



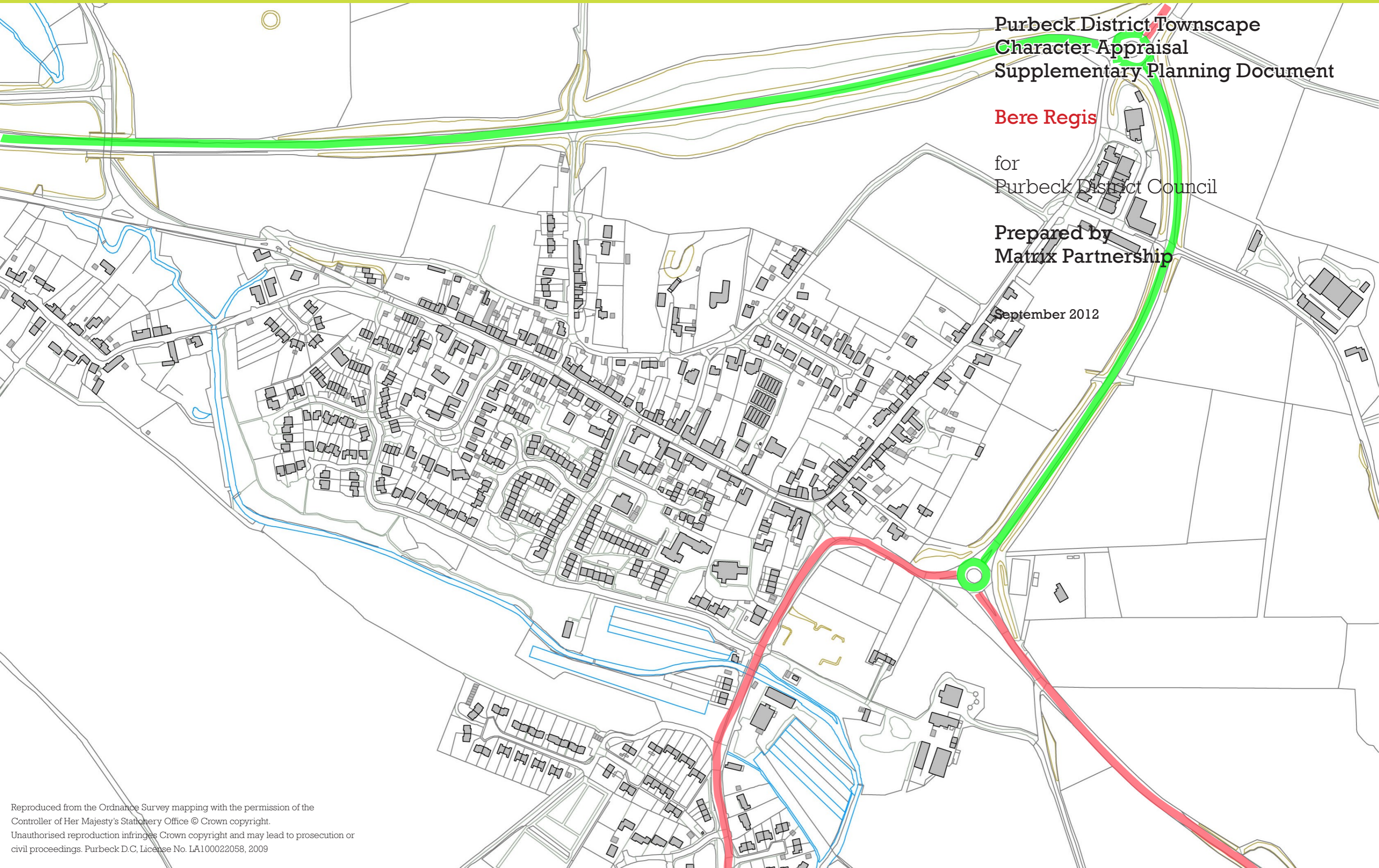
**Purbeck District Townscape
Character Appraisal
Supplementary Planning Document**

Bere Regis

for
Purbeck District Council

Prepared by
Matrix Partnership

September 2012





**Purbeck District Townscape
Character Appraisal for:**

Bere Regis

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Bere Regis

01.1

Introduction

“Character appraisal means understanding and evaluating the significance of a place, and drawing out the management implications so that its significance can be protected and opportunities for change identified” (Power of Place, English Heritage, 2000)







1.1.1 This Townscape Character Appraisal has been undertaken in recognition of the importance and value of townscape form, design and character in planning for and managing development, and in providing places with distinctive identity. The importance of taking into account the character of different areas is recognised as a core planning principle in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

“Characterisation attempts to define what makes a place special. This allows an estimate to be made of how much change, and what sorts, a place can absorb without losing its distinctive qualities” (Conservation Bulletin 47, English Heritage)

1.1.2 This report provides a basis for understanding existing townscape characteristics in terms of form, function, distinctive features, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and will provide a readily accessible source of information to both Local Authority officers and members of the public. The Appraisal formed part of the evidence base for policies in the Purbeck District Local Plan, and was subject to a period of public consultation from 1st June to 30th July 2010. The appraisal was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) by Purbeck District Council on 11th September 2012.

1.1.3 This appraisal supports Policy D: Design within the Purbeck District Local Plan. It should be taken into consideration in the design of new development, and forms a material consideration for the Council in the determination of planning applications.

1.1.4 There are nine reports in this series of Townscape Character Appraisals. The following towns and villages have been appraised:

- 1. Wareham 
- 2. North Wareham 
- 3. Swanage 
- 4. Upton 
- 5. Bere Regis 
- 6. Wool 
- 7. Bovington 
- 8. Corfe Castle 
- 9. Lytchett Matravers 



Map of Purbeck identifying the settlements included in the study



Bere Regis Introduction 01.2

Purpose: What is a Townscape Character Appraisal?

1.2.1 A Townscape Character Appraisal is a document that identifies the different qualities that make up the character of a town or village and what makes it special or distinctive from somewhere else. There are also significant variations in character within the settlements themselves.

1.2.2 Its purpose is to identify the factors that influence how a place looks and feels and to consider how these contribute to the character of the settlement.

1.2.3 Some areas within a town or village may be of special historic or architectural interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance – these will be designated Conservation Areas and subject to a separate process of Conservation Area Character Appraisal.

1.2.4 Developing a better understanding of the character of a place is essential in the preparation of planning policies and in the sensitive management of change and development within Purbeck's towns and villages. Without a clear appreciation of what makes a place special it can be difficult to ensure that proposals for any new development respect their context and can be accommodated in a satisfactory way.

1.2.5 A Townscape Character Appraisal will therefore assist in safeguarding local character and can be used to ensure sensitive, high quality new design where development does occur.

1.2.6 Consideration of character can also be used to identify the potential of different areas to accommodate new development, as well as influencing specific design policies.

Report Structure

1.2.7 The report is structured into 5 parts as follows:

Part 01. Introduction

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

Part 02. Town Context

This examines the geographical context, landscape setting and historic background of the settlement.

Part 03. Town Analysis

This part analyses the urban form and organisation of the settlement, and it examines the different aspects of the town or village itself through a range of different topics, such as building height, landscape and open spaces, street patterns etc.

Part 04. Character Types

This part of the report draws on the findings of Parts 02 and 03 and identifies different character types which together make up the different places of the settlement.

Part 05. Townscape Analysis

This provides an overview of the key townscape characteristics for each settlement.

Methodology

1.2.8 The methodology used for the Townscape Character Appraisal for each settlement involved the following stages:

- Desk Study;
- On-site survey;
- Stakeholder consultation;
- Final report.

1.2.9 Desk Study

The desk study gathers together relevant information from previous recorded work. This includes:

- Purbeck District Council's digitised layered mapping (including items such as up-to-date mapping of the town, contours, conservation areas, landscape designations etc.).
- Background publications (such as conservation area appraisals, the Employment Land Review, Landscape Character Assessment, Parish/Community Plans, local history publications etc.).

1.2.10 On-Site Survey

The on-site survey involved gathering fundamentally original information on those features not readily found in available sources, that contribute to the make up and character of each settlement.

1.2.11 A photographic record was taken of different areas within each town or village. Information was also gathered on topics such as building heights, land use, open spaces and landscape, areas of high and low activity etc. This information was subsequently digitally mapped for inclusion within these reports.

1.2.12 On-site survey work considered both the broader, more strategic aspects for each town or village, such as its setting within the wider landscape and its interface between town and country, as well as the identification of individual 'character types' within each settlement. This included some of the more detailed aspects, such as building form and architectural features.

1.2.13 During the survey work care was taken to ensure that proper consideration was given to all parts of each town or village, not just the older or more historic areas, which are often found within conservation areas. It is important that the whole of each town or village should be given due consideration.

1.2.14 Stakeholder Consultation

Two public consultation events were held for key stakeholders associated with each settlement. These were important for gathering information on local views of the appraisal work. In particular, these events concentrated on the issue of potential change and opportunities for accommodation of new development within these settlements:

One event was held for the three towns:

- Wareham/ North Wareham;
- Swanage;
- Upton.

A second event was held for the villages:

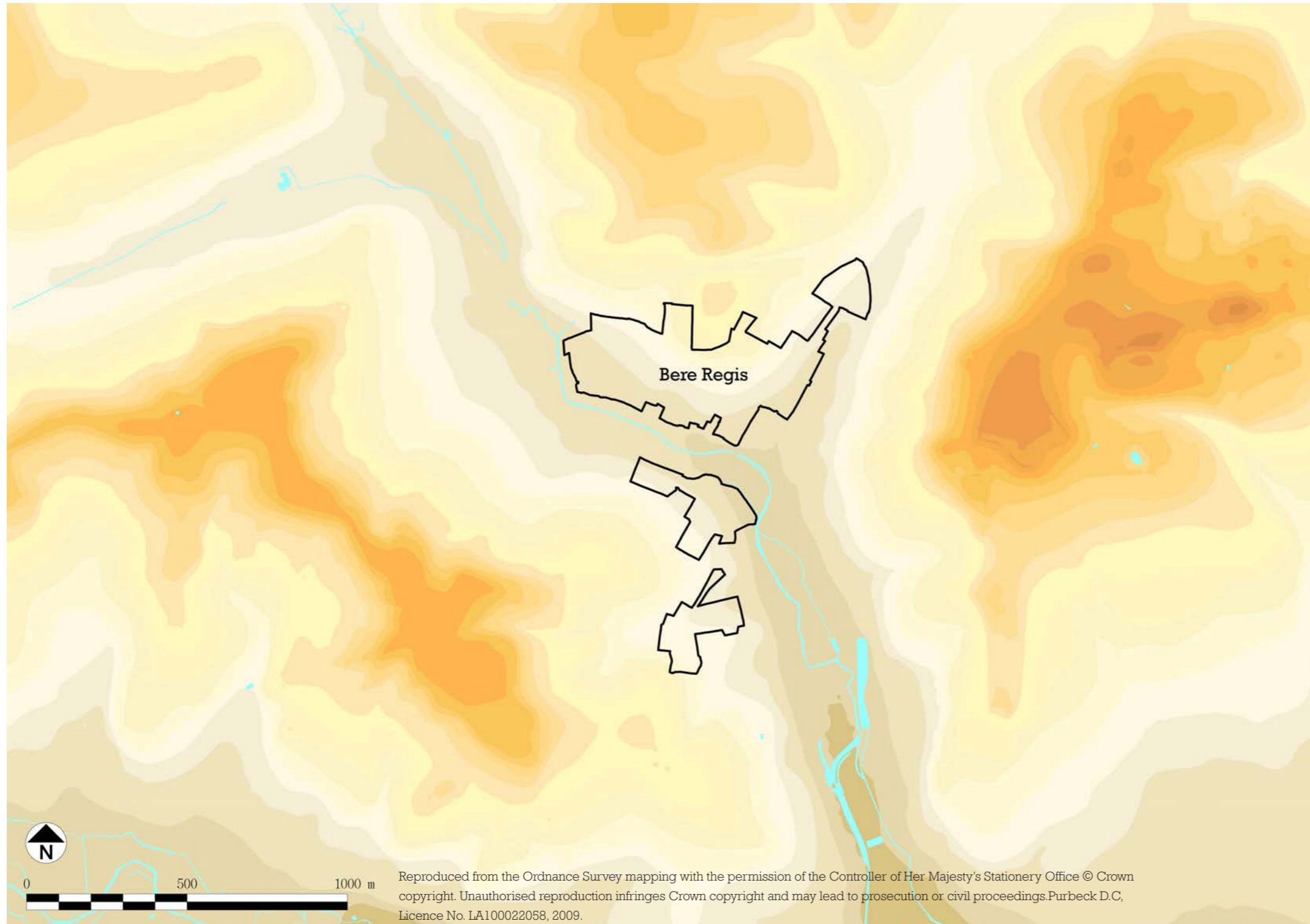
- Bere Regis;
- Wool;
- Bovington;
- Corfe Castle;
- Lytchett Matravers.

1.2.15 The report for each settlement combines the findings of the desk study and on-site survey, through the use of maps, photographs, written descriptions and analysis.

1.2.16 Following the stakeholder consultation events the feedback received was assessed and where appropriate, changes were incorporated into the final reports.



Bere Regis Village context 02.1 Geographical context



2.1.1 The geographical context map shows the topography of landscape around Bere Regis. The main body of the village is situated in the northern apex of a junction of two valleys. The principal valley contains a small stream whilst the other valley to the east contains no watercourse, typical of chalkland. Two smaller outlying parts of the village are situated on the opposite side of the stream on gently rising ground.



Steeply rising ground in northern part of the village gives rise to many incidental views towards surrounding countryside.



The site of main crossroads within the village at the junction of North Street and West Street. Through traffic now follows the bypass, avoiding the village altogether.

2.1.2 Bere Regis is situated approximately midway within a triangle defined by Dorchester to the west, Poole to the east, and Blandford Forum to the north. The settlement has no strategic or defensive foundation, like Wareham or Corfe Castle, but it is in essence a rural village situated within its own agricultural hinterland, substantially expanded by late 20th century development.

2.1.3 In geological terms, Bere Regis lies on the boundary between extensive sand and gravel deposits to the south and chalk deposits to the north, and these give rise to two very different types of landscape.

2.1.4 The sand and gravel deposits extend towards Dorchester in one direction and Poole Harbour and the coast in the other direction, whilst the chalk uplands form part of an even larger deposit that includes Cranbourne Chase and Salisbury Plain.

2.1.5 Although the landscape has a gently rolling character, some upper slopes of the hills in and around Bere Regis are in fact quite steep and there is a change of level of about 40 metres between the uppermost parts of the village on Barrow Hill and the low-lying parts along the stream. Within the village itself, the slopes are very pronounced north of West Street, and this gives rise to many incidental views across the valley to the south.

2.1.6 The village grew up along roads adjacent to the principal road junction with connections to Dorchester, Blandford Forum, Wimborne and Poole to the east and Wool to the south. These roads have historically influenced the form of the village, though the centre is now by-passed by the A35(T) Tolpuddle/Bere Regis bypass in the early 1990s.

Today the village serves as a base for commuters as well as people working in and around the village, and has a large population of retired people. The village retains a degree of through traffic avoiding other more congested routes to Wool and Weymouth.

KEY POINTS

- Bere Regis is an essentially rural village but was significantly expanded in the late 20th century;
- The village lies on the boundary of underlying sand and gravel and chalk deposits;
- The landscape is gently rolling but there are some locally steep slopes in the northern part of the village;
- The village is situated along principal roads adjacent to the main junction;
- The principal road, the A35, now bypasses the village.



Bere Regis Village context 02.2 Landscape setting



Aerial photograph courtesy of Purbeck District Council - Getmapping.com

2.2.1 The landscape setting of Bere Regis is an important aspect of the morphology and character of the village. The steeply graded nature of some of the land has already been noted, and situated on a south-facing slope, the village enjoys a bright, sunny position with many glimpsed views towards the countryside beyond. Views back towards the village demonstrate well its rural setting and close relationship to topography and vegetation, and although vegetation within and around the village assimilates many of the buildings into the landscape, the steep slopes on which the northern part is built make the village quite prominent in many local views from the south.

2.2.2 Reference to the adjacent plan shows the village situated substantially on the southern side of Barrow Hill, north of the Bere Stream, but an arm of development extends south across the valley along Southbrook and Rye Hill on the Wool Road.

2.2.3 To the south-west of the village across the valley, Black Hill dominates the village, and the heath and scattered trees on its summit make a constant point of reference on the skyline. To the east, Woodbury Hill with its ancient earthworks defines the setting of the village in this direction. Although the summit of the hill now appears quite wooded, the skyline is fortunately dominated by the rounded forms of native deciduous trees despite the extensive coniferous plantations of Bere Wood (an extension of Wareham Forest) beyond.

2.2.4 Between the two hills, the village looks down the valley of the Bere Stream that is a northern branch of the River Piddle that eventually flows into Poole Harbour east of Wareham. To the north, the valley of the Bere Stream is well-defined, extending north-west through the chalk downs towards Milborne St. Andrew, Milton Abbas and beyond. Within and to the south of Bere Regis, an active watercress growing industry has been established, utilising the pure water of the chalk stream. Although the watercress beds are not particularly prominent, and there are no associated buildings of any note, this activity does maintain a sense of connection between the village and the countryside, particularly at a time when the historic associations between rural villages and agriculture have been so comprehensively broken.

2.2.5 One of the defining features of Bere Regis is the group of mature trees that is situated above the highest point of the village on Barrow Hill. Although the village

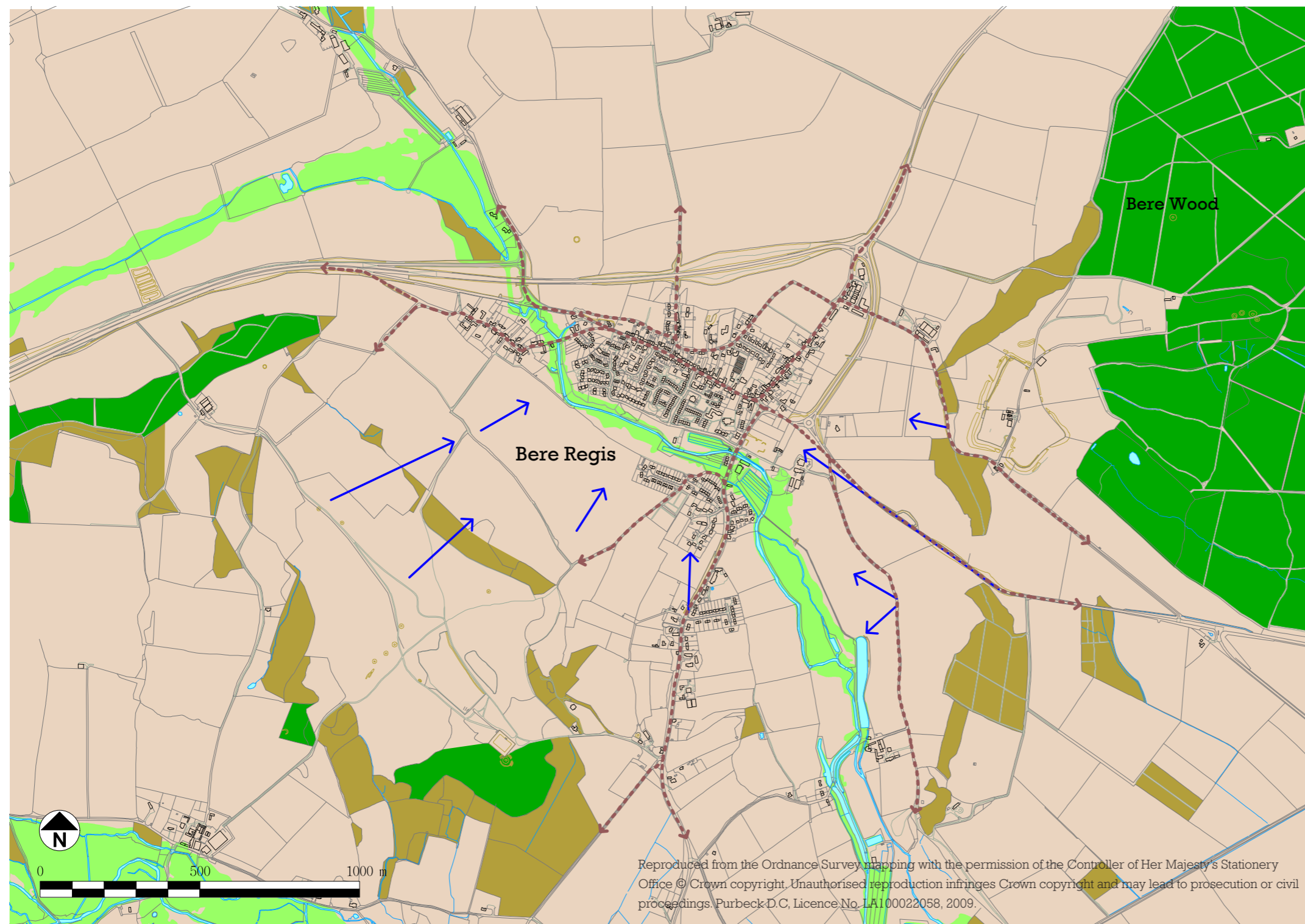
can be quite visible in wider views, these trees ensure that development is always seen contained below a treed skyline, and their size helps to reduce the apparent scale of built development itself.







2.2.6 Other vegetation important to the setting of the village is the substantial belt of trees and other vegetation situated along the banks of the Bere Stream. This creates a very well defined edge to the settlement that plays an important role in visually containing some quite extensive and rather suburban development within this otherwise rural setting.

2.2.7 To the north, the substantial cutting and embankments of the bypass do much to sever the sense of connection between the village and the chalk downs, notably Butt Lane that connected to an extensive network of drove roads. The bypass has also resulted in a loss of rural lanes connecting North of the village. However the aspect of Bere Regis is concentrated southwards and therefore the effect is much less damaging than might otherwise be the case. It should be noted that whilst the bypass has had the very desirable effect of removing the imposition of heavy traffic from the village, Bere Regis has lost much of its activity and passing trade derived from through traffic that it would traditionally have had. In particular, North Street is much changed, no doubt to the satisfaction of residents, but for a predominantly rural lane it does end rather unsatisfactorily at an industrial estate and service station.

KEY POINTS

- The landscape setting is important in defining the morphology and character of the village;
- There are many glimpsed views towards open countryside from the village;
- Watercress beds provide a sense of connection to the countryside;
- The group of mature trees situated on Barrow Hill is a defining feature of the village;
- Bere Stream and adjacent vegetation are important in defining the south-western edge of the village.



-  River/water feature
-  Floodplain
-  Raised land above floodplains
-  Mixed and deciduous woodland
-  Historic route
-  Principal views towards village from surrounding area

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Bere Regis
Village context
02.3
Landscape setting images



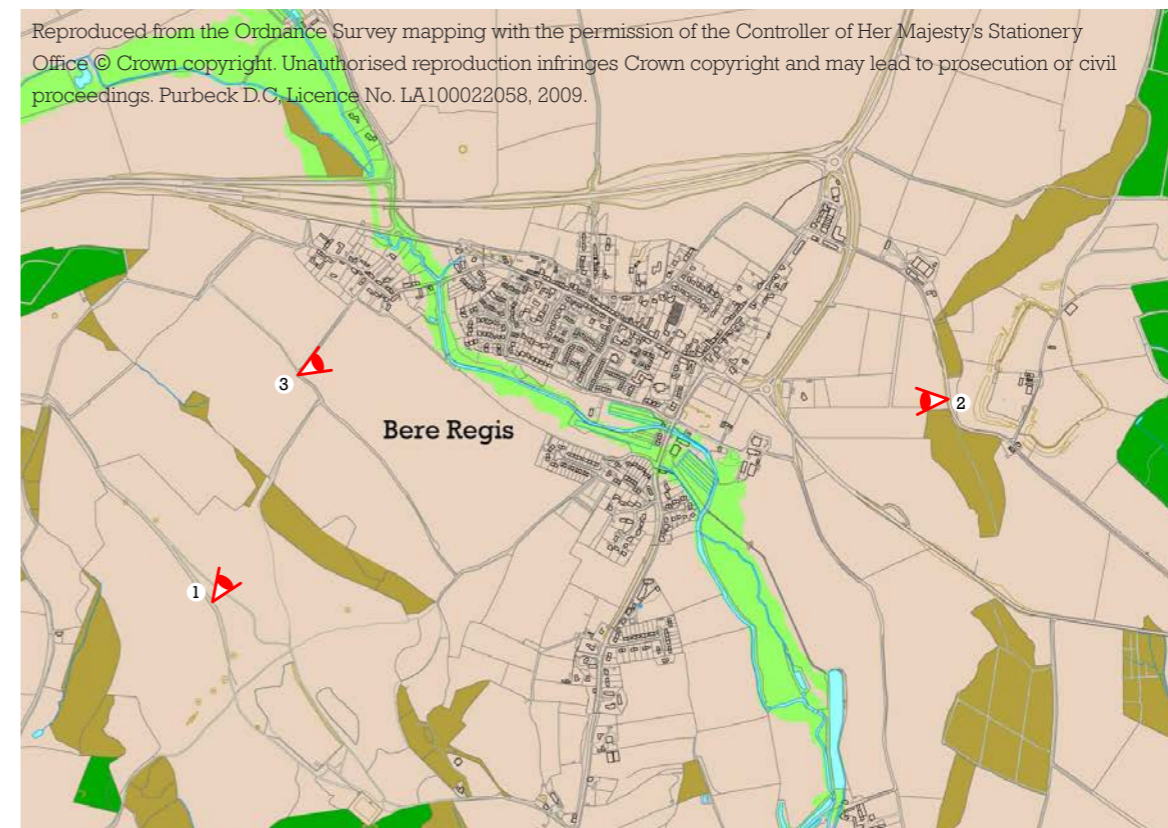
1. **Panorama from Bere Heath.** The importance of the group of trees on the summit of Barrow Hill, immediately above the village, can be appreciated in this view. Note Woodbury Hill at centre right and the rolling chalk landscape beyond at centre and left.



2. **Panorama looking west from Woodbury Hill.** The main body of the village and church can be seen in the centre of the view, with the two separate parts of the village situated on the south side of Bere Stream to the left with the land rising to Bere heath beyond. The the right of the view, the A35 bypass is concealed from sight within a substantial cutting.



3. **The south-western edge of the village.** It is clearly demarcated and contained by Bere Stream and vegetation in its vicinity. The line of trees and scrub on the far side of the field defines the line of the stream.



Landscape map indicating the positions where photographs were taken.



Bere Regis Village context 02.4 Historic background



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OS 1902

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Bere Regis

Village context

02.5

Village history

2.5.1 Nowadays Bere Regis appears to be simply a large village positioned at the busy junction of the A31 and A35, but the settlement's history extends back at least 1000 years. Even before this time, from about 1900 BC, there is much local evidence of ancient civilisation in the form of the Iron Age hillfort (settlement) on Woodbury Hill and Bronze Age barrows, the nearest of which is just northwest of the village at Barrow Hill. As is the case with so many other English villages and towns, Bere Regis' present position occupies the site of a small Saxon settlement probably dating back to the eighth century. The customary form of a Saxon village would have been a church, a manor house, a farm, and some timber and thatch cottages. In the case of Bere Regis it is known that a manor house existed around Court Green, next to the present Court Farm, by 978, adjacent to which the village became established.

2.5.2 The full name Bere Regis is fairly recent and for its early life the village was just known as Bere. Regis is thought to have been added after 1300 and comes from the Latin meaning 'belonging to the King', presumably because the village was property of the crown, as a Royal Manor, from Saxon times until 1259. The spelling of Bere varied until the early 20th century as did the theories of the name's derivation. The most accepted explanation is that it comes from the old English word 'Bere' meaning undergrowth, scrub or copse. This gives clues as to the character of the locality, which must have included areas of marshy copse either side of Bere Stream.

2.5.3 By the 13th century Bere had expanded into a town, with a weekly market on wednesdays that continued to be held until the 1860s. Even now, thursday is 'early closing' in Bere Regis as was traditional the day after market day. The manor house, already present by 978, was extended considerably during the early 1200s, when it was frequented by King John. It changed to private ownership during the mid-13th century and by 1274 became the residence of the Turbervilles. This family later became the foundation of Thomas Hardy's novel Tess of the d'Urbervilles. With extensive modification it was passed through the family until 1733 by which time the male line had died out. Although the house was still standing in 1803, it had fallen into disrepair and was entirely lost by 1844.

2.5.4 There were a series of fires in Bere Regis, the largest of which happened in 1633, 1717 and,

most crucially, in 1788. This fire broke out at night destroying the Vicarage and some 40 houses as well as farm buildings and outhouses. The extent of the fire's path ran from just north of the parish church up to the old Vicarage, and from Royal Oak to 30 West Street on its east-west axis. This was a densely built-up area prior to the fire, with closely grouped thatched cottages, especially along West Street, and when the fire began, this sealed the town's fate. The result today is that very little survives from before this period and after the loss of the manor house in the mid 19th century, the main historical relic in Bere Regis is its parish church.

2.5.5 The parish church, having survived the fires of Bere, remains today as a patchwork of period styles, virtue of having been added to from the 11th century until the 16th century. The Saxon church, constructed mainly in timber, is thought to have stood on the same site as the current church. The 14th century saw extensive work carried out by the Turberville family on the south aisle, used as their family chapel with burial vault below, as well as extensions on the west wall. The tower dates from the 16th century. The church was in a bad condition by 1870 as a result of the decline of rural prosperity and a waning population.

2.5.6 Reference to the historic maps opposite shows the village strongly concentrated along the main road in West Street and North Street and forming some tight and consistent frontages along the back of the pavement. Brick is much used material in Bere Regis and much of this must have come from the former Blackhill Brickworks that used the local Reading Clay. The 1902 map shows only very limited development on Barrow Hill and south of the stream at Southbrook. A small group of buildings is situated west of the stream at Shitterton, but it is not included within the settlement boundary.

2.5.7 The recent map shows considerable expansion behind the earlier frontage, extending north up Barrow Hill and south in the area between West Street and Bere Stream. This latter development is of ubiquitous suburban character, evident from the map by its layout, but also in built form and materials, with little or no reference to local character. A few irregular and small semi-detached residential developments have occurred south of the stream which is now bordered by watercress beds.

2.5.8 The tight frontage onto the main A35 road through the village, and particularly at the crossroads, led to considerable congestion and intrusion which resulted in the construction of the bypass to the north of the village involving some considerable earthworks.



Some densely vegetated margins of Bere Stream reflect the original old English meaning of the name Bere.



Watercress beds adjacent to Bere Stream are now a feature of the village.

KEY POINTS

- Bere Regis is of Saxon foundation dating to the 8th century;
- The village had developed into a small town by the 13th century with its own weekly market;
- The manor house at Court Green had disappeared by 1844;
- Bere Regis suffered major fires in 1633, 1717 and 1788. Few buildings from before 1788 now exist in the village;
- Historically development was concentrated along the main road frontage on West Street and North Street;
- Significant 20th century development has taken place north and south of West Street, mostly of ubiquitous suburban character;
- The village has been bypassed to the north in recent years.

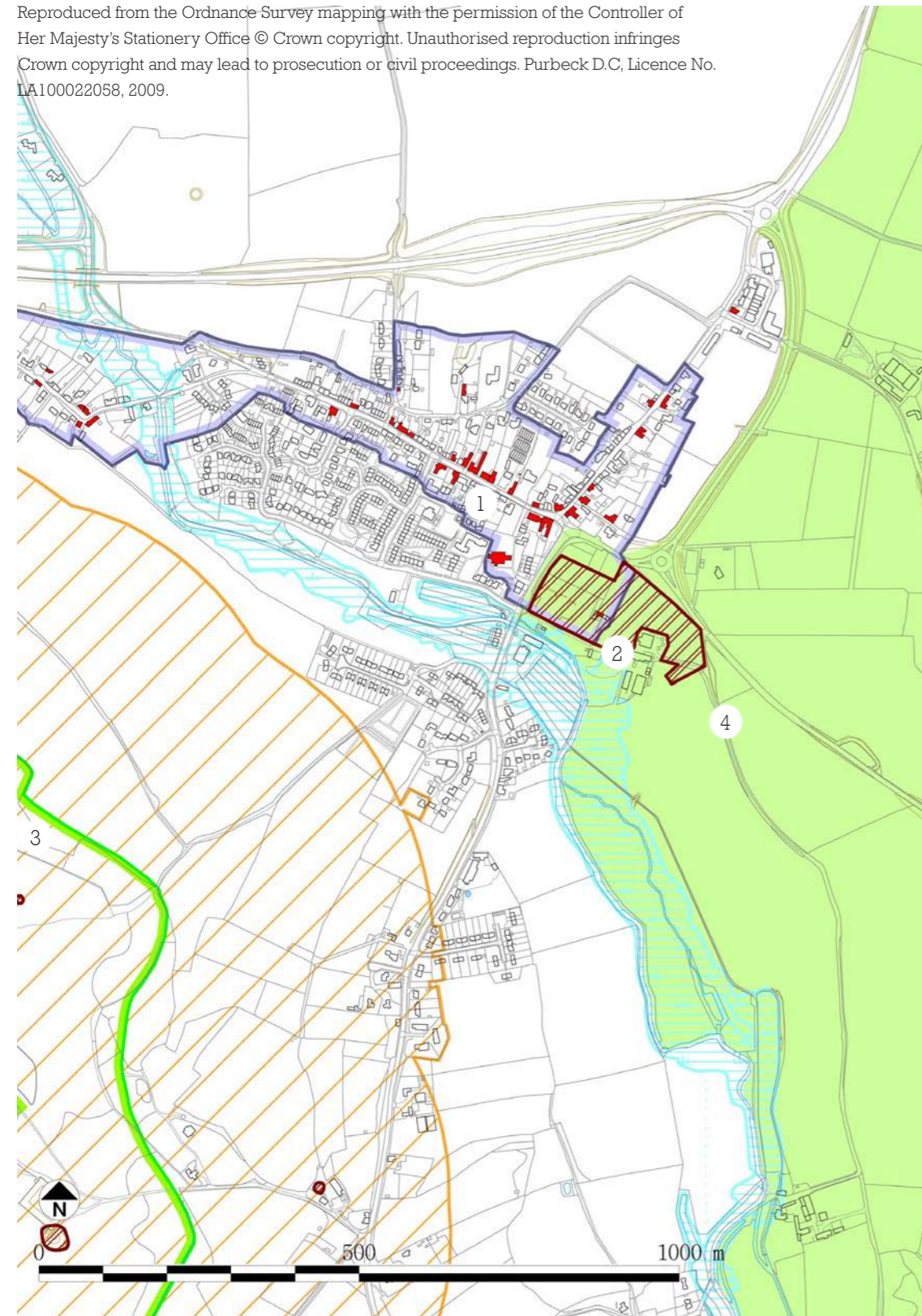


The parish church



Bere Regis Village context 02.6 Planning Designations

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-  **Listed building**
-  **Green belt**
-  **SAM (Scheduled Ancient Monument)**
-  **Conservation area**
-  **Heathland 400m buffer zone**
-  **SSSI**
-  **Floodplain**

2.6.1 Bere Regis is situated in open countryside within an attractive landscape setting although the majority of the surrounding area is not the subject of specific landscape designations. However, the land to the east of the village is identified as Green Belt. This designation requires the openness of the Green Belt be protected from inappropriate forms of development.

2.6.2 A large Conservation Area encompasses the older northern half of the village and includes the neighbouring, but separate settlement of Shitterton to the west of the Bere Stream. The Conservation Area defines those areas of architectural or historic interest, which are considered desirable to be preserved or enhanced. Areas of modern housing are deliberately excluded from this designation. Within the Conservation Area are a range of listed buildings which are themselves of architectural or historic interest and which are protected by law. These are concentrated mainly on the West Street and North Street, but also include the fine church.

2.6.3 A number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) are also present within the vicinity of the village. These include several Barrows located to the south on Black Hill, on the far side of the valley from the village. The largest of the three SAMs is the site of the former Manor House just east of the village and which was known to have had associations with King John in the 13th century, although no remains above ground are present today.

2.6.4 The area of Bere Heath to the southwest of Bere Regis is identified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for ecological reasons and surrounding this area is a Heathland Special Protection Area buffer zone that prevents most forms of new residential development within 400m of the heathland, in order to protect this important habitats.

2.6.5 The low lying land situated along the river valley of the Bere Stream is an area known to flood and as such is identified as floodplain. This represents a considerable constraint on most forms new of development within this zone.



1. Much of the village has been designated as a conservation area including the area around the Drax Arms in West Street.



2. The area around the site of the former Manor House is defined as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.



3. Bere Heath has been identified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest that, as heathland, has a protected buffer zone.



4. Floodplain along the course of Bere Stream constrains the extent of Bere Regis and separates development at Southbrook from the main body of the village.

KEY POINTS

- The majority of countryside surrounding Bere Regis is not protected by landscape designations, although land to the east of the village is designated as Green Belt;
- The original village centre is an area of special historic and architectural interest and is designated as a conservation area;
- Designated listed buildings are concentrated mainly along the West Street and North Street;
- The Bere Stream river valley encompasses an area of floodplain;
- Bere Heath is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is protected by a Special Protection Area buffer zone which extends close to the south western edge of the village.