, outside of settlement boundaries, will be strictly controlled, it is important that whatever development does take place respects the key positive features identified, and fits into the particular landscape character described.

Over the past few decades there have been substantial changes in local farming, with many working farms becoming larger and more commercially driven, with the construction of large industrial style sheds far removed from the more traditional image of the Dorset countryside. Farming plays a key role in local food production, and maintains the countryside (the fields and hedgerows) that so many of us enjoy. It is important that farming continues, and that farms can be run on a sound economic basis. However, the siting and design of the more modern, utilitarian agricultural units should be carefully considered as these can otherwise be extremely conspicuous, detract from the landscape character and tourism appeal.

This also applies to other types of modern infrastructure, such as the expanses of solar panels and wind turbines that have been introduced in the countryside over the past few decades. Rudge Hill solar farm is one such example within the parish. It is located in a slightly lower lying field between Glue Hill and Broad Oak, which is quite well concealed from most parts of the parish but can be seen clearly when in closer proximity, and from the surrounding hills in Broad Oak from where it has a considerable adverse visual impact. The solar farm was allowed on appeal on the understanding that it would have a moderate to major impact in local views, but that such harm would be limited, as in wider views it would be seen as part of a broad landscape of

fields, hedgerows and scattered buildings. However, from our consultations it is clear that much of the appreciation that local residents have of the countryside is based on their enjoyment of local views and the small scale and sometimes intimate character of the landscape surrounding Sturminster Newton. Such schemes can cumulatively impact on people’s experience of the countryside, and this appeal decision should not be seen as setting a precedent within the Parish as further developments such as at Rudge Hill would undermine the attractive overall character of the countryside. Map 17 shows the main rural recreational trails from which views are most appreciated by local residents and visitors.

Another issue of particular concern to local residents is the growth in the number of larger lorries and heavy goods vehicles using the narrow rural lanes. This is particularly notable in Common Lane going up to Broad Oak, where the mushroom farm operates. Not only do these large vehicles give rise to road safety concerns due to the amount of road space and limited visibility (particularly where the roads have little verge and steep banks), but where vehicles try to pass they have eroded the verges.

The following policy for development in the countryside has been drafted to guide development where this occurs. It should also be applied to the rural areas adjoining the main town (in circumstances where the built town character would not be appropriate).

Policy 38. Rural areas countryside character

Development should be in keeping with the predominant character of the area, respecting the positive features it contains (see character description).

<u>Character description</u>	<u>Predominant character of the area and positive features:</u>
<u>Landscape:</u>	<i>Gently undulating agricultural landscape, mostly arable and pasture land with large fields. The river meadows alongside the Stour, although wide, open and flat, feel somewhat enclosed by the surrounding landscape. South of the A357 the land becomes more undulating, with medium to large fields, and the chalk scarp just beyond Okeford Fitzpaine to the south creates a notable backdrop. To the east Piddles Wood, an ancient oak and hazel coppice, is a local landmark.</i>
<u>Settlements:</u>	<i>Scattered farms, typically on the higher ground, and cottages. No major development in the open landscape of the river corridor</i>
<u>Road network</u>	<i>Diverse pattern of lanes and roads – sometimes narrow and twisting, and often with wildflower-rich verges</i>
<u>Views:</u>	<i>Due to the open nature of the undulating land, there are many fine views in and around this area of the parish</i>
<u>Buildings:</u>	<i>The building ages and styles vary but in the main they are stone or brick built with red tile or thatched roofs. Some of the more attractive and distinctive buildings include the old chapel and the old school house along Chapel Road, Bagber and Bagber House Farm</i>
<u>Vegetation:</u>	<i>Fields are surrounded by dense hedgerows with occasional mature deciduous trees growing within the hedges and fields. Large mature oak trees are a particular feature of the landscape. There are also occasional tree groups, coppices and small woodlands which break the horizon and add texture to the agricultural landscape</i>

Where development would substantially increase large lorry movements on country lanes, measures will need to be taken to make sure this level and type of traffic can be accommodated on the road network without damage, hazard to other users and harm to the rural character of these roads.

Development that is not in keeping with the traditional rural character of the area or that may damage key landscape views or settings will require particular scrutiny. This includes large industrial style agricultural barns and large-scale renewable energy proposals. These will only be acceptable where their siting and design (including landscape screening) can successfully integrate them into the rural landscape, and where they are not visually prominent in views from the main rural recreational trails and roadways.

Important green spaces and views

The landscape around Sturminster Newton, although not within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is part of the Blackmore Vale and has a real sense of place and the beauty of the landscape. It is perhaps difficult to single out any one space or spaces for special note – so many different views and spaces are enjoyed from the various routes that cross the countryside. For example, one of the most distinctive views is from the A357, just below Piddles Wood, travelling west and looking across the Stour to Sturminster Newton. Piddles Wood itself is protected given its status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Another iconic view is from Colber Bridge, an attractive Listed 19th century iron footbridge west of the town, looking north up-stream to the old railway bridge. From Broad Oak you can view to the North the Mendip transmitter, and to the East you can clearly see Lydlinch Church, and the Dorchester Gap and to the South Bulbarrow Hill.

The focus for Local Green Spaces has been primarily within or adjoining the existing settlements, where spaces have a dual role including some form of community function or relate to a particularly important historic feature. Those protected under Policy 11 (see Map 7) are:

- Riverside meadows opposite Bull Tavern
- Sturminster Newton Town Cemetery
- Land round Sturminster Newton Castle
- Land around the Mill
- Dorset Lavender Farm
- Broad Oak Community Orchard

Important character buildings and features

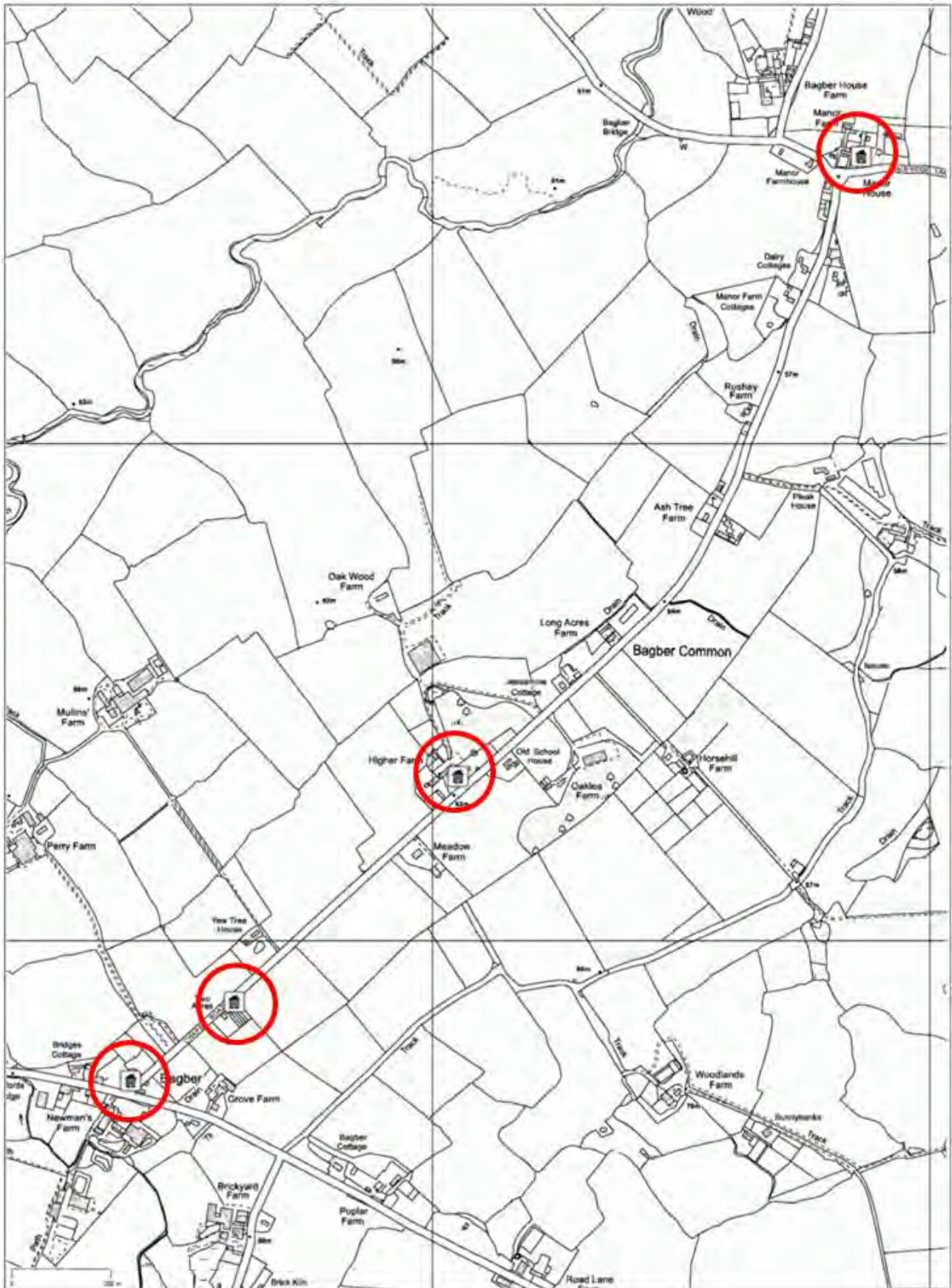
There is a well-used network of footpaths from Broad Oak linking the Trailway to Piddles Wood ancient woodland that is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) onto Fiddleford Mill, in the North and Okeford Fitzpaine in the South.

There are a lot of Listed Buildings in this area, many within the Conservation Area at Newton, but also farmhouses, cottages and other historic buildings scattered across the area. Of particular note is Fiddleford Mill House, which is a Grade I Listed Building, and Fiddleford Manor, Sturminster Mill and Sturminster Castle. A number of additional buildings have been highlighted for the local interest and contribution they make, as described in the table below. These will be protected under Policy 10.



Most of these are shown on Map 15, but those in the westernmost part of the parish (Bagber area) are shown in the following map.

Map 16. Locally Important Buildings – western zone



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Table 20. Rural area – Locally Listed Buildings

Toll House, Bagber	<i>Former toll house</i>
Chapel Meadows, 6 Nook Cottages, Bagber	<i>1877 Chapel converted to house, together with row of 4 Victorian brick cottages</i>
Higher Farm and Firefly Barn, Bagber	<i>Traditional stone farmhouse and associated buildings</i>
Manor House, Manor Farm, Bagber	<i>Traditional stone farm house and associated buildings</i>
Broad Oak Farm (cluster of buildings) Common Lane, Broad Oak	<i>Old farmhouse and adjoining cottage (stone) marking the entrance to the village</i>
Steep Cottage, Common Lane, Broad Oak	<i>Old cottage in a prominent location on a junction</i>
Strouds Common Lane, Broad Oak	<i>Very old house</i>
Gulden Cottage, Broad Oak	<i>Brick and stone cottage (converted from 2 cottages)</i>
Greystones Common Lane, Broad Oak	<i>Stone building prominent in wider views across the Blackmore Vale</i>
Hillbrow Common Lane, Broad Oak	<i>Early 20th Century brick built house, prominently situated at top of hill</i>
River House, Newton	<i>Modern building on the river frontage notable due to the architect design</i>
101 and 102 Glue Hill, Rivers Corner	<i>Row of traditional stone thatched cottages</i>
Mill Farm House, Stalbridge Lane, Newton	<i>Former farmhouse with river frontage, part Brick, part stone, with thatch and part tile roof</i>
Former Methodist Chapel, south of the Bridge, Newton Hill	<i>Originally a Methodist Chapel dating from the 1800s</i>
The Mount, Newton Hill	<i>Large dwelling that overlooks the Bridge and the River Stour, dating from the 1800s</i>

Particularly notable tree groupings that would be protected under Policy 12 include:

- > Along the River Stour and its tributaries
- > Along the Trailway / dismantled railway line
- > Around the Town Bridge
- > In Broad Oak – particularly important are those trees which are remnants from field boundaries
- > The area around the Mill
- > The rural edges of the North Dorset Business Park (Rolls Mill) – in a screening capacity

11.4 Important infrastructure, routes and connections

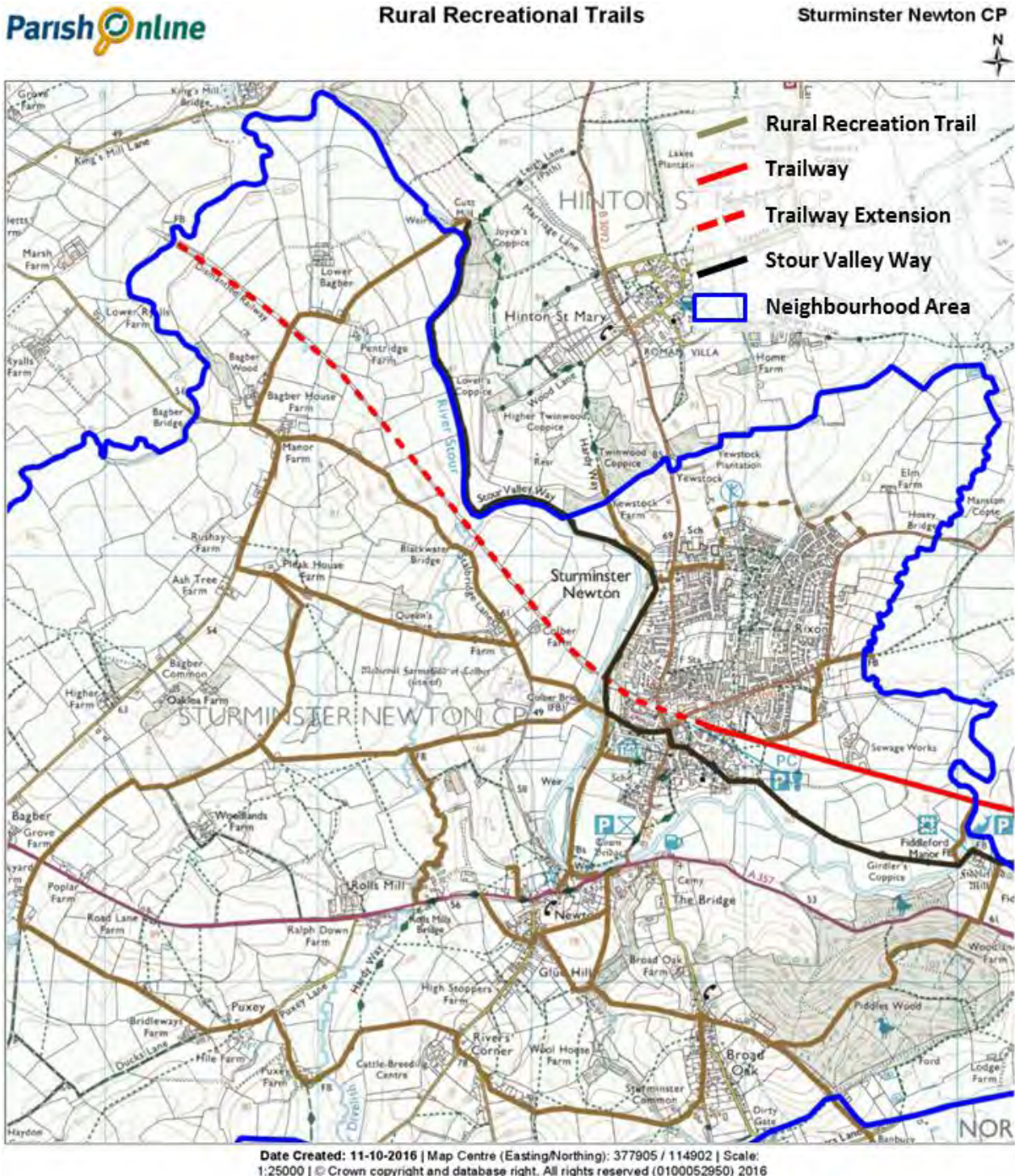
There are few community facilities located in this rural area. The two key ones, protected under Policy 4 (see Map 4), are

- > the Mill which is an important cultural heritage centre, and

- > the Bull Tavern which is the local pub for the area south of the Town bridge, where residents and visitors can meet and socialise (see also Policy 41).

There is also the town cemetery and a number of important open spaces managed for recreation, which are protected as Local Green Spaces under Policy 11 (see Map 7).

Map 17. Network of Important Recreational Trails



There are a number of good, well-maintained footpaths in the rural area that provide good links between settlements and also provide a valuable recreational resource. There is the Trailway and the Stour Valley Way in addition to a well-used network of footpaths from Broad Oak, linking to Newton, Puxey, Fiddleford and beyond. The key routes are shown on Map 17.

The Town Council, in conjunction with the Highways Authority, will work together to improve the network of recreational trails in the area, aimed at improving visitor experience and enhancing the recreational potential of these routes.

Policy 39. Rural recreational trails

Improvements to the network of recreational trails in the area, as shown on Map 17, will be sought, aimed at improving visitor experience and enhancing the recreational potential of these routes

11.5 Areas of change

Development that may come forward will be guided by the general policies above. Additional guidance is provided in relation to Rolls Mill (North Dorset Business Park) and the two potential development sites at Newton and Town Bridge:

North Dorset Business Park - Rolls Mill

The North Dorset Business Park site lies immediately north of the A357 on the western end of Newton, just east of the River Divilish. The site has been proposed for employment for many years and is gradually being built out. As well as providing the long-term potential for business growth in the area, this strategic employment site also provides scope for businesses within the town that are perhaps not in the best location (due to their proximity to housing or the large lorry movements they generate that have to go through the historic town centre) to relocate into modern and flexible premises with better access onto the strategic road network.

Under the Local Plan policies, it is primarily intended for B1 (business), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) type uses, although other employment-related uses may also be acceptable. In particular, uses that support the business park ethos, such as education / training and other business support functions, are likely to work well in the anticipated mix. However, uses that would be better located closer to the town centre (such as community venues, healthcare facilities, financial / professional services and retail of non-bulky goods), or have a residential element (such as a residential care home) would not be welcomed.

The original development brief for the site (commissioned by SturQuest and endorsed by the Local Planning Authority) envisaged the southern part of the site being more suited to a high-quality business park, presenting the site's best face to the main road, whilst distribution-based businesses could be accommodated to the north. This concept is carried forward into this Neighbourhood Plan as providing a reasonable and flexible basis for considering future planning applications. Another key point was the need to avoid disturbance and disruption to existing site occupiers and nearby residential uses at all stages of the development – therefore consideration needs to be given to access arrangements and where more unneighbourly business uses are located. The exact extent of the site is shown differently in the local plan and earlier brief, and therefore the opportunity has been taken to clarify the extent of the area to which this policy refers, taking into account more recent planning consents, the topography and potential impacts of the development.

The site occupies rising ground to the west of a small ridge of land that runs between the Rivers Divilish and Stour, and land adjoining the River Divilish may occasionally be affected by flooding (and further assessment may be required if there is potential flood risk). It is reasonably well screened in wider views from the north due to the surrounding topography, existing development and tree cover. However, the siting in relation to these features, the scale and massing of buildings and materials used in the development, will all influence its overall visual impact.

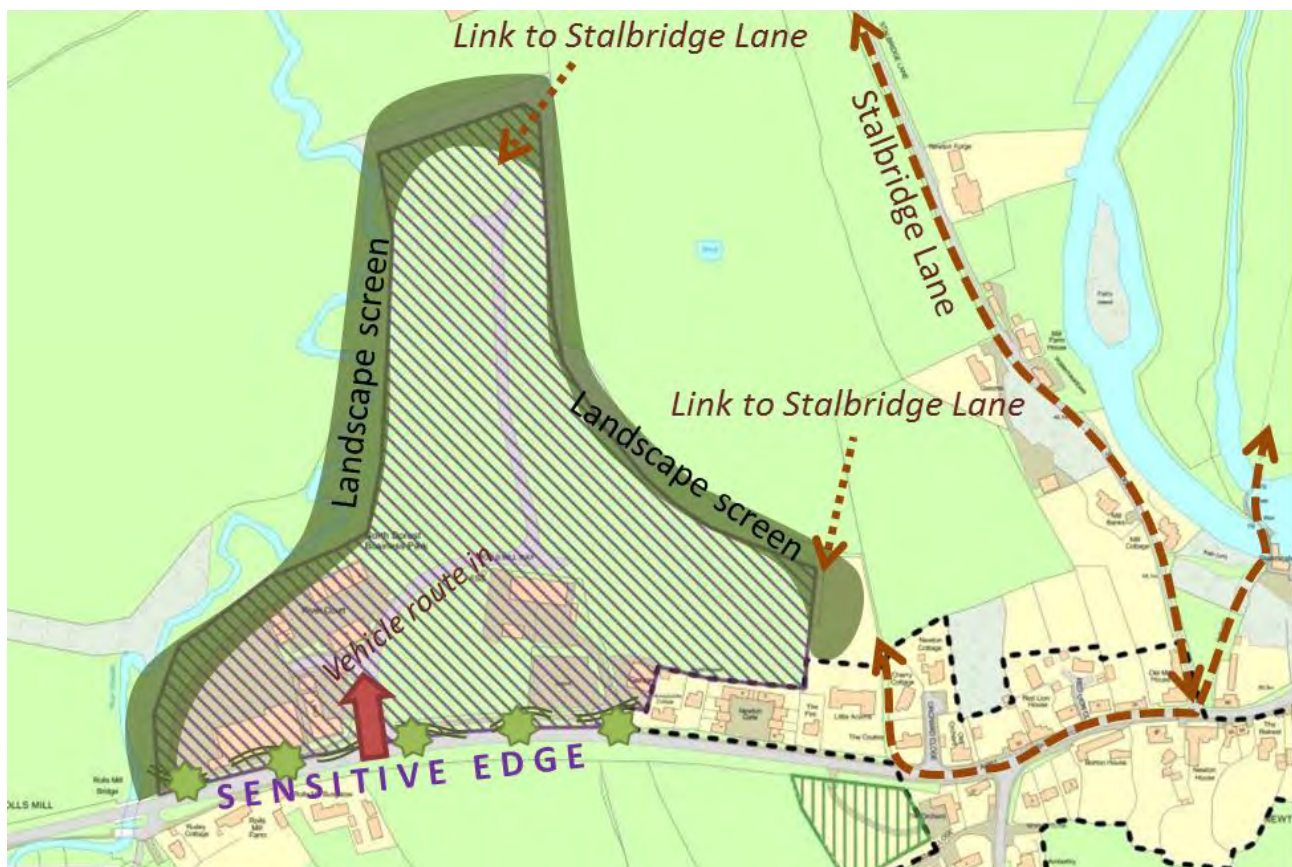
Links between the business park and the town do need to be improved for cyclists and pedestrians, as it is a feasible distance for people working there to walk or cycle. The most direct and accessible route is along the pavement by the A357. This is in good condition although there is a problem with overhanging growth from one or two gardens in Newton. The road has to be crossed where the pavement changes sides and a crossing could be provided in conjunction with some traffic calming which may mitigate the issue of speeding traffic through the settlement. The possible development at Barton Farm could be the catalyst for this. There are existing public rights of way away from the heavy traffic, but more direct and all-weather routes would make walking and cycling more attractive. The proposed links are shown on Figure 9, linking the northern and eastern ends of the site to Stalbridge Lane, and thereby on towards the Trailway.

Policy 40. Land at North Dorset Business Park

The development of land at the North Dorset Business Park as shown on Map 3, will be supported for employment uses, provided:

- The primary use falls within B1 / B2 / B8 type use or is for education / training facilities, ancillary retail of bulky goods, hotel/catering primarily aimed at business users and other uses whose main focus is business support
- The design of buildings fronting onto or clearly visible from the A357 is of a high quality appropriate to a business park (as opposed to a general industrial estate), and incorporates suitable landscaping to reinforce the semi-rural character of this section of the road
- The siting of less neighbourly uses would not be likely to have an adverse impact on existing businesses or nearby dwellings, by virtue of their operation or anticipated traffic movements
- The landscaping scheme provides a robust tree and hedgerow screen around the northern, western and eastern perimeters of the site, with buildings and any parking and external storage areas suitably sited and designed (in terms of height and materials) to ensure views from the rights of way south of the site, Stalbridge Lane and public footpaths along the south-western edge of the town are not unduly harmed
- Provision is made for all-weather pedestrian / cycle routes linking the site with the town and the Trailway, from the northern and eastern edge of the site via Stalbridge Lane and the bridge by the Mill

Figure 9. Concept and Issues Diagram – North Mills Business Park



Land adjoining the Bull Tavern, Town Bridge

The Bull Tavern is an important community building, as well as being an historic building on the main road close to the junction into the town. Its age, limited site and situation on the junction means that the parking and outdoor areas are limited, and the accommodation (including the internal bar / kitchen / cellar areas as well as living space for the landlord) is relatively cramped.

By using the adjoining field, it would be possible to provide much improved separate family accommodation for a landlord / manager, outdoor space and parking for the pub customers, and allow the facilities in the pub to be improved. It should also provide further scope for reducing the impact of surface water flooding that has affected the pub in recent years. The remaining part of the field could be used for housing, allowing some limited growth in this area and release capital for reinvestment in the pub.

The field is in agricultural use and slopes up away from the A357 main road. It is a potentially prominent and sensitive site in the approach to town bridge from the east, being within the Conservation Area, and between the historic chapel / keepers cottage (not Listed) and the pub. There is a strong, mature hedge and tree screen along its southern and western edge, which may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations. The northeast quarter of the field has some notable grassland ecological interest. Limiting development to the area along the road frontage was considered as an early option, but the slightly elevated nature of the land and the green character of this area on the road bend suggest that the site does not lend itself to frontage development. As such an alternative solution of setting the buildings back is likely to provide a better solution. The retention of the hedge and trees on the boundaries should limit any impact of the buildings on wider views. Vehicular access will need to be from the main road as the junction with Common Lane is not considered suitable for increased traffic, and development here offers the potential to improve visibility on the main road and reduce speeds.

Policy 41. Land adjoining the Bull Tavern

The development of land adjoining the Bull Tavern (as shown on Map 3), will be supported for a mix of housing (including landlord accommodation) and amenity and visitor parking area associated with the Bull Tavern public house, provided:

- suitable vehicular access can be provided from the A357, where practical, including measures that will reduce traffic speeds (designed in keeping with the local vernacular)*
- the frontage onto the A357 includes planting to retain the semi-rural character of this section of the road and provide biodiversity benefits*
- landscape planting along the eastern edge is included to provide a soft transition respecting the setting and amenity value of the cemetery and Listed buildings and biodiversity benefits*
- the layout and design of the development is in keeping with the local vernacular character and scale of the adjoining Listed Buildings*
- the mature tree and hedgerow boundary around the southern and western edge is maintained, with any buildings and private amenity space laid out to minimise future threats*
- the delivery of the housing is delivered in tandem with the package of pub-improvement measures for the Bull Tavern public house (i.e. new landlord accommodation, new amenity and visitor parking area, and internal improvements to the pub), and opportunities taken to reduce flood risk to the Listed Building*
- the parking, amenity areas and landlord accommodation are tied to the Bull Tavern public house to secure its long term viability*

Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse

The only other site considered as having potential for housing development is the garden adjoining Barton Farmhouse on the western end of Newton. It is worth noting that the field further west was considered to be too visually prominent and unsuited for development.

The site rises gently up, away from the A357 main road towards the housing on its southern boundary. As such it still could be potentially prominent in the approach to Newton from the west. The road front is defined by a row of mature ash trees that reduce the prominence of this site and should be maintained in the scheme (and ideally strengthened by other species in the event that the ash trees become victims of ash die-back). Development here should largely be set back from the road, and designed at a relatively low density in keeping with the village character.

At about 0.4ha in size, the site could have room for about 8 dwellings at a density of 20dph. This is below the current threshold in the Local Plan where a mix of house types including affordable housing would generally be required. This site would suit the inclusion of what we are calling ‘aspirational homes’ - high quality larger homes, incorporating flexible / adaptable layouts for home working (see Policy 3 for definition).

Policy 42. Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse

The development of land adjoining Barton Farmhouse (as shown on Map 3), will be supported for housing provided:

- Suitable vehicular access can be provided from the A357, where practical including measures that will reduce traffic speeds, which should be designed in the local vernacular to be in keeping with the character of this important approach to the town*
- The frontage onto the A357 retains the existing mature trees and includes additional planting to retain the semi-rural character of this section of the road*
- The layout and design of the development is in keeping with the local vernacular character of the village, appropriate to its location at the entrance to the village, where development is typically more dispersed and softened by planting*

Conversion of rural buildings

Meetings with representatives from the farming community highlighted the desire to have greater flexibility in the re-use of former agricultural buildings for housing, including the option for live-work units. There was general consensus in subsequent consultations that the Neighbourhood Plan should support such conversions and potentially allow modest extensions and alterations where such changes would make a positive impact.

National changes to the current planning system do allow small, redundant farm buildings to be re-used, for uses such as farm shops, offices, workshops, storage and even as housing or holiday accommodation, under permitted development rights (without the need for a planning application). There are limits on what changes can be made – linked to the size of the building, its structural condition, its current (or last) use, and whether its location makes a change of use impractical or undesirable (for example, if it is located next to a slurry pit). There are no rights to extend the buildings or provide a garden area if there is no associated land, and any applications would be scrutinised through the normal planning process. It is possible that the Government may relax some of the restrictions further, as these conversions are proving popular in general and are seen as helping support the rural economy.

Given the changing national policy context, any Neighbourhood Plan policies aimed at providing a local context for what might be acceptable is likely to be overtaken in the short term. However, there are some key principles which have emerged from our research, reflecting the potential for such schemes to strengthen the viability of farming enterprises, and to actively improve local character. As there are permitted development rights that would allow either housing or employment re-use, flexibility to allow live/work uses is also considered acceptable in principle, and would be supported under the following policy.

Policy 43. Re-use of redundant agricultural buildings

The re-use of, and minor extensions and alterations to, agricultural buildings that are of permanent and sound construction, but are no longer suitable in the context of modern farming techniques, should be supported where it can be demonstrated that the change of use would support the on-going viability of an established farming enterprise. As a point of principle, any physical changes should result in a more appropriate design of building in keeping with the predominant character of the area and its positive features, and any extension or use of the curtilage should not be visually intrusive and should be appropriate to the nature and scale of the intended use and the rural character of the area

11.6 Changes to the settlement boundary

As part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the settlement boundaries adopted in the Local Plan have been checked to make sure they still provide an appropriate division between the built-up areas and surrounding countryside.

Under Policy 2 we have modified the previous settlement boundary around Newton and the Town Bridge area to take account of results of our work on important local green spaces, and recognise the less developed character of the area around Town Bridge. The settlement boundary has also been changed around Rolls Mill, as this is a specific employment allocation and would not otherwise be considered appropriate for infill development. A more modest change has been made to the settlement boundary at Hillcrest Close so that it more closely follows the existing field boundaries. In summary, the main changes are listed here:

- > Exclude the areas around Sturminster Mill, the remains of Sturminster Castle and Castle Farm, Sturminster Newton Town Cemetery and the site adjoining the Bull Tavern (which is covered by a site specific allocation)
- > Exclude Rolls Mill (North Dorset Business Park)
- > Exclude corner of field adjoining Hillcrest Close

We have also considered whether the remaining hamlets such as Broad Oak, Glue Hill and Bagber should also have settlement boundaries but concluded that, because of the nature and character of the settlements and their surroundings, they should remain in the countryside for the purposes of the general policy of development restraint.