

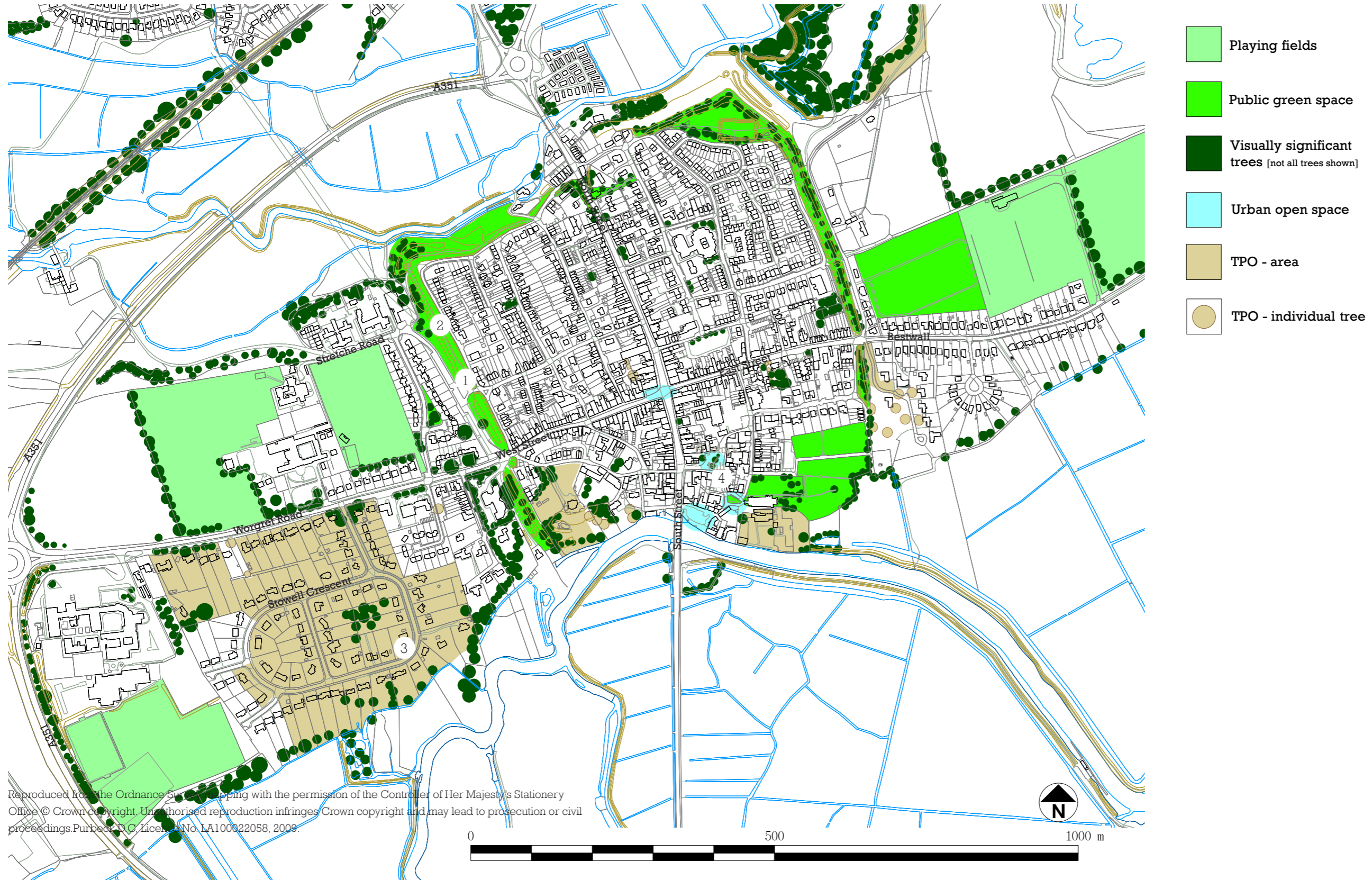


Wareham

Town analysis

03.5

Landscape and open spaces





1. The town 'walls' are one of the few publicly accessible green areas in the town and are an important recreational resource.



2. Trees can be an important feature in the skyline and add interest to an otherwise urban environment.



3. Garden vegetation makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of many streets.



4. St. John's Hill Square is one of a series of important urban spaces located in the south-east quarter of the town.

3.5.1 Wareham displays a relatively hard urban landscape with very few open green spaces within the 'walls'. Here there are no public parks and publicly accessible green spaces are confined to a few churchyards. Also the tight grain and near-continuous frontages of the centre limit opportunities for planting. Trees are generally seen at a distance in views along the central streets or glimpsed above rooflines. The group of trees around the entrance to the town on North Street is visually important in views along this road, providing visual relief and closing the view. Similarly, the large tree next to auction rooms on East Street dominates views along this road and indicates how individual trees can make a significant contribution to the townscape. Elsewhere in the central area modest setbacks and front gardens provide some space for hedges and occasional small trees. In addition, the personalisation of properties with planted pots or climbing plants make a modest contribution to greening the area.

3.5.2 The Cross, the Quay, Church Green and St. John's Hill square are distinct and identifiable hard urban spaces of considerable character which contribute to Wareham's unique identity.

3.5.3 Beyond the historic centre, residential areas display a surprising amount of vegetation for what is a relatively dense urban environment. Front gardens and small gaps between buildings allow space for planting. The enclosed nature of the streets ensures that even modest planting has greater prominence in the street-scene. Plants overhanging the road and climbers are also important to the character of these roads.

3.5.4 The principal open space in Wareham is that of the town 'walls' whose steep grassy banks and treed slopes provide a green path around the old town. The character of the 'walls' varies from steep open banks to more intimate areas enclosed by trees. The ancient 'walls' are a unique feature to Wareham and an important informal recreational route for both residents and visitors.

3.5.5 Beyond the town 'walls' to the east and west, modern lower density estate development has significantly more vegetation which tends to dominate views along these streets.

3.5.6 Looking towards Wareham from the east and west, intervening tree lines and hedgerows restrict

clear views of the town. From the south, open water meadows allow more distant views, but buildings are seen behind and amongst trees and vegetation creating a pleasing approach to the town.

3.5.7 In contrast, the approach to the northern entrance is dominated by the raised and partly treed 'walls' that overlook the River Piddle. Seen across the water meadows the skyline is partly punctuated by rooflines where gaps in the tree cover appear.

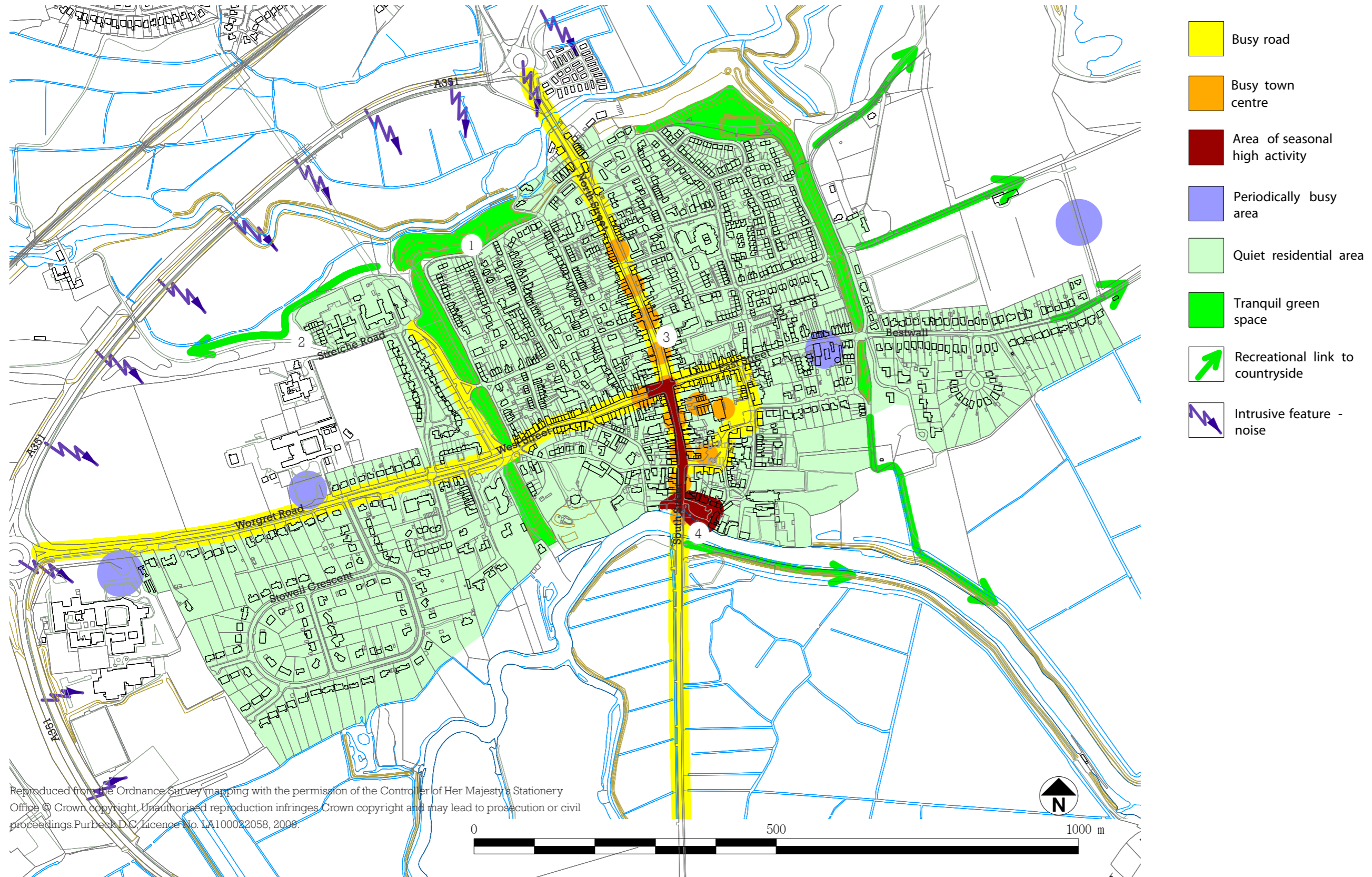
3.5.8 Beyond the town 'walls' the principal open spaces in the town are the playing fields and allotments located to the north of Bestwall. These are large areas but they are generally well contained by lines of mature trees. Similarly, the school playing fields to the west of the town are also visually contained by mature trees providing a soft edge and a gradual interface between town and country.

KEY POINTS

- The town centre is a relatively hard urban environment with few open green spaces;
- Trees form a backdrop in wider views of the town;
- Beyond the town centre, front garden vegetation contributes significantly to the greenery and relief to the streetscene in an otherwise dense urban environment;
- The Cross, the Quay, Church Green and St. John's Hill square are important urban spaces contributing significantly to the character and identity of the town;
- The town 'walls' themselves are an important green space for Wareham;
- Outside the 'walls', lower density residential areas have a more vegetated appearance;
- The most extensive public open spaces are playing fields located outside the 'walls';
- The open water meadows are important in defining the approaches to the town.



Wareham Town analysis 03.6 Vitality and tranquillity





1. The ancient lanes and town 'walls' create a peaceful residential setting with an intimate atmosphere.



2. The north 'walls' and the tranquil surroundings of Wareham are compromised by the sight and noise of traffic on the bypass.



3. The approaches to the town centre and the area around the Cross are well trafficked roads and a busy pedestrian area, creating vitality and a bustling atmosphere.



4. The Quay is an important focal point for visitors and a location for periodic activities such as markets and events.

3.6.1 An interesting aspect of Wareham's character is the disposition of areas of vitality and tranquillity within the town. It is also important to appreciate that the levels of activity associated with such places varies according to the time of day and season.

3.6.2 Wareham has distinct areas of activity which generate a sense of vitality and vibrancy. The main focus of activity is associated with the commercial core of the town along North and South Streets, part of West Street, the area around Sainsbury's supermarket and Wareham Quay. These provide destinations that can generate high levels of activity at various times during the day, week and season. The main roads are the historic focus of activity and remain so today. They are of course also principal thoroughfares for traffic, and although the traffic can be intrusive, it also generates a sense of bustle and vibrancy associated with a successful town centre.

3.6.3 Wareham Quay is an area often busy with vehicles using the space for parking, but its attractive location also draws visitors during the holiday season and weekends. The river itself also provides an additional source of activity, as do the auction rooms in East Street.

3.6.4 The approaches to North and West Streets are generally well trafficked roads which create a sense of vitality, although not being destinations in their own right the activity is more transient in nature. The schools located on Worgret Road to the west of the town and the recreation grounds are locations which also generate activity. The schools can generate considerable movement at the beginning and end of the school day, and pedestrians filter to and from the school, populating the usually quiet surrounding residential streets. The play area and recreation grounds also draw visitors at different times of the day and week.

3.6.5 Beyond the main commercial centre and busy approach roads, there are quieter residential streets. Those within the town 'walls' appear to generate a surprising degree of pedestrian activity, as people walk to and from the town centre. This is not to the extent that they feel bustling, but they do retain a low level of activity. The absence of pavements in some areas effectively turns the streets into 'shared-surface' areas that require pedestrians to walk in the road.

3.6.6 The modern 20th century developments along Bestwall and the Worgret Road are quieter. These roads do not link to adjoining areas and consequently do not generate through movements.

3.6.7 The green banks of the town 'walls' are an important recreational resource providing a pleasant walk with fine views over the rooftops and surrounding countryside around the western, northern and eastern boundaries of the town. Although development extends beyond the 'walls' in some places, there is a distinct sense of connection to the countryside beyond with some good footpath links to the east.

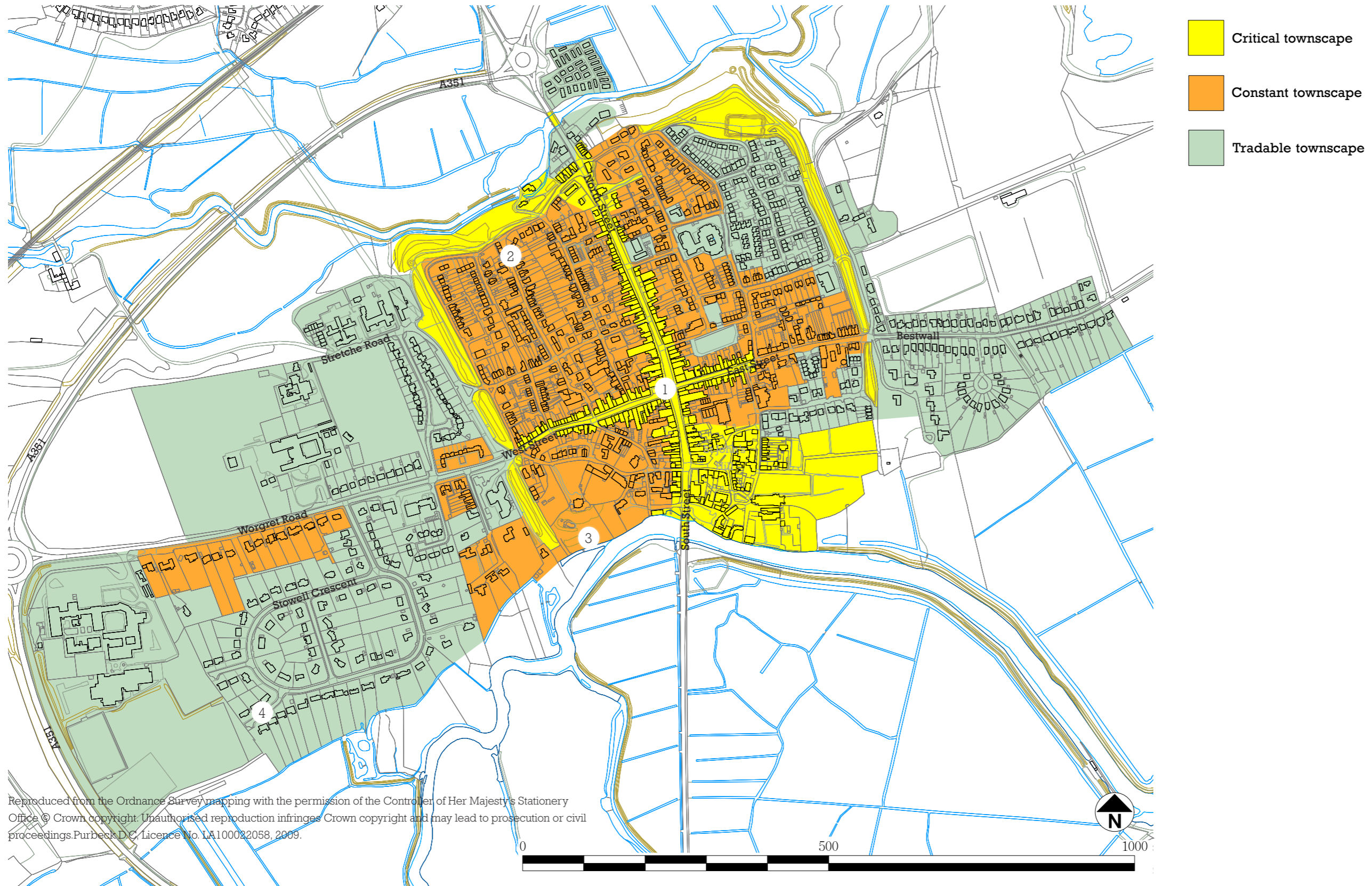
3.6.8 Along the northern part of the 'walls', much of the walk is directly affected by the town bypass. This is a source of both traffic noise and visual intrusion that diminishes the quality of the walk, including the sense of contiguity with countryside beyond. There are two footpath connections eastwards from the town, but both are similarly blighted by the road and, to a lesser degree, by the railway.

KEY POINTS

- The town centre and the Quay are busy areas often with a bustling atmosphere;
- Wareham Quay provides an area for markets and is also an area of seasonal tourist interest;
- North and South Streets are main routes into Wareham and often have a sense of vitality;
- Schools and playing fields generate period activity throughout the day and week;
- Residential areas within the 'walls' are generally quiet although, their proximity to the town centre generates a notable amount of pedestrian movement;
- Estate developments outside the 'walls' are very quiet areas with low levels of activity;
- The town 'walls' provide an important area of tranquillity, although this is compromised by the bypass along the north 'walls'.



Wareham Town Analysis 03.7 Townscape quality



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1. Prime quality historic townscape centred around the Cross in the old town.



2. Residential areas within the 'walls' are generally of high quality and are considered to be areas of positive townscape.



3. Mature trees and vegetation along the southern edges of the town soften the visual impact of the built environment and create a gentle transition between town and country.



4. The majority of the town located outside the 'walls' is of neutral quality, being of a pleasant but rather ubiquitous style, rather than distinctive to Wareham.

3.7.1 The townscape quality of Wareham has been graded against the following criteria:

Critical: Those elements of the urban environment which are irreplaceable but vulnerable to damage or loss – they should remain unchanged or virtually unchanged. (Typically those elements which hold historic significance and vernacular distinctiveness, which play an essential role in terms of local identity).

Constant: Those elements which are important for their individual value or for their contribution to a wider whole – some changes may be acceptable and sustainable if the overall character is maintained. (Typically elements of lesser historic significance holding varying degrees of vernacular distinctiveness but nonetheless playing a role in providing local identity).

Tradeable: Those elements which could potentially be sacrificed in return for other benefits. (Typically developments of more commonplace type or those which fit poorly into their context).

Critical

The main roads and the area around the Cross and the town 'walls' are identified as being critical in terms of their townscape value. The buildings are generally older and more historic in nature providing a strong sense of character, interest and distinctiveness. The 'walls' are recognised as being an important and attractive feature. Their uniqueness and scale are such that they are a prominent element in the townscape for many areas and have also helped define the development of much of the town.

In addition, the town's most important urban spaces make a significant contribution to both the appearance and character of Wareham. These include the Quay, St. John's Hill, Church Green and the Cross. These unique spaces contribute significantly to the interest and distinctiveness of Wareham as a town.

Constant

Within the 'walls' the four residential quarters located behind the main axes are predominantly recognised as areas of constant townscape that generally make a positive contribution to the appearance and character of the town. These areas are based around the network of historic streets and comprise a range of architectural styles and often relatively tight enclosed streets, with an intimate atmosphere.

Outside the 'walls', The Almshouses at Westport are an attractive and well known building at this entrance to the old town. Further south, along the fringes of the river, low density houses also make a positive contribution to the townscape. This area is less important for its architecture than the mature grounds in which it is located, and the resulting appearance of houses nestling amongst mature trees. This results in a pleasing green edge to the town.

Tradable

Areas of tradable townscape can be found outside the 'walls' primarily to the east and west. These are generally developments of ubiquitous character, being the type of townscape common to many towns. They lack the distinctiveness, but are generally attractive residential environments for their type. They are also relatively green areas by virtue of their lower density.

Within the 'walls', one large area identified as tradable is in the north-east quarter. This relatively large development displays the uniformity typical of many modern estates, whereas elsewhere within the 'walls', development has been more incremental.

Certain other locations sit less comfortably within their context are also identified as tradable. At the town's northern entrance the mobile home park and some minor commercial activities create a poor first impression. Within the 'walls' several larger scale modern buildings also appear incongruous with the prevailing character of the old town.

KEY POINTS

- The historic town centre and associated spaces are distinctive to Wareham and are **critical** areas of townscape which should remain largely unchanged;
- The four residential quarters within the 'walls' together with the southern fringes represent **constant** elements where limited change is acceptable provided its overall character is maintained;
- Outside the 'walls' the majority of development is of ubiquitous character and is classified as **tradable**, where new or redevelopment may be less harmful to the distinctive character of the town.