

Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2031

January 2019

Referendum Version
Sturminster Newton Town Council



Foreword From The Mayor

This Neighbourhood Plan document is the community's expression of its aspirations for how the town should develop. The project was initiated by SturQuest, our independent community organisation, sponsored and funded by the Town Council, and delivered by a dedicated team of volunteers working together over the last three years and assisted by professional advisers. Many members of the community have contributed significant time and effort to the project, particularly as part of the public consultation events we ran to gauge public opinion and support. It has truly been a community-led plan from start to finish.

In our plan work we have listened to many different views about the prospects for Sturminster Newton. In planning for the future we have to strike a balance between attracting new investment and development on the one hand, while protecting what our community appreciates about our parish on the other; between our precious landscape and sense of community, for example, and the need for more housing and business growth.

We believe the result is a well-balanced and sustainable plan that builds on the town's strengths and its tremendous achievement in recovering from the loss of its historic livestock market and creamery. It is a plan that reflects the spirit of the town and of its community, while positively embracing the future. It takes account of the significant geographic constraints that exist around the town, but provides for the housing needs of our local population, as well as additional housing to support the wider growth needs of the region.

We have been innovative and have set out conceptual plans for the town centre that would encourage more visitors and a wider choice of shops and services. The Town Council is committed to taking forward in its business plan several key projects identified during the Neighbourhood Plan work that will build on the planning framework in this document to help deliver the improvements needed, attract investment and encourage sustainable development. The Town Council will collaborate with Sturquest to implement the plan and we encourage all those interested in the future of town to have a look at the policies and proposals. We will continue to work with planners, designers and developers to achieve the sort of development and change that meets the needs of our community and that we can all be proud of.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the Neighbourhood Plan and hope you all feel justifiably proud of this achievement.

The Mayor of Sturminster Newton – Mr Andrew Donaldson, April 2017

Foreword From SturQuest

This Neighbourhood Plan is perhaps the most ambitious and determined proposal to date for our community's continued development. As the Mayor says in his Foreword: "Many members of the community have contributed significant time and effort to the project...it has truly been a community-led plan from start to finish".

Indeed, SturQuest itself simply reflects an active and involved community. It exists thanks to the ideas, interests and concerns of those who live in the same neighbourhood it does. SturQuest is still developing from its origins in the 'Stur 2000 & Beyond' and 'Task Force' groups. It played parts in both the Old Market site and Creamery development consultations, followed by the Town Design Statement and various projects in the early stages of the Rolls Mill business-park site.

SturQuest is delighted, and proud, to have been part of the community commitment and enthusiasm that has been demonstrated throughout the last three years of creating this Neighbourhood Plan. This achievement has once again reminded SturQuest of its origins as the volunteer-run organisation that it enjoys being.

The Chairman of the SturQuest Board – Mr Peter Boxer, April 2017

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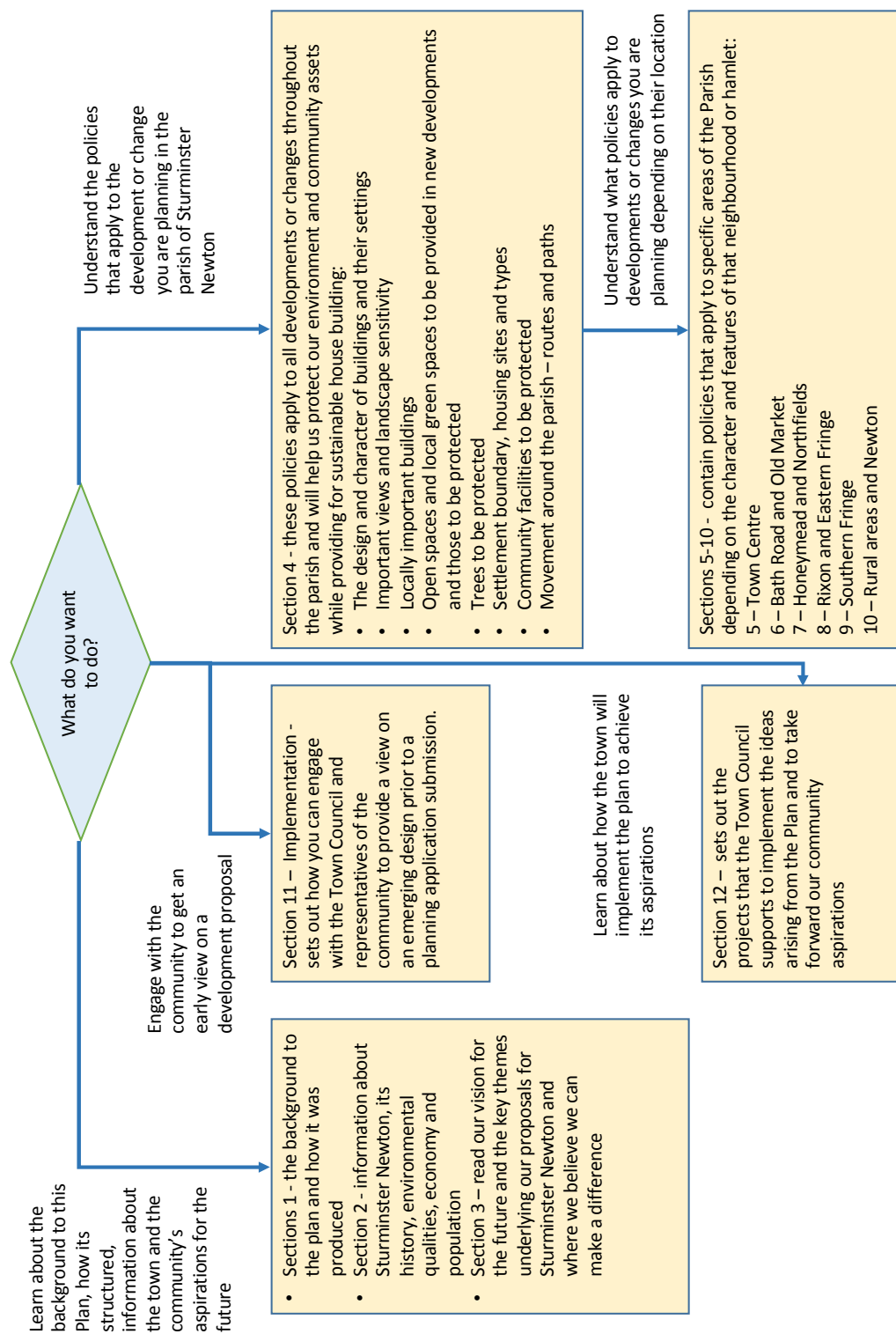
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How to use the Plan

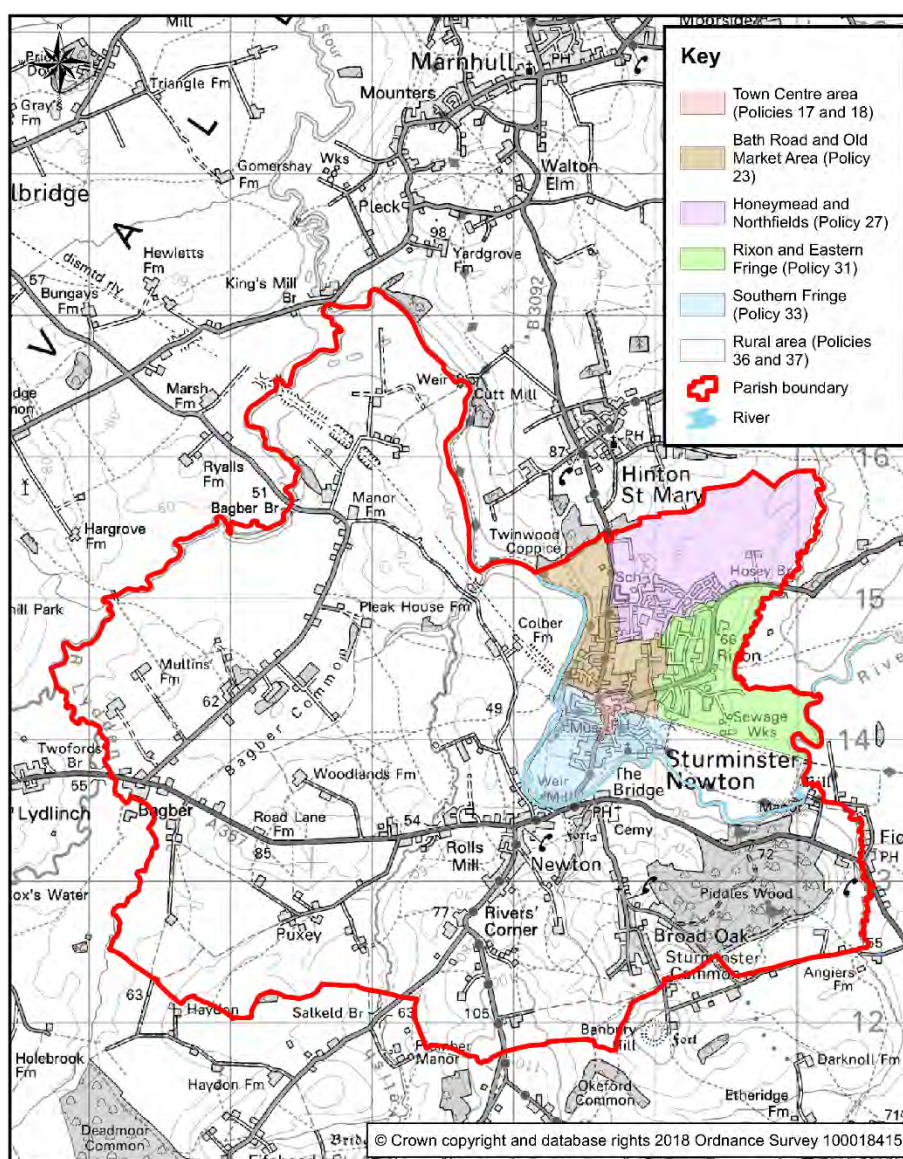


1 Introduction

1.1 About this Neighbourhood Plan

- 1.1.1 The Town Council is responsible for preparing the 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, have worked together for over three years to produce this Plan.
- 1.1.2 The Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan will guide development in the town and its surrounding area until 2031 based on the aspirations of the community. It forms part of the development plan for the area (which includes the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 [2016]). This means it must be taken into consideration when planning applications are assessed.

Map 1. Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan Area



- 1.1.3 Community engagement has been central to our activity. The 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 reports that are available to download from Sturminster Newton Town Council's website (www.sturminsternewton-tc.gov.uk) or from the Town Council Office.

Table 1. The key milestones of the consultation process

Date	Event/consultation		Outcomes
March 2014	Public launch event promoted through a range of different media, run as a drop-in event and also repeated at the High School	Attended by nearly 200 people	Results published and presented at Town Council workshop.
November 2014	Second Public Consultation run as drop-in event covering Issues, Themes, Vision and Aims – also run at the High School	Attended by over 400 people	Formed the basis of the vision and aims to be included in the Plan
November 2015	Third Public Consultation including more detailed questions for the community on matters such as important open spaces, local buildings, community buildings, transport and design criteria, repeated at the High School	Received over 200 questionnaire responses with more than 300 people attending	Helped to refine the direction and focus of the planning policies to be included in the Plan
February 2016	Rural areas-focused consultation, run to coincide with the Newton Residents Association AGM		Helped to refine the rural area policies and approach
July 2016	Town Centre Options Consultation, with detailed proposals and in Unity Community Magazine as well as drop-in events	Received 170 returned questionnaires	This and all the other research led to the pre-submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan
November 2016 – January 2017	Pre-submission consultation on the whole plan, which ran for nearly 8 weeks, and included drop-in events and an event at the High School	Received just under 50 responses from local residents in addition to responses from statutory consultees	Changes to the plan were considered and agreed in response to the various suggestions made.

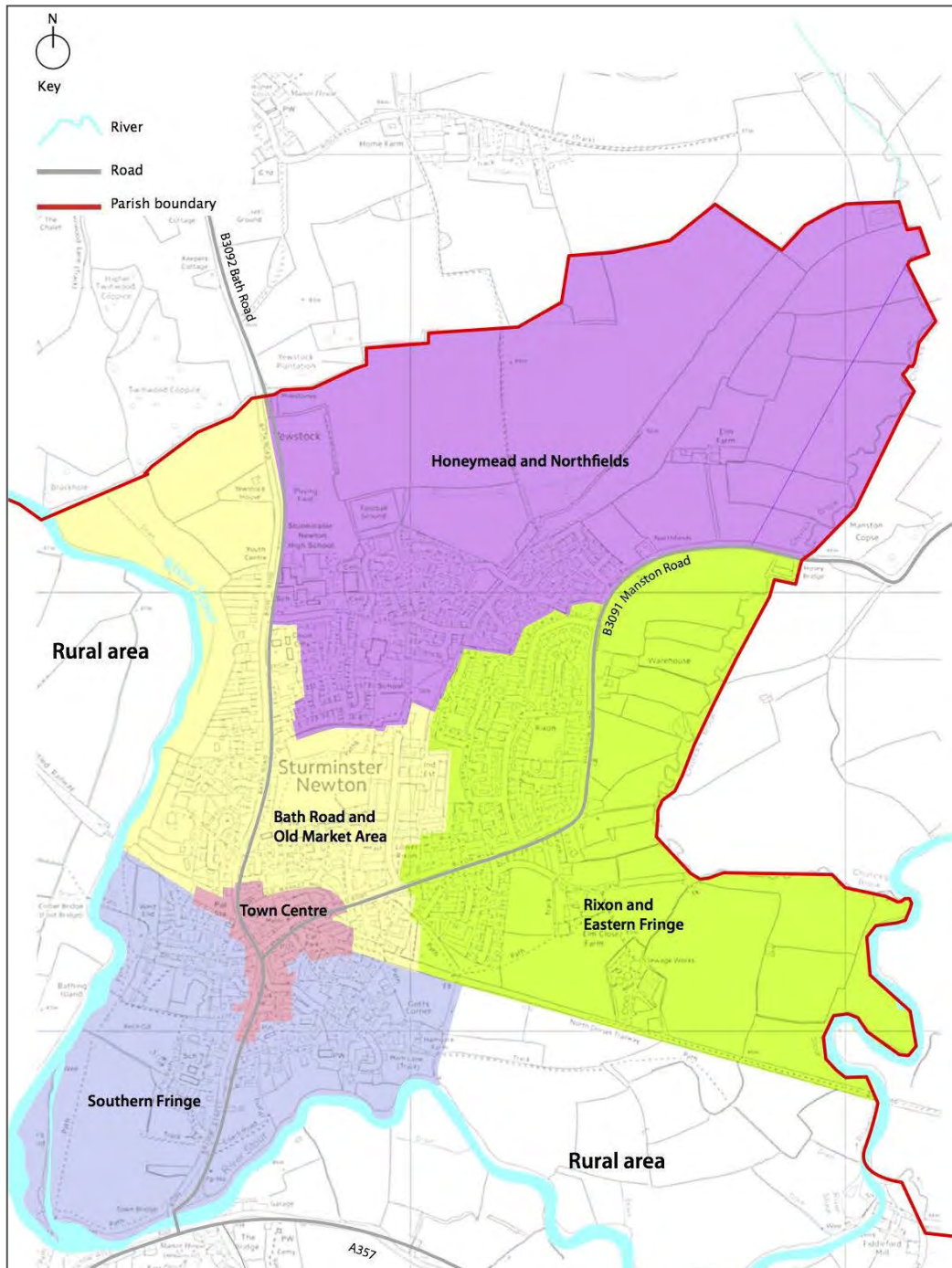
1.2 How this Plan is Organised

- 1.2.1 **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 buildings, covered in later sections.
- 1.2.2 **Section 3** puts our Vision and Aims in the context of the challenges we see today and those we foresee for the future. This section considers a role and identity for the town; how the town centre is experienced when visited and should 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 type of housing will be needed. This section also provides detail about the provision of community buildings, 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. This section provides the rationale for many of the policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and is relevant to all of them.
- 1.2.3 **Section 4** sets out general policies that are over-arching and will apply to all planning decisions in the Parish. These should be considered alongside current National and local 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, landscape and views.

- 1.2.4 **Sections 5 to 10** provide an area-focus. These sections give detailed information and policies relating to specific and discrete geographic locations within the Plan area, each with its own distinct set of characteristics. They allow us to provide finer detail and a more thorough context for the policies that apply. Map 2 below shows the areas covered in these sections.
- 1.2.5 **Section 11** sets out how the plan will be implemented and reviewed.
- 1.2.6 **Section 12** identifies a set of projects that the Town Council will run with the community.
- 1.2.7 **Appendix A** contains the evidence gathered during the project supporting the policies in the Plan.

Map 2. Spatial Areas covered in sections 5 to 10 in this Plan¹



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2 About Sturminster Newton

2.1 A Short History

- 2.1.1 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 the 1200s and its shape today still reflects this history. The medieval lanes in the old town, the market square, the bridge built in the 1500s over the Stour and the 17th century mill, are all little changed. The coming of the railway in 1863 gave a significant boost to the town. It enabled the transportation of milk and livestock and encouraged the cattle market to grow and the creamery to develop. The loss of the railway in the 1960s, followed by the closure of the livestock market and creamery, have meant that agriculture is now less important to the town's economy and function.

Photo 1 Livestock Market



- 2.1.2 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 cultural centre, was built in 2007 and two nationally renowned festivals – the Cheese Festival and the International Boogie Woogie Festival are based in the town today.

The Exchange

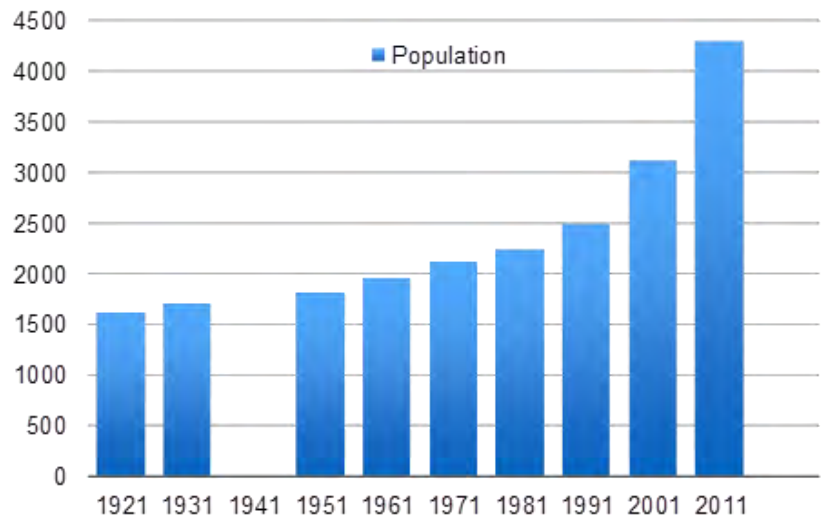
Often cited as a case study in successful community partnership projects, "The Exchange" was a £2.6M redevelopment to provide a large and impressive community facility, health centre, supermarket and community offices. Run by volunteers, the centre broke-even in its first year of operation, and attracts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

- 2.1.3 However, since the dramatic change in its economic circumstances since the 1990s, it could be said that Sturminster Newton has struggled to find its identity and to grasp the opportunities that these attributes could present to help strengthen its role in the area. Our Plan has been crafted and developed to help address this key challenge.

2.2 Socio Economic profile

Figure 1. Population growth from the Census surveys

2.2.1 The population of Sturminster Newton grew slowly up to 1981 after which it increased much more rapidly to 4,355 people by 2011 (ONS Census) 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), 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 generally living longer (Dorset has the highest life expectancy of any county in the UK).



- 2.2.2 In line with the rest of North Dorset, the most recent (2014-based) projections predict that the population of Sturminster Newton parish would grow by about 450 (10.1%) over the next fifteen years. With the level of housing proposed in the Local Plan it could rise by around 800 (18%), although changes in household size may affect this figure.
- 2.2.3 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 similar to those of North Dorset and Dorset as a whole.
- 2.2.4 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'. 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 a relatively affluent area. However, 13% of residents, both families and individuals, are defined as 'hard pressed', which broadly reflects the number of residents who we know are on benefits of various kinds.
- 2.2.5 Although unemployment is relatively low (consistently under 1.8% for many years), wages in North Dorset are well below the national average.

2.3 Environmental Qualities

- 2.3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Area contains many highly valued buildings, open spaces, rivers and woodlands, a number of which are protected through legislation. The River Stour with its tributaries runs through the area and encircles the town. The surrounding water meadows not only perform an important function as part of the floodplain, but also make a real contribution to attractive and memorable views into and out of the town, and to its overall setting.
- 2.3.2 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 Red Kite), rare or threatened butterflies and amphibians (such as the Great Crested Newt).
- 2.3.3 Although lying just outside the nationally important Dorset 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.

- 2.3.4 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 (a promontory fort re-used as a fortified medieval manor) and Fiddleford Manor are also scheduled monuments, as is the Medieval Cross 200m north west of St Mary's Church.

Photo 2. Sturminster Newton from Hambledon Hill



Photo 3 Museum and Medieval Cross



3 Our Vision and Aims for Sturminster Newton

- 3.1.1 This section contains our overall Vision and Aims for Sturminster Newton. It provides justification and context for the more detailed policies and proposals that follow, taking account of consultation feedback and drawing on other contemporary research and evidence.

3.2 Role and Identity

- 3.2.1 After consulting local people there was consensus that the Plan should have, at its core, a clearly defined role and identity for the town. While in the past Sturminster Newton was a flourishing market town serving a local farming community, in the future its identity and role are much less clear. 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 determining its future role within North Dorset.
- 3.2.2 There are several other towns within ten miles, which have larger populations, more employment and often better access to roads and the rail network.
- 3.2.3 This Plan recognises that, if Sturminster Newton is to thrive, it needs to craft a role that positively differentiates it from these neighbours.
- 3.2.4 During consultation, there were differing opinions about what constitutes a 'contemporary' market town and also a strong community feeling that 'traditional' was not necessarily a bad thing. The key characteristics in defining the town's current identity and role, were seen to be:
- 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
 - 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 fascinating history
 - the town's rural setting and Dorset character, particularly with its fine views and many historic buildings
 - a good range of facilities providing opportunities for shopping, working and social and leisure interests, so that people can satisfy their daily requirements without leaving the town
 - 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
- 3.2.5 These characteristics are important to our community today and should still hold true in 2031. But for the future, residents have told us they are committed to a more vibrant and distinctive community. They want to see a place where others want to live, work in and visit and a town centre that is safe, well used and provides good access to a wide range of leisure pursuits. People have a great loyalty to the community and are prepared to work together to achieve these aims. The development of The Exchange is great example of this and has resulted in a facility that is the envy of larger towns.

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 was the largest calf market in Britain. In 1906 it transferred to its final purpose-built site immediately to the north of the railway that 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.

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

Our Vision for 2031

The Parish will continue to be a place in which people want to live and raise their families, invest, work in and visit. Development 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, its important 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 buildings, 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

- > 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*

3.2.7 If we are to achieve this vision, we must plan for it. **Our strategy has seven key themes:**

- 1 Safeguarding our environment while promoting sensitive and sustainable new design**
- 2 Meeting local housing needs and accommodating our share of population growth**
- 3 Supporting the facilities that our growing community needs**
- 4 Encouraging a travel and movement network that provides safe and convenient access for all**
- 5 Attracting and promoting flourishing businesses**
- 6 Encouraging more visitors**
- 7 Supporting a strong, vibrant and safe town centre**

The following sections set out how these themes are addressed in the Plan.

3.3 Theme 1 - Safeguarding our environment while promoting sensitive and sustainable new design

- 3.3.1 Our consultations have shown that residents value the character of the old town area but some of the new housing built since 1980 was felt to have done little to enhance that character. 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 our Community Partnership organisation SturQuest) assessed the different features and character in the town, and identified what made it unique and attractive. Its purpose was to help guide the design of new development to emphasise and enhance the much-loved character, and it will remain relevant in providing a finer grain of detail than could be included in this Neighbourhood Plan. Other more recent research has added to this understanding including the Dorset Historic Towns project in 2011 and our own town studies.
- 3.3.2 Producing the Neighbourhood Plan has provided an opportunity to revisit the subject of local character and to consider the open spaces, important tree groups, views and buildings that contribute to our enjoyment of the local scene. We were particularly interested in those that were not identified within current protections (such as listed buildings or other conservation designations). The work of our Open Spaces Group and other volunteers was critical in this research.
- 3.3.3 Good design depends on many 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 will have a major bearing on the final design. The space around buildings, and how this is landscaped and maintained, is important. It provides a setting to the buildings as well as functioning as an amenity or as practical space for storage (such as for parked cars, waste bins etc.). These kinds of details were felt to be highly important in making places pleasant to live in and have

led us to include a set of general design principles covering the whole Parish and specific design principles that apply to the different areas of the Parish with their own particular characters.

Design, landscape and environment – Aims

To safeguard the 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

To safeguard the enjoyment of views, trees and spaces that are particularly valued by the community and contribute to the character of the area

To conserve the locally important buildings, structures and other features which contribute to the character of the town or an understanding of its history

To make sure new development is designed to a high standard and positively reinforces local character, by

- > acknowledging an area's unique character and what distinguishes it from other areas and reinforcing this through appropriate layout and design, including the use of scale, materials and architectural details
- > avoiding standard and overly 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 using landscaping, materials and technologies (such as renewable energy provision) to minimise environmental impacts

3.3.4 The main policies that help deliver these aims are

- Policy 1. Design and character of buildings and their settings (more detailed shop front guidance is set out in Policy 18)
- Policy 2. Important views and landscape sensitivity
- Policy 3. Important local buildings
- Policies 4 and 5. Local Green Spaces and Other Green Spaces (and related changes to the settlement boundary in Policy 8)
- Policy 6. Trees in the landscape
- Policies 15, 17, 23, 27, 31, 33, 36 and 37 – policies relating to the character of the areas.

3.4 Theme 2 - Meeting housing needs and accommodating our share of population growth

- 3.4.1 Existing house types range from traditional thatched cottages to modern estate type housing, including flats, terraces, semi-detached and detached homes.
- 3.4.2 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 and did not encourage a sense of community. Many consultees felt that lessons should be learnt from this period.
- 3.4.3 The Local Plan sets a minimum housing requirement of at least 395 homes to be built in Sturminster Newton from 2011 to 2031, of which about 95 must be affordable homes. 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%), a figure that is higher than that needed to accommodate projected growth in the local population. 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.
- 3.4.4 The future expansion of the town is constrained by the River Stour and its flood plain, the topography and local landscape character, landowner restrictions to the north and the local road capacities,

including the A357 and the historic network of roads in the town centre. These constraints are illustrated in more detail on Map 6 in section 4.3. In preparing the plan, possible development sites (in addition to those identified in the Local Plan) have been considered. What also became clear was, that due to the constraints, the town has limited potential for further growth, and its status within the settlement hierarchy should be examined closely in the review of the Local Plan. At the current time the town is helping meet the wider strategic needs of the housing market area, but continuing with this strategy is likely to severely limit options to cater for locally-driven growth in the future.

- 3.4.5 The current requirement 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. Our research indicates:
- > 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 that has increased by 40% in the last ten years. With 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; and
 - > 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 for people with a local connection (either through living here previously, or through having close family or work in the area).
- 3.4.6 Estate agents have told us that three bedroom properties are generally in demand, there is good demand for housing (not flats) priced for first time buyers and good demand for bungalows. School aged children have commented that bedrooms are often shared and room sizes are often too small to allow space for homework and other activities.
- 3.4.7 There was a view held by some local residents that providing more rentable social housing would create an imbalance in the parish. This is one of the reasons underpinning the desire to see some high quality larger homes that would attract higher income families and individuals, and their businesses, to locate here.

Housing – Aims

To deliver the amount of housing identified in Policy 7, with opportunities provided by:

- > site specific allocations
- > sensitive infill development within the settlement boundary and
- > the reuse of existing buildings in the countryside where appropriate

To deliver an appropriate mix of housing types catering for the main identified needs, in particular focused on

- > 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
- > housing to attract new households that will bring skilled workers and new, high-wage industries to the area

- 3.4.8 The main policies that help deliver these aims are
- Policies 7, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35 and 39 which are all site-specific allocations
 - Policy 40. Re-use of redundant agricultural buildings which includes provision for residential uses
 - Policy 9. Housing types

3.5 Theme 3 - Supporting the facilities that our growing community needs

- 3.5.1 Community buildings include those as varied as community halls, sports, leisure, education and medical facilities, emergency services and local shops. There are many well-used facilities in the area, mainly focused in the town centre and north of the town around the High School. The community felt strongly that improvements in services and community buildings should keep pace with new housing and population growth.
- 3.5.2 The research and consultation for this Plan has helped assess the importance of the area's community buildings 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 and whether they indicate potential gaps in provision. For example, the Fields in Trust (FIT) 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.
- 3.5.3 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. The primary school had been identified some time ago for rebuilding to create more capacity and to provide for future growth in the town. Public concerns have also been voiced about the loss of the swimming pool associated with rebuilding the primary school (which although not open to the public is of educational value in helping local school children learn 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 buildings 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 in the absence of public sector funding or significant voluntary support.

Community buildings – Aims

To make sure that the town's community buildings, schools and services can cater for the future projected population, by

- > supporting The Exchange as a community hub that provides the opportunity to consolidate key services and organisations at its town centre location
- > supporting changes to community buildings and services where this would benefit the community, and resisting changes that would result in less suitable provision for local people
- > supporting a coordinated approach to development at the schools, leisure centre and Sturminster Newton United Football Club grounds in the northern part of the town (Honeyamead Lane Education and Leisure Hub)
- > providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and play that focus on improving the main recreation sites at the War Memorial and Rixon, and at Honeyamead Lane Education and Leisure Hub,
- > retaining and providing more informal recreation and play opportunities on locally valued green spaces closer to all homes

- 3.5.4 The main policies that help deliver these aims are
- Policy 28. Honeyamead Lane Education and Leisure Hub
 - Policy 10. Important Community Buildings and associated land
 - Policy 11. Open space provision and standards in new developments (and also Policies 4 and 5 protecting existing Local Green Spaces and Policy 32 Land south and east of Elm Close where new allotments are planned)

3.6 Theme 4 - Encouraging a travel and movement network that provides safe and convenient access for all

- 3.6.1 The Highway Authority's 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 encourage 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.
- 3.6.2 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 runs 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.
- 3.6.3 The North Dorset 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. The Parish has been subject to drastic cuts in bus services although we have some vital alternatives, including school buses and services provided by North Dorset Community Accessible Transport (NORDCAT) that provides a door-to-door minibus service.
- 3.6.4 The difficulties of traffic movement in and around Sturminster Newton was considered one of the most important factors in constraining business growth, especially the issue of free (or cheaper) parking serving the town centre (both for shoppers and workers) which was a recurrent theme in response to our consultations.
- 3.6.5 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 reduces to a single lane between buildings either side of Market Cross and the pavement is narrow). There were also comments made about problems arising from poorly parked cars in the residential areas, particularly where these could give rise to potential safety issues for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 3.6.6 Our traffic surveys showed that generally traffic flows well through the town centre (as most drivers exercise courtesy and common sense), and the road design generally suppresses traffic speeds. Delivery vehicles do cause traffic delays and confusion where they stop to unload in parts of the central area of the town. Queues sometimes stretch back by a significant length (up to 200m) to enter the town from the south, but usually clear quickly. Vehicles frequently have to come to a standstill in the centre but are seldom delayed for long. Pedestrians sometimes need to take great care to avoid large vehicles, particularly when they pass through the narrow sections. Future designs should take the opportunity to improve the safety of those on foot.
- 3.6.7 Some key walking routes were also identified across the town, which are well used by residents in their everyday business and leisure. Some shortcomings were found in these routes, particularly where they run across busy roads. A project has been identified to improve these routes so that they are suitable for all potential users.
- 3.6.8 The idea of diverting traffic onto other routes may initially seem like a good idea, but our research shows there are no practical alternative routes. The Police have informed us that any HGV ban on through-vehicles could not in practice be effectively enforced. Our Plan is based on the presumption that there is no affordable or practical relief road solution at this time, although relevant authorities might review this idea in the future.

Movement and transport – Aims

To make sure the transport network provides for safe and convenient access for all users, by

- > 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) and 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 becoming congested or unsafe, and that opportunities are taken to reduce existing traffic-related problems in residential areas and the town centre
- > delivering traffic management and public realm enhancements to support a strong and vibrant town centre
- > protecting the network of recreational routes (such as the Trailway and the Stour Valley Way) and improving the network by completing a perimeter recreational route around the town, and making sure these routes can be easily accessed from the centre and people's homes.

3.6.9 The main policies that help deliver these aims are

- Policy 12. Delivering a safe and convenient travel network
- Policy 19. Town centre public realm improvements (and Policies 20 and 22 that provide more detailed guidance on the main town centre sites)
- Policy 13. on the Trailway, Policy 14. on rural recreational trails

3.7 Theme 5 - Attracting and promoting flourishing businesses

- 3.7.1 The town has two key employment/commercial estates: Butts Pond in the centre of the town that 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. Research underpinning the Local Plan and the relatively slow take-up of plots on the North Dorset Business Park indicate that the provision of further general employment sites is not required at this time. Within the town centre there are opportunities for office-based or service businesses. Outside the town, some farms have diversified with redundant farm buildings being converted to employment uses.
- 3.7.2 Superfast Broadband rollout covers the majority of the town and Fibre-To-The-Cabinet has been provided to the North Dorset Business Park. 4G coverage has significantly improved and, as of Spring 2017, covers the majority of the town and the business park. This provision has the potential to make a major difference to the type of businesses that can operate from the town.
- 3.7.3 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.
- 3.7.4 A separate Economic Development Plan is being developed by the Town Council to build on the proposals in this Plan and help create the case for investment in the Parish.

Businesses – Aims

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. by introducing heavy traffic on unsuitable roads), by

- > 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
- > ensuring that new and growing businesses have suitable road access/parking²
- > supporting projects that strengthen the town's distinctive identity and role

3.7.5 The main policies that help deliver these aims are

- Policy 38. on the development of North Dorset Business Park
- Policies 15 and 16. which detail appropriate town centre uses, and Policies 20 and 25 which recognise the potential for offices and similar business uses on the Station Road and Stour View sites
- Policy 40. on the re-use of redundant agricultural buildings
- Policy 28. Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub

3.8 Theme 6 - Encouraging more visitors

3.8.1 The town offers many attractions for tourists and visitors. These include its many historic buildings (including a 16th century town bridge and working mill at its southern entrance, and a 15th century Parish Church) and cultural associations (being the birthplace of William Barnes the poet and home to Thomas Hardy). There are many beautiful walks along the river, the Trailway provides for safe cycling, walking and riding, and two long distance footpaths, The Hardy Way and the Stour Valley Way, cross the area. There are local producer street markets, the internationally renowned Boogie Woogie festival, an annual Cheese Festival that attracts over 13,000 visitors, and a purpose-built theatre and events facility (The Exchange) that regularly attracts nationally-known performers.

3.8.2 However, our work in preparing this Plan has demonstrated that more could be done to promote Sturminster Newton to visitors, and to ensure there is suitable accommodation, leisure and other facilities to support this sector of the economy and allow it to flourish. The Economic Development Plan project has set up a Tourism Association and is developing marketing and a town web site to help attract visitors, but it has identified that there is a lack of good quality town centre accommodation to support this. The Neighbourhood Plan, as a result, encourages a greater provision in the centre of the town through conversion and sensitive development.

² Note that parking access/charges, broadband/mobile and other non-planning related aims are being addressed primarily in the Town's Economic Development project.

Encouraging more visitors - Aims

To improve opportunities for visitors to enjoy the cultural and recreational opportunities provided within the town and wider area, including

- > 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 through the Parish
- > protecting and improving the wider network of key recreational routes that can be easily accessed from the town
- > supporting new services, enterprises and facilities that add to the attraction of Sturminster Newton as a place worth visiting

3.8.3 The main policies that help deliver these aims are

- Policy 10. Important community buildings and associated land (a number of which are also key visitor facilities)
- Policies 4 and 5. Protecting existing Open Spaces and Policy 19. Town centre public realm improvements
- Policy 13. The Trailway, and Policy 14. on rural recreational trails.

3.9 Theme 7 - Supporting a strong, vibrant and safe Town Centre

- 3.9.1 Sturminster Newton town centre is divided into two distinct areas; the old town to the south comprising the historic Market Place and High Street, and the north town situated near the route of the old railway line and which has had more recent development, including The Exchange, the Medical Centre, a supermarket, some shops and provides the majority of the town's parking. A partially pedestrianised shopping street, Station Road, links the two areas.
- 3.9.2 In consultations, residents said that traffic through the High Street and the lack of free parking were 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. While 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, the parking could be better located, coordinated and managed. There are concerns that there is an uncoordinated mix of public charges and private restrictions that may deter shoppers and encourage employment parking in unsuitable places. It is unfortunate that the main Station Road car park is not particularly obvious to visitors passing through the town centre as the route to it is circuitous, poorly signed and can involve negotiating two sets of traffic lights.
- 3.9.3 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 centre provide but were also concerned that the old town should remain lively and not be supplanted by the northern area. Lack of some key shops and poor signage were also noted in our surveys. It was generally believed that the market, held on Mondays, could be improved as attendance has dwindled in recent years. Stalls are often split between two different areas of the town; Market Square and the Station Road pedestrian area.
- 3.9.4 In response to consultations, many local residents have 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 large supermarkets.
- 3.9.5 Our consultations confirm that the opportunity exists for the Town to build on the success of its local businesses, particularly those in the craft, food and drink-based sectors, which would help meet local needs and attract visitors to Sturminster Newton. With its modest sized population, visitors are

important to the town's 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.

Town Centre strengths and possible threats and missed opportunities

Key strengths

- > A 'market town' with weekly market presence, range of largely independent shops and services, and events such as the annual Cheese Festival
- > An attractive historic town centre including the Market Place and Market Cross with potential links to its railway and cattle market heritage.
- > 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, on the line of the former railway, brings visitors into the Town Centre

Possible threats or missed opportunities

- > 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
- > Perceived difficulties parking and some visitors not stopping if they cannot park easily, or not returning if they are unable to move safely around the town
- > Impact of vehicular traffic on the environment, which compromises 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

- 3.9.6 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 more vibrant and attractive destination.

Town Centre – Aims

To support a strong and vibrant town centre that people want to visit and invest in, by

- > having reasonably-priced and convenient public car parks for shoppers, visitors and workers including those with disabilities
- > having welcoming, pedestrian-friendly public areas, that can host the regular market and occasional public events and support 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
- > supporting the appropriate re-use or redevelopment of underused/disused land or buildings
- > retaining the key facilities that bring people into the town centre, such as The Exchange, the Medical Centre and the Post Office

- 3.9.7 The main policies that help deliver these aims are

- Policy 10 on important community buildings and associated land
- Policies 15 and 16 on town centre uses and uses in the shopping frontages area
- Policy 17 on general character and Policy 18 on shop front design
- Policy 19 on the town centre public realm improvements
- Policies 20 to 22 regarding the main potential development sites (Station Road, Market Hill and the area around Clarkes Yard)

4 Parish-wide Neighbourhood Plan Policies

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This section describes how we will achieve our aims. It contains policies that should be used to aid planning decisions alongside what is current in national and North Dorset planning policy. Where matters are adequately covered in the Local Plan or in national policies (for example, general policies on avoiding flood risk) these are not duplicated here. The sections that follow on from this one contain detailed descriptions of specific constraints and opportunities in each of seven distinct spatial areas of the Parish and policies for each of these areas.

It is important that both the Parish-wide and the specific area sections are consulted when seeking information to assist planning decisions. All relevant policies in this Plan, as well as in the Local Plan and national policy, will be taken into account in making planning decisions.

4.2 Design, Landscape and Environment

- 4.2.1 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, some areas may well suit contemporary styles that provide interest and character. Whatever is developed, it should be done with the aim of creating good design that lasts well and engenders a real sense of civic pride.
- 4.2.2 Later in the Plan, in sections 5-10 describing each spatial area, we highlight the important characteristics that should be taken into account when development is considered on sites in those locations. Further detail is available in the Town Design Statement. **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. Thus some degree of flexibility can be applied to provide a softer transition at the boundaries with design cues potentially reflecting either area.
- 4.2.3 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 that 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.
- 4.2.4 Consideration should be given to how important locations (such as the gateways into the town) and important view corridors and junctions (such as Bath Road/Old Market Hill), and buildings planned for community uses (such as the new school), can be marked by buildings worthy of admiration and future protection. Such landmark buildings are important in creating a more distinctive place that is easy to navigate. This doesn't mean that every building on a junction or viewpoint has to be larger than its neighbours or make an architectural statement. Indeed, 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 these will not be appropriate in more prominent locations. Particularly tall buildings (such as those exceeding 2½ storeys) or massive buildings (such as an unbroken terrace of townhouses or large, bland apartment blocks) can have a notable impact in panoramic views and can adversely dominate town centre vistas.
- 4.2.5 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 energy efficiency requirements

are set in this Plan, since national Building Regulations are being updated to drive forward this agenda. 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 and roof load bearing structures to allow future occupants to retrofit these where possible.

- 4.2.6 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 or storage space (such as for parked cars, bicycles, 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. Attractive communal open green spaces may provide an alternative solution to individual garden areas. Where such arrangements are proposed, it will be important to establish an organisation to manage and fund the maintenance regime. Boundary treatments should generally reflect the character of the area, with stone/brick 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.

Table 2. Residential parking standards

- 4.2.7 Parking guidelines (see Table 2) derived from the Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset Residential Car Parking Study should be applied. In order to provide sufficient parking, it is important that these standards are kept as a minimum. Parking spaces should be located close to the buildings they are intended to serve in order to reduce clutter and congestion on local roads. For example, data behind these standards clearly show that three quarters of households living in 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.

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	}

- 4.2.8 The Local Plan Policy on design says that proposals for development will be required to justify how the relevant design principles and standards are met, and how the design responds to the local context. The standards contained in the following policy and the relevant character area policies in the following sections should therefore be covered in the design and access statements that accompany planning applications. Please note that the Town Design Statement (2008) provides a finer grain of detail that can usefully be referenced. Where a possible conflict with policy is identified, the design and access statement should explain the reason why, and set out how the resulting design will still achieve a high-quality design in keeping with local character.

Policy 1. Design and character of buildings and their settings

Development should be of a high quality that is sympathetic in scale and design to the character of the area, and has regard to the character and significance of Listed and Locally Important Buildings and important open spaces. 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. New and altered boundaries between properties should reflect the traditional treatment of similar boundaries in the locality and be of high quality.

Any new development should acknowledge the road frontage and adjoining open spaces positively and in a manner appropriate to 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.

Buildings that will serve as key community facilities, or are located on an important node or vista, should be designed as local landmarks where such a landmark design would improve the legibility of the area.

Buildings should not have large expanses of facades lacking detail and interest. Frequently repeated building designs within a large development site should be avoided.

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. Materials likely to be acceptable include, but are not limited to, flint, local brick, local stone, high quality timber partial cladding on some elevations, thatch using local Dorset techniques and materials, stone or slate tiling.

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 ease of maintenance to help ensure the street scene remains attractive in the long term.

Development should include sufficient externally accessible storage provision (including for waste bins and bicycles) and sufficient parking (residential car parking standards are as set out in Table 2). These features should be designed to be both convenient and unobtrusive in the street scene. Sufficient amenity space should 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.

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.

- 4.2.9 In assessing potential harm to local landscape character, a key consideration is how it is perceived from public areas and routes. It wasn't possible to map and assess every single viewpoint that could be affected by development, although important views from within the rural areas have been described in the Character Appraisal undertaken by Matrix in support of the Neighbourhood Plan. As such, a more generic approach has been taken to highlight those places and recreational paths from which views may be important, to help inform any landscape visual impact assessment. Where a visual impact assessment may be required as part of a planning application, this should therefore identify and consider the overall impact of the proposed development on the enjoyment of views from those routes and spaces identified in Maps 3 and 9, and from major viewpoints such as Hambledon Hill. Where harm may occur, Policy 2 sets out potential measures to mitigate this harm to an acceptable level.

Policy 2. Important views and landscape sensitivity

Development should not be supported if it would adversely affect views from Hambledon Hill, the main approach roads to the town, or the routes and spaces identified in Maps 3 and 9. Where potential development on a site is likely to be clearly visible and prominent in such views, the following principles should be applied

- > avoid light coloured rendering and bright or highly reflective materials*
- > retain views of key landmarks*
- > avoid conspicuously high (such as three or more storeys) or massive buildings (including unbroken terraces or similar uniform layouts in a large block)*
- > reduce landscape impact by careful siting and orientation, and by making the most of the existing landform*
- > use opportunities to reduce harm caused by existing intrusive development, if possible, to provide a new benefit*
- > use existing tree cover, hedgerows and/or new landscaping that will be maintained to minimise the impact or reduce any remaining adverse visual impacts*

Locally Important Buildings

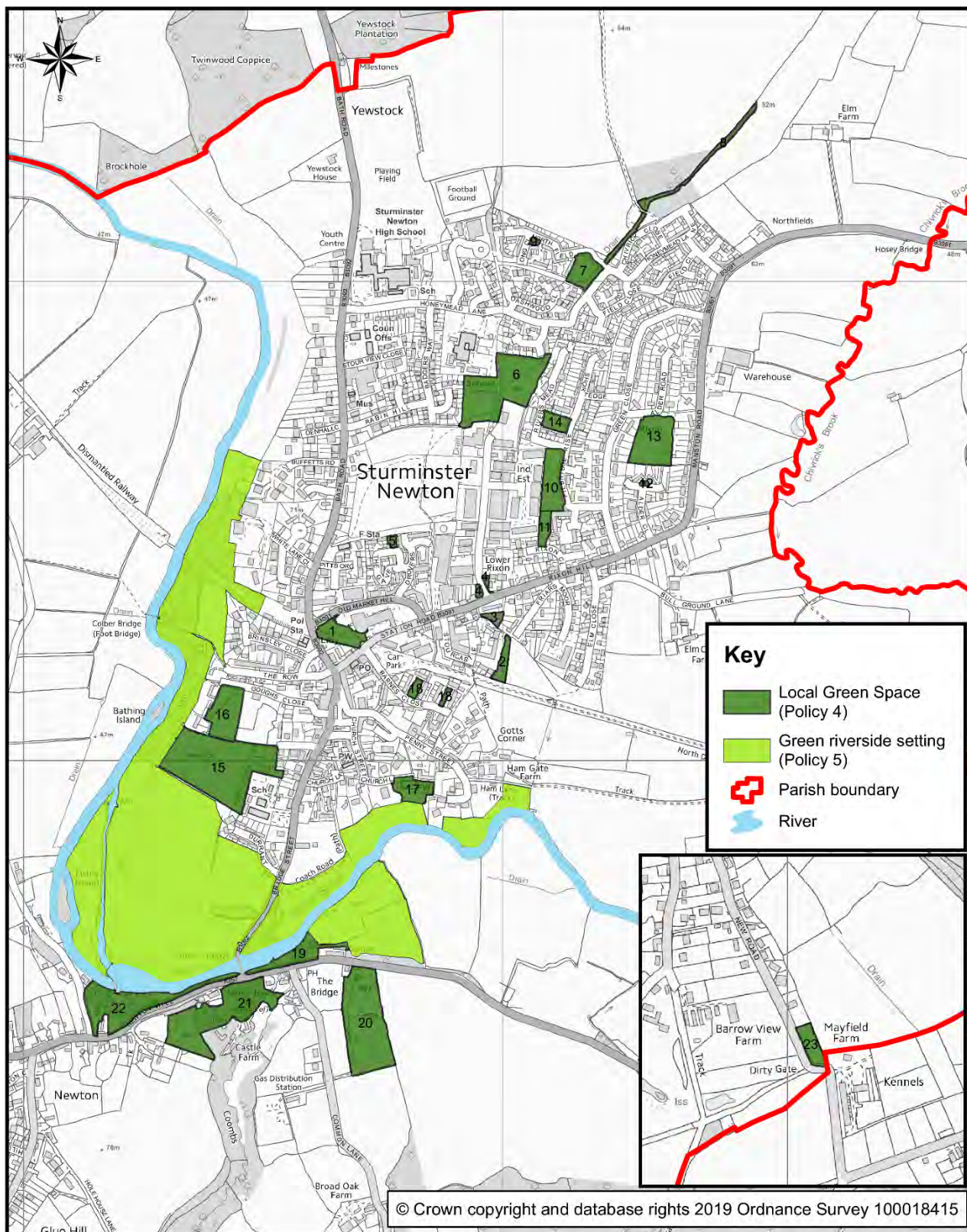
- 4.2.10 In addition to Listed Buildings, Locally Important Buildings have been identified, and these are referred to in Policies 1 and 3 and the relevant area chapters that follow. These have been assessed as meeting one or more of the following criteria.
- > the building is of historic importance in 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
 - > a 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.
- 4.2.11 Although not designated as Listed Buildings, these Locally Important Buildings contribute significantly to the character of the area. Their demolition would adversely impact on this local character, as potentially would other changes to their appearance or through detracting development on adjoining sites. It is therefore 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.

Policy 3. Locally Important Buildings

Where feasible, identified Locally Important Buildings should be retained, and development should respect and not detract from their contribution to the historic and architectural character of the area.

Local Green Spaces and Other Green Spaces

Map 3. Local Green Spaces and Green Riverside Setting



- 4.2.12 The open and wooded spaces within and on the edge of the town and some of the rural settlements are often valued by local people, 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.
- 4.2.13 The most valued spaces have been designated as Local Green Spaces based on a thorough assessment of their value against key criteria in line with National Planning Policy Framework guidance, and effectively replace the Important Open and Wooded Area policy areas that were carried forward from the previous Local Plan. This is a recognised designation in national policy, and means new development is ruled out other than in very special circumstances. One such example would be where development would result in an improvement to that space's recreational use and enjoyment.

Policy 4. Local Green Spaces

Development should not reduce or adversely impact the importance and enjoyment of the following designated Local Green Spaces (as shown on Map 3):

<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. Green at Stourcastle	Grass area used for amenity and as an informal play area, bordering the Trailway
	3. Chinnocks Allotment Gardens	Well-used allotment plots
	4. Butts Pond Estate entrance	Treed area marking the transition between more urban centre and Rixon
	5. Play area in The Gavel	Well-used equipped play area
HONEYMEAD AND NORTHFIELDS	6. Butts Pond Local Nature Reserve	Local nature reserve. Three grass fields including pond and 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
	7. North Fields Open Space	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
	8. Green Lane	Thought to be an ancient byway – much used footpath (although not part of the official public right of way network) along ancient hedgerow 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
	9. Long Close Green	Informal planted open area within this more modern estate
RIXON AND EASTERN FRINGE	10. Filbridge Rise allotments	Valued, and well-used and well-kept recreation areas used for allotments and informal play
	11. Filbridge Rise Play Area	Area for informal play strangely signed for use by 'under 11s'

SOUTHERN FRINGE	12. Hambledon View green	Small grassed triangle area, well used for informal play by local children despite close proximity to Rixon Recreation ground
	13. Rixon Recreation ground	Recreation ground with equipped play area, heavily used for play and organised games by young and adults, focus for play in east of town
	14. Filbridge Rise and Riversmead Green	Amenity green space within housing development
	15. Memorial Recreation Ground, Ricketts Lane	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.
	16. Open land in front of West End Cottages, adjoining and part of Stourbend House land.	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
RURAL AREA	17. St Mary's Churchyard	Peaceful area for quiet contemplation, setting of the church and crossed by connecting route between some of the older streets in the town
	18. Land at Barnes Close Green	Informal open areas, well maintained and attractively planted, in front of houses, forming an intrinsic part of the character of this more modern estate
	19. Riverside meadows opposite Bull Tavern	Unspoilt wildlife and quiet recreation area (for fishing and walking) close to centre of town, with river, meadows and car park
	20. Sturminster Newton Town Cemetery	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
	21. Land around Sturminster Newton Castle	Setting of Iron Age hillfort with later manor ruins overlooking river – partly farmed, part private garden. Crossed by footpath between bridge and Coombe Valley
	22. Land around the Mill	Setting to the historic Mill, and used for picnicking, annual Boogie-Woogie Festival and Museum and Mill Society events
	23. Broad Oak Community Orchard	Managed orchard with ancient and new apple trees owned and managed by Dorset Wildlife Trust – local events include apple pressing and hog roast

- 4.2.14 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. It is also clear that the enjoyment of open spaces is affected by the use of the land that surrounds it.
- 4.2.15 Land between the River Stour and the edge of the town, provides an important setting to the conservation area, the historic bridge structures and landmark features such as St Mary's Church, and important habitat for local wildlife. A detailed landscape assessment of the areas around the town was carried out as part of the evidence gathered for this Neighbourhood Plan, and highlighted the river valley character as "particularly attractive and of high quality. It is distinctive and special to the parish of Sturminster Newton". The areas shown on Map 3 are much enjoyed by residents and visitors alike, being so close to the town and crossed by and seen from various public rights of way. Although not appropriate for Local Green Space designation due to its more extensive nature, it is a particularly important green space for all these reasons.

- 4.2.16 Criteria for evaluating other green spaces were agreed through the consultation process. It was not possible to assess every potential site against these criteria, so the absence of a landscape designation does not mean that a site isn't important. Where local concerns are raised as part of the consultation on a planning application regarding the loss of a green space, its contribution in terms of these criteria (included in the policy below) should be taken into account. Where such a site is particularly valued against one or more of these criteria, its loss should be resisted.

Policy 5. Other Green Spaces

Development should not reduce the importance and enjoyment of public open spaces delivered as part of the provision for outdoor sport and recreation associated with new development.

If development is proposed on an open space outside of the settlement boundary, consideration and, if appropriate, protection, should be given to the existing contribution of this space in terms of its:

- > Public access for informal recreation including the enjoyment of the space and views out*
- > Positive contribution to the character of the local area*
- > Historic significance and associations*
- > Wildlife interest, as an important habitat or wildlife corridor*

Land forming the riverside setting of the town, as shown on Map 3, will be protected as an important part of the green infrastructure network, for its wildlife and landscape value, flood management function and for the opportunities it provides for informal recreation on public rights of way and land made available for public access. Proposals will be supported that enhance the recreational enjoyment of this area and access to the river, providing they respect the landscape character, views, wildlife interests and the area's role in flood alleviation.

Trees

- 4.2.17 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). The likely impact of development on existing trees should be considered at the very start of the development process, in the scheme design, through measures to protect trees during the construction phase, and allowing for their future growth and maintenance. Where trees are present on a site that may be impacted by the proposals, a detailed arboricultural survey should be submitted that assesses their condition and merit, taking into account the above factors.
- 4.2.18 Certain areas are notable for their tree coverage. Piddles Wood and Girdlers Coppice are the most obvious wooded area in the Parish. 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 3 below. These were derived from an assessment, included in the evidence, of the importance in the landscape of specific trees and groups of trees in the parish. Many of the most significant individual trees within the town are covered by Tree Preservation Orders, and a list has been provided to the Local Planning Authority identifying further specimens to be considered for such protection. Other areas lack tree coverage, and in certain circumstances tree planting may improve local character – this is particularly relevant for the Rixon and Eastern Fringe character area.
- 4.2.19 Policy 27, later in this section, seeks to secure the retention of important trees, and enhance the treed nature of particular areas to reinforce local character. Where the retention of trees is not possible (for example if the expansion of the sewage treatment works would necessitate the removal of some trees) replacement planting should be provided to mitigate the loss.

Map 4. Areas of significant tree cover

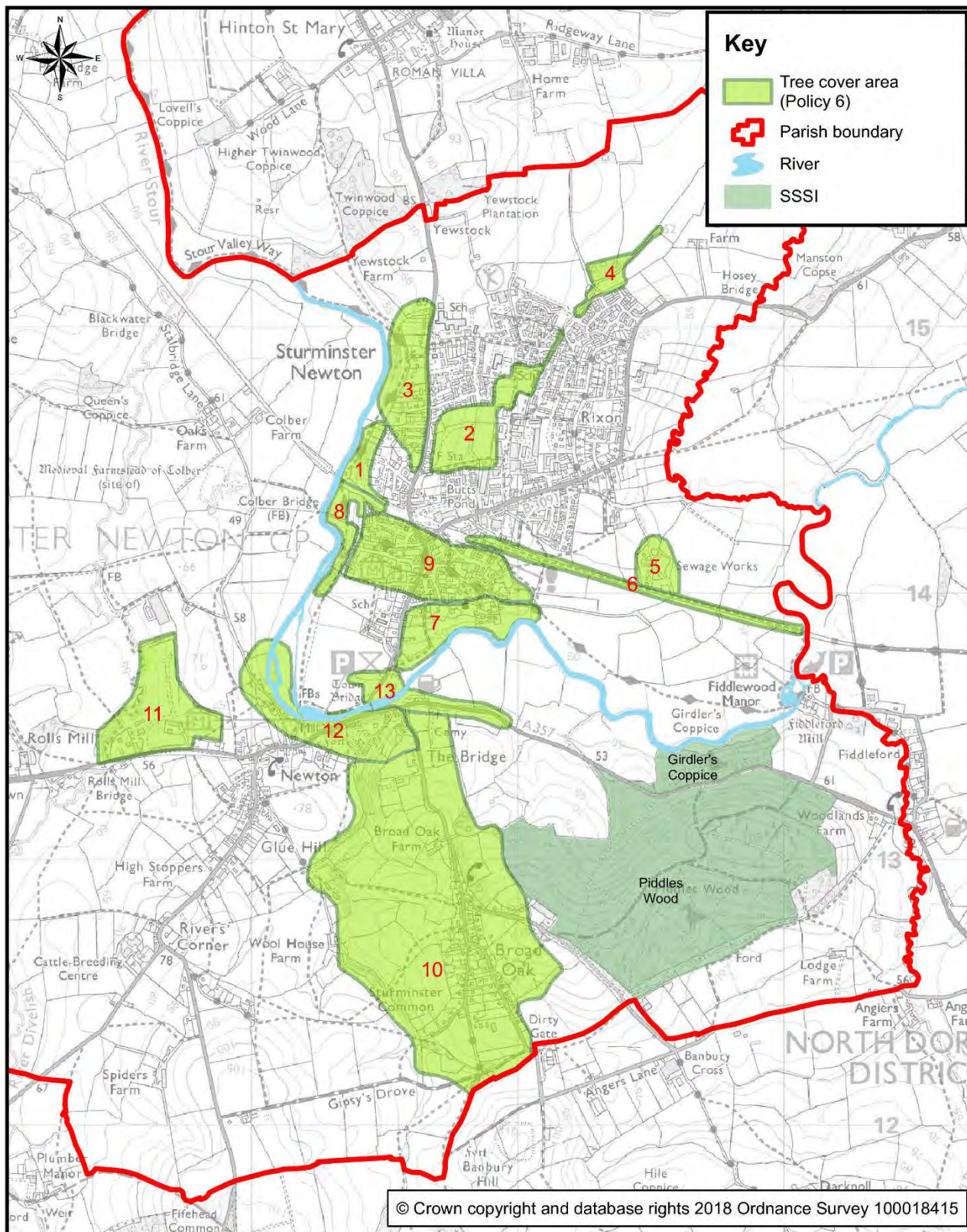


Table 3. Tree Coverage Areas where trees make a significant positive difference

Area	Tree Coverage	Importance
BATH ROAD AND OLD MARKET	1. Along the River Stour from the course of the old railway to the back of Buffets Close	Important in the landscape when viewing Sturminster from the west. These trees are part of a relatively recent plantation that has grown dense and could be improved to allow fewer mature specimens to thrive.
	2. In the hedgerows in Market Fields and in the green corridor running from Market Fields northwards into the Butts Pond nature reserve	These trees and hedgerows provide important screening of the Butts Pond Industrial estate. In addition, the area is identified for significant development and the trees and hedgerows will be important in maintaining a green corridor and softening/mitigating its effect.
	3. Along the elevated ridge line of Bath Road	Important in the landscape and soften the skyline of the town when approaching from the east.
HONEYMEAD AND NORTHFIELDS	4. The continuation of the green corridor from the Butts Pond nature reserve northeast towards and along Green Lane	This is identified as a key pedestrian route from the town centre northeast past the development area at North Honeymeads and into the countryside. The trees and hedgerows along this route form an important green corridor.
RIXON AND EASTERN FRINGE	5. Around the Sewage treatment works	Act as a screen.
	6. Along the Trailway/dismantled railway line.	Important in the setting of the Trailway as it enters the town from the east.
SOUTHERN FRINGE AND TOWN CENTRE	7. Bordering and close to River Stour including trees in the grounds of Beech House, Stour Grange, Magnolia House, Ham Gate, the Churchyard and along the Coach Rd	These treed areas are of great importance to the landscape setting of the town viewed from the south
	8. Along the River Stour from the Memorial Recreation Ground to the course of the old railway.	Important when viewing Sturminster from the west and from the recreation ground. Trees to the west of the recreation ground up to South House are important in its setting. Many trees from South House north west to the course of the old railway are part of a relatively recent plantation which has grown dense and could be improved to allow fewer mature specimens to thrive.
	9. In private gardens in the conservation area particularly in Linden Gardens and Little Lindens	Important in the views of the town from the south and west, and when walking within the conservation area or approaching the town centre on routes from the east.
	10. In Broad Oak – particularly those trees that 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.	These trees make an important contribution to a generally wooded landscape south of the A357 and to views from the east and west of the town as one approaches it along the A357.

RURAL AREA	11. Around the edges of the North Dorset Business Park	Act as a screen.
	12. Around the Mill, Castle Farm (including the Manor House ruins), Newton Hill and the river banks and surroundings from the Mill round to Fish's Island	Act as an important backdrop to one of Dorset's iconic views – the Mill seen from the Town Bridge. Also softens some more recent developments.
	13. Area including the Bridge, the Garage and Riverside Meadows	Important in mitigating the appearance of the Garage and providing wildlife habitat for the meadows. Attractive treed approach to the town from the east.
	SSSI - Piddles Wood and Girdlers Coppice	Protected areas of woodland (SSSI - Special Site of Scientific Interest). Mainly ancient Oak and Hazel coppice. Widely used and valued by walkers and host to bluebells and other woodland flowers.

Policy 6. Trees in the landscape

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. Areas where trees are noted to make a significant positive difference are listed in Table 3. Landmark trees, due to their prominence in the street scene or their historic/cultural associations, should also be retained. If the removal of such trees is unavoidable (for example to allow for necessary infrastructure work), replacement planting with appropriate species should be secured, in a manner that provides at least similar benefits to the specimens removed.

As part of any landscaping scheme, 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.

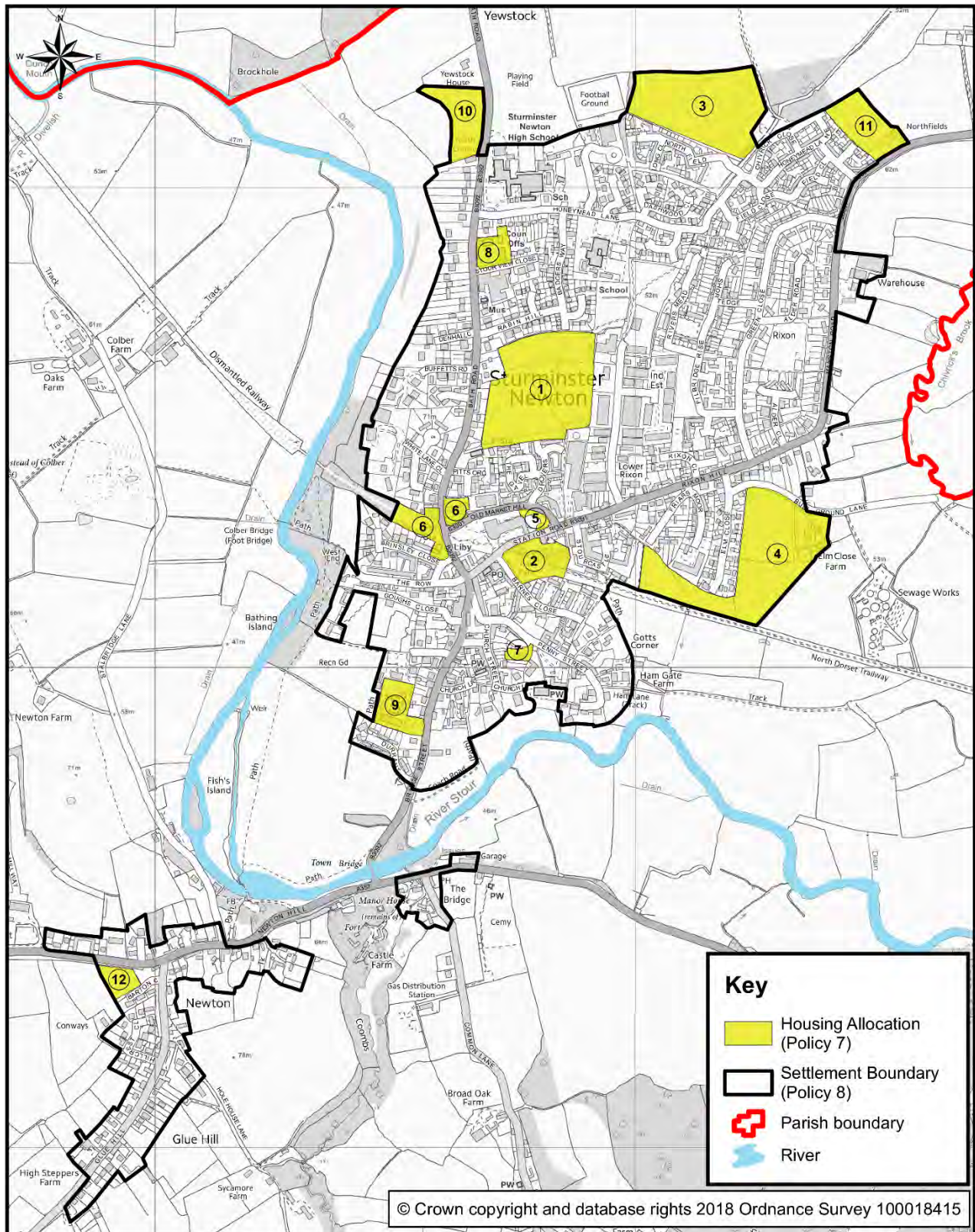
4.3 New Housing Provision

- 4.3.1 19 new homes were built in the five years from 2011 to 2016. This Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites to accommodate a further 446 dwellings which, together with a 'windfall' allowance of 29 on smaller sites (many with extant permissions), brings the total to 494 dwellings. These allocations include a number of sites identified in the Local Plan, as well as two further sites within the built-up area of the town (the former Council office, north of Stour View Close and William Barnes Primary School site) and four sites on the edge of the built-up area (land at Yewstock Fields off Bath Road, land north of Manston Road, land east of Elm Close Farm off Bull Ground Lane and land adjoining Barton Farmhouse in Newton).

Table 4. Housing Allocations

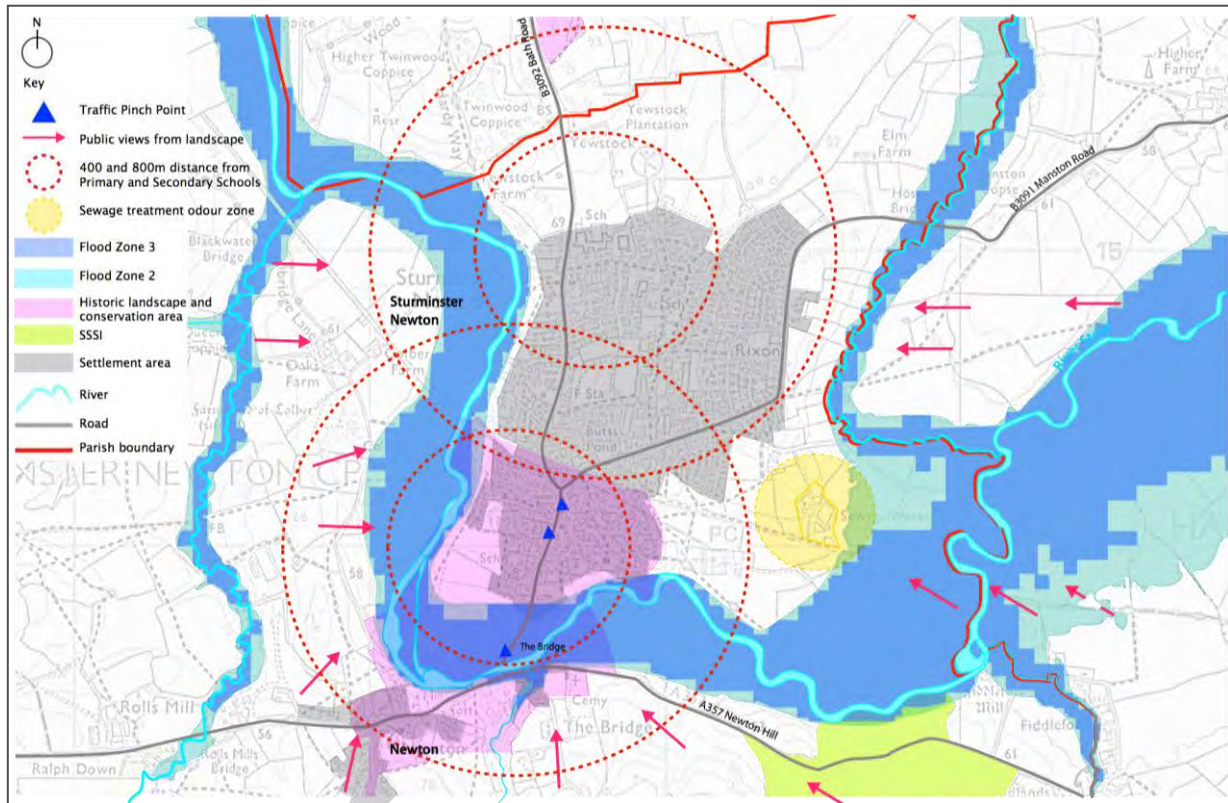
Allocated Sites	Indicative Capacity	Map 5 Ref	Policy Ref
COMPLETIONS (from April 2011 to March 2016)	19		
LOCAL PLAN IDENTIFIED LARGE SITES	255		
Market Fields: East of Bath Road, North of the Livestock Market	80	1	24
Station Road - Former Creamery and Car Park	40	2	20
North Honeymead Fields: Land North of North Fields	100	3	29
Land South Of Elm Close and Friars Moor	35	4 (part)	32
'INFILL' SITES WITHIN THE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY	85		
Market Hill Site - land at junction with Station Road	25	5	21
Clarks Yard site and other land at the Bath Road / Old Market Hill junction	25	6	22
Hammonds Builders Yard	5	7	35
Former Council offices, north of Stour View Close	10	8	25
William Barnes Primary School	20	9	34
'WINDFALL'	29		
SUB-TOTAL	388		
ADDITIONAL SITES	106		
Land at Yewstock, Bath Road	8	10	26
Land North of Manston Road	30	11	30
Land East of Elm Close Farm off Bull Ground Lane	60	4 (part)	32
Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse, Newton	8	12	39
TOTAL	494		

Map 5. Settlement Boundary, main Housing Allocations



- 4.3.2 As a result of its underlying landform, the river and its floodplain, and its historic pattern of growth (with some of the historic lanes that access parts of the town unable to accommodate more traffic, and Newton separated from the town by the main road, river and causeway), the town appears to have limited future development potential that would be considered 'sustainable'. The key constraints are shown on Map 6. Whether Sturminster Newton should remain a location for significant growth in the future in light of these issues, is a matter that needs to be considered further by the Local Planning Authority in reviewing the Local Plan's spatial strategy.

Map 6. Sturminster Newton – Constraints to further growth³



Policy 7. Housing numbers and locations

This Plan makes provision for at least 457 new dwellings as a minimum in the parish of Sturminster Newton between 2011 and 2031, sufficient to meet the Local Plan requirement and needs of the community. New dwellings should be located within the settlement boundary (as revised under Policy 8), on allocated sites (as shown on Map 5) or delivered through the conversion of existing buildings (under Policy 40).

Green field sites outside the settlement boundary should not be released.

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Settlement Boundary

- 4.3.3 Changes have been made to the existing settlement boundary, with the new boundary as shown on Map 5 and explained in more detail in the area chapters that follow. The evidence base includes a report on the changes⁴ to the Settlement Boundary with their rationale.

Policy 8. Settlement boundary revision

The settlement boundary, as carried forward into the 2016 Local Plan, is amended as shown on Map 5

Housing Types (including tenure and size)

- 4.3.4 In terms of housing types, research shows that housing development should be focused on providing:
- Properties particularly suited to older people of all incomes, including those 'down-sizing' from larger family homes to housing more suited to their needs. As a guide, the latest housing needs evidence (the 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment) indicates that 25% of the total supply should be designed to meet the needs of new residents, and a higher proportion would help cater for the needs of existing residents that may be unsuitably housed. 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 Lifetime Homes standards or the higher optional standards set in Building Regulations). A requirement for a proportion of all new homes to meet these higher optional standards should be considered through the Local Plan review.
 - Affordable housing of all types. 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), is required, along with more modest-sized semi-detached and terraced properties sold on the open market. For properties delivered as affordable housing under the Local Plan policy, priority should be given to housing those with a local connection, which is defined for the purpose of this Plan as:
 - > people born and still living in the Parish, or who have lived in the Parish for at least two years; or
 - > people whose close family (grandparents, parents, siblings, children) are currently living, and have lived for over two years, in the Parish; or
 - > people in permanent full-time or part-time work in the Parish, and have been so employed for the last two years (without a break in the period of employment for more than three months).
 - > key workers required in the Parish as set out from time to time by the Town Council.
 - some high quality larger homes in attractive locations that would appeal to high-income/skilled working families, supporting the local economy. As a guide, the latest housing needs evidence (the 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment) indicates that about 16% of the total open market supply should be for 4 bedroom or larger homes. Where family homes are provided, consideration could usefully be given to the internal room sizes, and flexible/adaptable layouts to allow home working. Our interviews with school aged children highlighted that rooms that are too small do not allow sufficient space for homework and other activities, whereas accommodation that is designed to be flexible to meet different lifestyles is inherently more sustainable.
- 4.3.5 A mix of housing types is generally considered to be desirable. The exact mix will need to take into account the above needs, as this provides some guidance on possible proportions whilst providing some flexibility. Some sites may lend themselves more readily to certain types of housing, and where this is the case on allocated sites, this has been highlighted in the Plan. The delivery of the housing

⁴ Note: The examination of the submission version of the neighbourhood plan resulted in the approach set out in the Settlement Boundary Report to the allocations not being adopted.

types outlined above should be monitored, to check whether the policy delivers the overall mix that is needed across all sites.

- 4.3.6 The layout of larger housing developments should also make sure that affordable housing is integrated in terms of location and design, to promote more inclusive communities. Housing specifically designed for older people or people with mobility issues should, in general, be provided in locations reasonably close, and with reasonably level access, to the town centre.

Policy 9. Housing types (including tenure and size)

The type (including tenure, size and quality) of new housing should reflect the need and demand for the following dwellings, and where feasible and compatible with the character of the area, achieve a mix of these house types on larger sites of 11 or more homes:

- > affordable housing (including the potential for low cost starter homes and other types specified in national policy) based on up-to-date evidence of local needs, at or above the level required by the Local Plan*
- > 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*
- > high quality larger homes*

In allocating affordable housing, priority should be given to housing people with a local connection to the Parish, followed by those with a connection to adjoining parishes.

4.4 Important Community Buildings and Associated Land

- 4.4.1 Research for this Plan has identified important community buildings and associated land, where such land is important to its function, that should be supported because they are home to key community facilities and services, and should be given protection from changes that would undermine their future provision.
- 4.4.2 The main community buildings providing such facilities and services are identified in the following table. Critical community buildings are considered to be the most important because of the impact the loss of such a building would have on the social well-being of the community. Other important community buildings are also valued, but due to the overall number of such buildings in the town or more narrowly focused benefits, there may be greater scope for change that could still provide overall public benefit.
- 4.4.3 The protection should also extend to the land associated with the functioning of the community facilities - such as the parking areas and amenity / recreation spaces. The main public open spaces, which are also considered to be important community facilities, are designated as Local Green Spaces under Policy 4 and are therefore protected.

Table 5. Important Community Buildings

Type	Critical (C) and other important Community Buildings	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.
Education and training facilities	Sturminster Newton High School (C) William Barnes Primary School (C) Pre-School provision such as Stepping Stones Pre-School (part of the Primary School) Adult Learning such as The Exchange Learning Centre, Yewstock School and College	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
Local centre facilities	Post Office (C) Swan Inn (C) The Bull Tavern (C) The White Hart	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.
Medical/Social Care facilities	Sturminster Newton Medical Centre (C) Old Market Dental Practice Stour View Complex (Stour View and Stour Castle centres) Sturminster Dental Care	The Medical Centre provides critical services for all NHS patients, centrally located in a modern, purpose-built building. The Stour View Complex is a community day service providing day care for older people, adults with physical or learning disabilities and respite for their carers.
Sport and recreation built facilities	Sturminster Newton Leisure Centre (C) Sturminster Newton United Football Club (C) Sturminster Newton Amateur Boxing Club	The Leisure Centre provides a range of sporting activities and facilities for the High School and the community. The Football Club building has a club house providing changing and social facilities and is adjacent to their football pitch. Although of community value, the boxing club has a more limited scope.

- 4.4.4 Where there is more than one building providing similar services, it may be possible that the other buildings could be improved to make sure that the loss is not felt. Where development would result in the loss of the whole or part of an important community building or associated land, 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 building.
- 4.4.5 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 buildings in the local area should be taken into account.

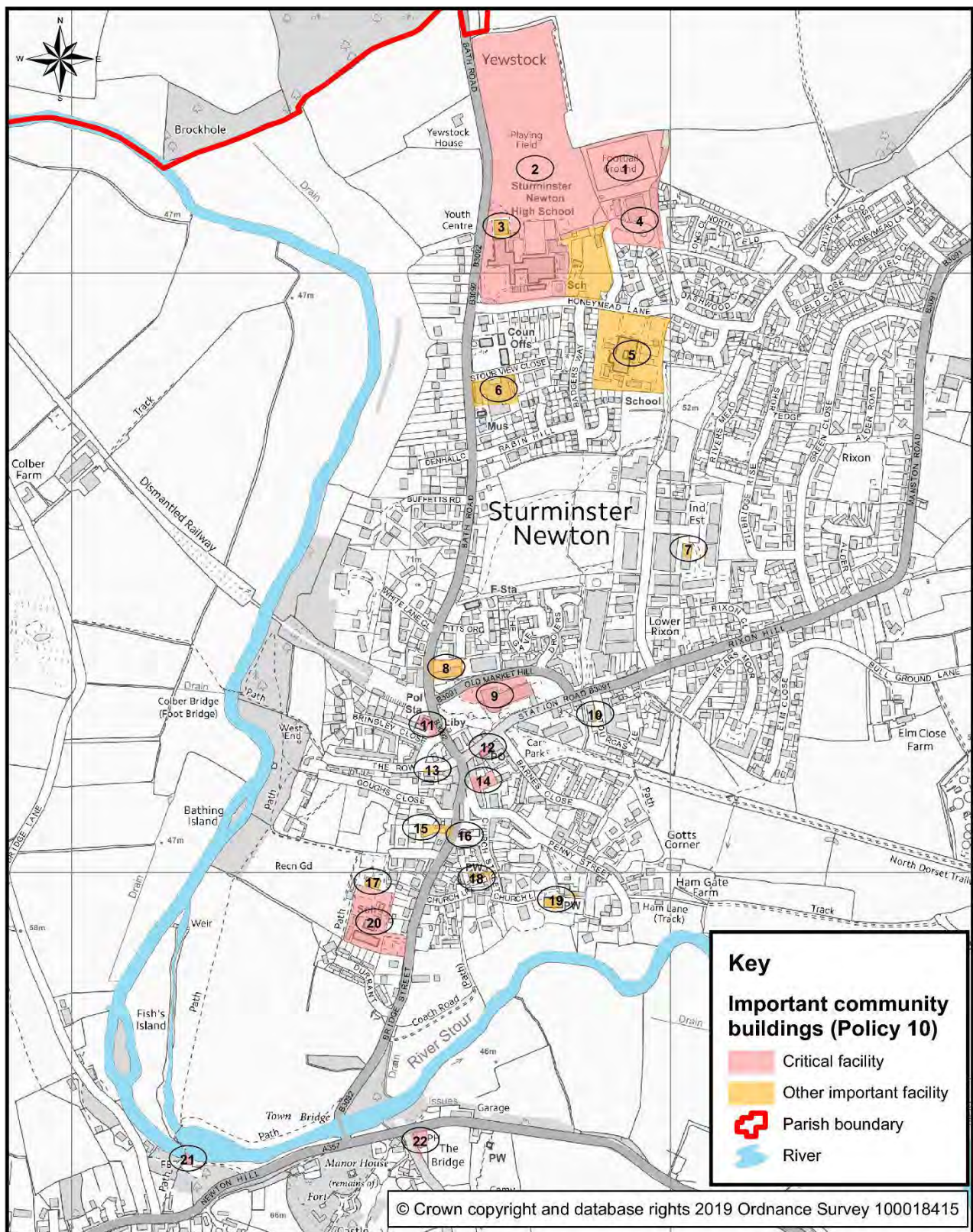
Policy 10. Important Community Buildings and associated land

The following locally important community buildings and associated land are protected. These should be retained and allowed to modernise and adapt to enable the community facilities they provide 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 buildings and associated land will be strongly resisted. Where there may be more than one building providing similar services locally, the loss or reduction may be off-set by improvements elsewhere.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Important Community building and Associated Land</u>	<u>Importance</u>	<u>No on Map 7</u>
TOWN CENTRE AREA	The Exchange, Old Market Hill	Critical	9
	The Post Office	Critical	12
	Town Council Chamber, Old Market Hill		9
	Community office, Old Market Hill		9
	Royal British Legion Club, Bath Road		8
	Sturminster Newton Medical Centre, Old Market Hill	Critical	9
	Old Market Dental Practice, Old Market Hill		9
	Sturminster Newton Library, Bath Road	Critical	11
	Museum, Market Cross	Critical	16
	Swan Inn, Market Place	Critical	14
BATH ROAD AND OLD MARKET AREA	The White Hart, Market Cross		15
	Stour View Complex, Bath Road		6
	Sturminster Dental Care, Station Road		10
	Sturminster Newton Amateur Boxing Club, Butts Pond		7
	Youth Centre		3
HONEYMEAD AND NORTHFIELDS	Yewstock School and College		5
	Sturminster Newton High School	Critical	2
	Sturminster Newton Leisure Centre	Critical	4
	Sturminster Newton United Football Club	Critical	1
SOUTHERN FRINGE AREA	William Barnes Primary (including the pre-school)	Critical	20
	Christian Fellowship Hall, The Row		13
	Methodist Hall, Church Street		18
	St Mary's Church and Hall, Church Lane		19
	Scout Hall, Rickets Lane		17
RURAL AREA	Sturminster Newton Mill, Newton Hill	Critical	21
	The Bull Tavern Public House, Town Bridge	Critical	22

Map 7. Important Community Buildings and Associated Land



Open space and recreation provision in new housing developments

4.4.6 In support of the neighbourhood plan, work has been carried out to assess open space and recreation provision at Sturminster Newton. The following table seeks to indicate, on the basis of the work carried out, whether the provision of public open spaces and recreation provision in Sturminster Newton meets, or falls short of, the standard required in the 2016 North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2016) (the standards required in the Local Plan being the Fields in Trust (FiT) standards) and the main priorities for the future provision in and around the town. These priorities are the basis of decisions to be taken under Policy 11 that follows.

Table 6. Open Space and Recreation Provision Priorities

Type	Assessment	Main priorities and recommended standards of provision
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.	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. See Policy 28 for more details of the proposals for this area.
Parks, gardens and amenity green space	The town lacks these areas when assessed against the FiT standards, particularly in the older areas. Even 'double counting' the two recreation grounds there is a shortfall. They do make a significant contribution to the new housing areas in the town (such as the North Fields open space).	Amenity green spaces should be provided, at a level in line with the FiT standard. This should be part of a landscaping strategy and designed for informal play.
Equipped play areas	There are toddler play areas in the newer housing areas, but the evidence, supporting the plan, suggests existing provision of Local Areas of Play (LAPs), when considered against the FiT standard, is insufficient. The equipped play areas in the War Memorial Recreation Ground in the south of the town and Rixon in the north, aimed at children who can go out to play independently, are well placed to serve most residents. There are currently no facilities aimed at older children and young people therefore the relevant FiT standards for this group are not being met. There are no multi-use games areas (MUGAs), however work on building a Skate Bowl on Rixon Recreation Ground has been completed.	In addition to maintaining and improving the play offer for all ages at appropriate locations, for which contributions will be sought at the equivalent FiT standards, a particular priority is to provide for older children (potentially in the education/leisure hub or within one of the main recreation areas).

Type	Assessment	Main priorities and recommended standards of provision
Publicly accessible natural green space	The town appears reasonably well served with Butts Pond, the open space around the Mill and Town Bridge, but is still just over 2ha below the recommended standards.	The main priority is to maintain the existing sites and improve recreational trails around the edge of the town and linking to the countryside (see Policy 14). A further area of natural green space can also be provided within the Elm Close sites (see Policy 32), and Butts Pond LNR may be extended as part of the mitigation measures for the Market Fields site (see Policy 24). Where on-site or related off-site provision is not possible, contributions towards identified and costed projects will be sought.
Allotments	There is a shortfall and need for more allotments, against the current local standards – the standards suggest additional allotment land is needed for the existing population.	The larger development sites, and in particular land at Elm Close (see Policy 32), should provide the opportunity to deliver much needed allotments to achieve the required standards. Where not provided on-site, contributions will be sought.

- 4.4.7 The most valued public recreation spaces have been identified and designated as Local Green Spaces. Development should not result in the loss or reduction of these public recreation areas except in very special circumstances (see Policy 4).
- 4.4.8 The following policy outlines considerations for future provision of public open spaces in conjunction with new housing development. The standards sought are outlined in Table 6. Where financial contributions are sought towards off-site provision, the level of contribution may be adjusted dependent on-site viability. In addition to space for recreation, consideration also needs to be given to potential wildlife and other benefits that such spaces can deliver. An approved biodiversity appraisal and mitigation plan should be submitted with planning applications for sites of more than 0.1ha in size, or where there are known protected species or important habitats/habitat features, in line with the Dorset Biodiversity Protocol. The mitigation plan may, for example, secure enhancement measures through the protection and improvement of wildlife features within the open space areas, or specify which areas should remain undeveloped and managed for wildlife interest.
- 4.4.9 New spaces created during the lifetime of this Plan will be protected under Policy 4 and should be considered for Local Green Space designation when the plan is reviewed.

Policy 11. Open space and recreation provision and standards in new housing developments

Housing development proposals will be expected to make provision for outdoor sport and recreation in line with the standards of provision (those standards being the Fields in Trust (FiT) standards) and Neighbourhood Plan priorities set out in Table 6.

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

- > *the open space is readily and safely 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 taking into account any findings of the site's biodiversity appraisal and mitigation plan where required*
- > *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*

4.5 Movement around the Parish

- 4.5.1 Transport issues are a frequently raised concern of local residents. The importance of having good road access for the economy is acknowledged nationally. However, this must be 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 motorcar.
- 4.5.2 There is no single solution, but it is clear that decisions should be based on considering how to support alternatives to using the car and whether the changes would result in a safe network of routes, at the same time acknowledging that most people and businesses are currently reliant on vehicles and deliveries.

Key Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

- 4.5.3 As part of the research outlined in Section 3.6, the key pedestrian and cycle routes were identified. These routes (and proposed improvements to them outlined in Table 7) should allow safe and attractive walking and cycling access into the town centre, to the main employment areas (particularly from the town to North Dorset Business Park) and to the schools and leisure facilities, and should be able to be used by people with mobility difficulties. The proposed standards include an even surface, dropped kerbs, and pavements of suitable width so pushchairs/cyclists can pass, with lighting where appropriate. Current best practice (such as the 2014 International Cycling Infrastructure Best Practice Study and 2015 Designing for Walking) advises at least 3m for combined cycle and pedestrian routes and at least 2m for pedestrian-only routes. Adjustments may be needed to these standards due to the historic character of the area.
- 4.5.4 It is important that in designing the layout of development within or adjoining the town, thought is given as to how the site connects to this key pedestrian and cycle route network. Developments likely to generate significant traffic movements should be accompanied by a transport assessment, and this should include consideration of the potential likely impact of increased traffic on the safety of this network, and how any adverse impacts can be mitigated. Where improvements to the network are necessary to mitigate adverse impacts, these will normally be secured through a legal agreement such as a S106 planning obligation.

Policy 12. Delivering a safe and convenient travel network

Development should not result in an adverse impact on the safety of users of the key pedestrian and cycle route network shown on Map 8. The delivery of the improvements identified in Table 7 will be supported.

New developments shall incorporate existing formal and informal rights of way, and connect to the key pedestrian and cycle route network (see Map 8), where feasible. Where pedestrian routes or combined pedestrian/cycle routes are provided that form part of, or provide access from the site to, this network, they should be safe and convenient, and meet the following standards:

- > routes should be reasonably direct, with good surveillance, avoiding sharp turns and confined corridors (e.g. not in between 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 conform to current best practice 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 benefit*
- > within the built-up areas of the town, energy-efficient lighting shall be provided to facilitate safe use at night by pedestrians, provided this can be achieved without significantly adding to light pollution*

- 4.5.5 The routes shown on Map 8 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 12 as funds become available. The proposed enhancements are detailed in Table 7 below. Further information about these routes can be found in the following Area Sections of this Neighbourhood Plan, and in the Conditions Report that is part of our evidence base. Where the proposed enhancements require use of private land, any scheme will need to be subject to the landowner's agreement.

Map 8. Key Pedestrian and Cycle Route Network

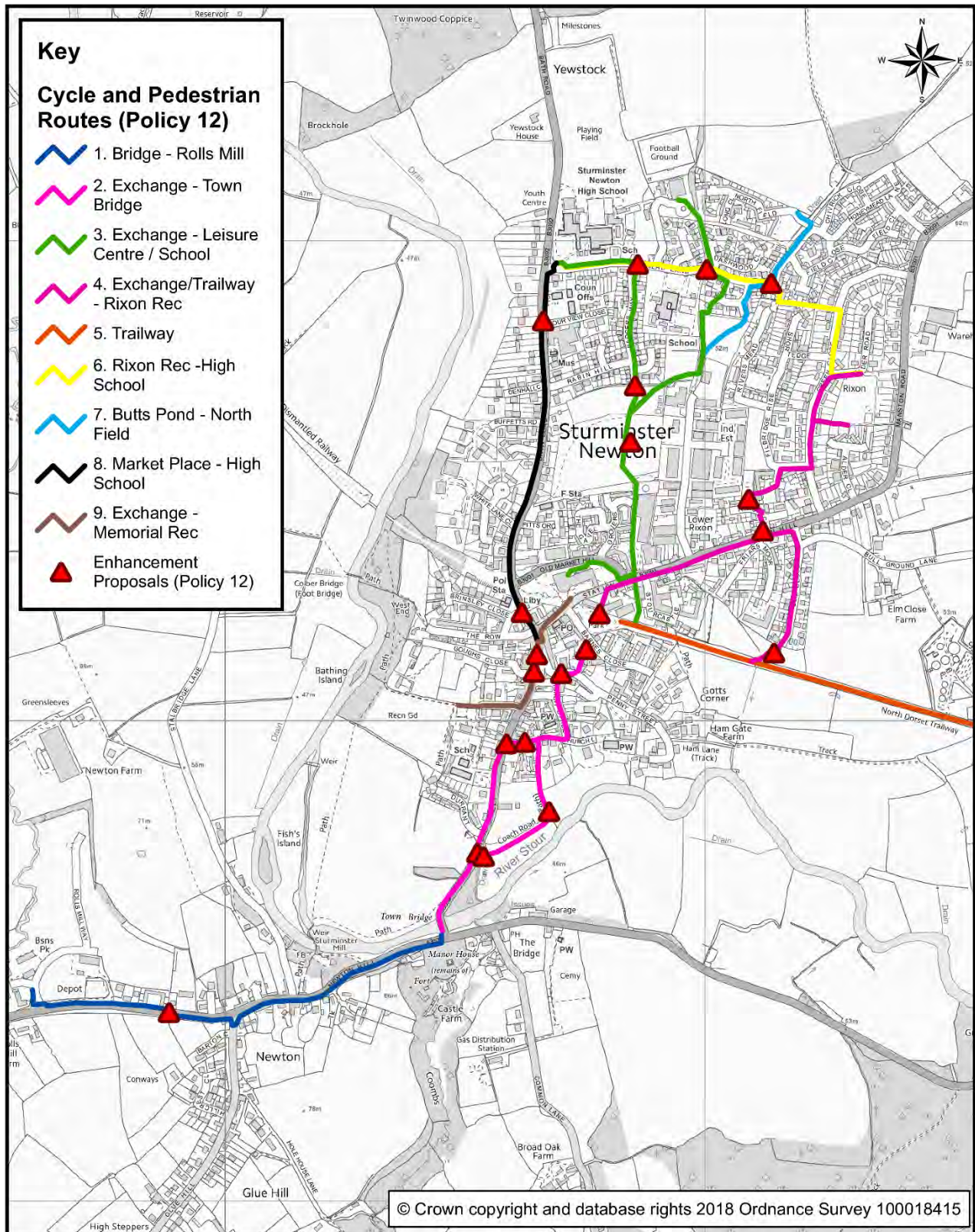


Table 7. Proposed future enhancements of Key Pedestrian/Cycle Routes

Route	Proposals
Route 1 (Blue): Town Bridge to North Dorset Business Park,	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	<p>Ensure route connecting from the Exchange across Station Road site is integrated into comprehensive design to redevelop this area.</p> <p>Lovers Lane requires additional lighting, widening, resurfacing and its alignment adjusted; recent improvements have been made to the Penny Street end and further improvements should be included as part of future redevelopment of other adjoining land.</p> <p>Renew road surfacing along Penny Street & Church Street to indicate shared surface.</p> <p>Install dropped kerb at bottom end of Church Street.</p> <p>Replace kissing gate at end of old Coach Road with a more accessible barrier.</p> <p>Upgrade path across the meadow so that it is suitable for wheelchair use.</p> <p>Provide accessible barrier at exit onto Bridge Street, and provide raised crossing (i.e. level with pavement).</p> <p>Renew road surfacing along Church Lane to Bridge Street to indicate shared surface.</p> <p>Provide raised crossing on Bridge Street (i.e. level with pavement) or road narrowing.</p>
Route 3 (Green): Town Centre Exchange to Leisure Centre/High School	<p>Ensure route across Market Fields is integrated into comprehensive development of this area, including level access onto Badgers Way.</p> <p>Insert raised crossing (i.e. level with pavement) or road narrowing/traffic calming to provide clear and safe crossing point of Honeymead Lane opposite Badgers Way.</p> <p>Insert raised crossing (i.e. level with pavement) or road narrowing/traffic calming to provide clear and safe crossing of Honeymead Lane opposite Dashwood Close.</p>
Route 4 (Purple): Station Road Car Park/Trailway to Rixon Rec	<p>Ensure route across Station Road site is integrated into redevelopment.</p> <p>Provide a safe crossing over Rixon Hill to Rixon Close using traffic calming and building out Rixon Close pavement to improve sight lines.</p> <p>Widen (to 2m) and make up pathway across Filbridge Rise play area.</p> <p>Ensure route from Trailway to Elm Close is integrated into housing development.</p>
Route 5 (Red): Trailway	<p>Ensure route from existing end of Trailway across Station Road site and Railway Gardens is integrated into comprehensive design to redevelop this area.</p> <p>Ensure route through Clarkes Yard is protected in housing development.</p> <p>Support extension of Trailway towards Stalbridge.</p>
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): Butts Pond to N Field	A safe crossing over Honeymead Lane at same point as for Route 6.
Route 8 (Black): Market Place to High School	<p>Pavement surface needs improvement between zebra crossing and Brinsley Close.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>A proper crossing of Bath Road is required between Stour View Close and Honeymead Lane in conjunction with traffic calming where the pavement crosses from one side to the other.</p>
Route 9 (Brown): Exchange to Memorial Rec	<p>Slightly widen by 150mm the pavement between Goughs Close and Candy's shop.</p> <p>Consider modest widening of pavement on west side of Market Place as part of enhancement scheme.</p>

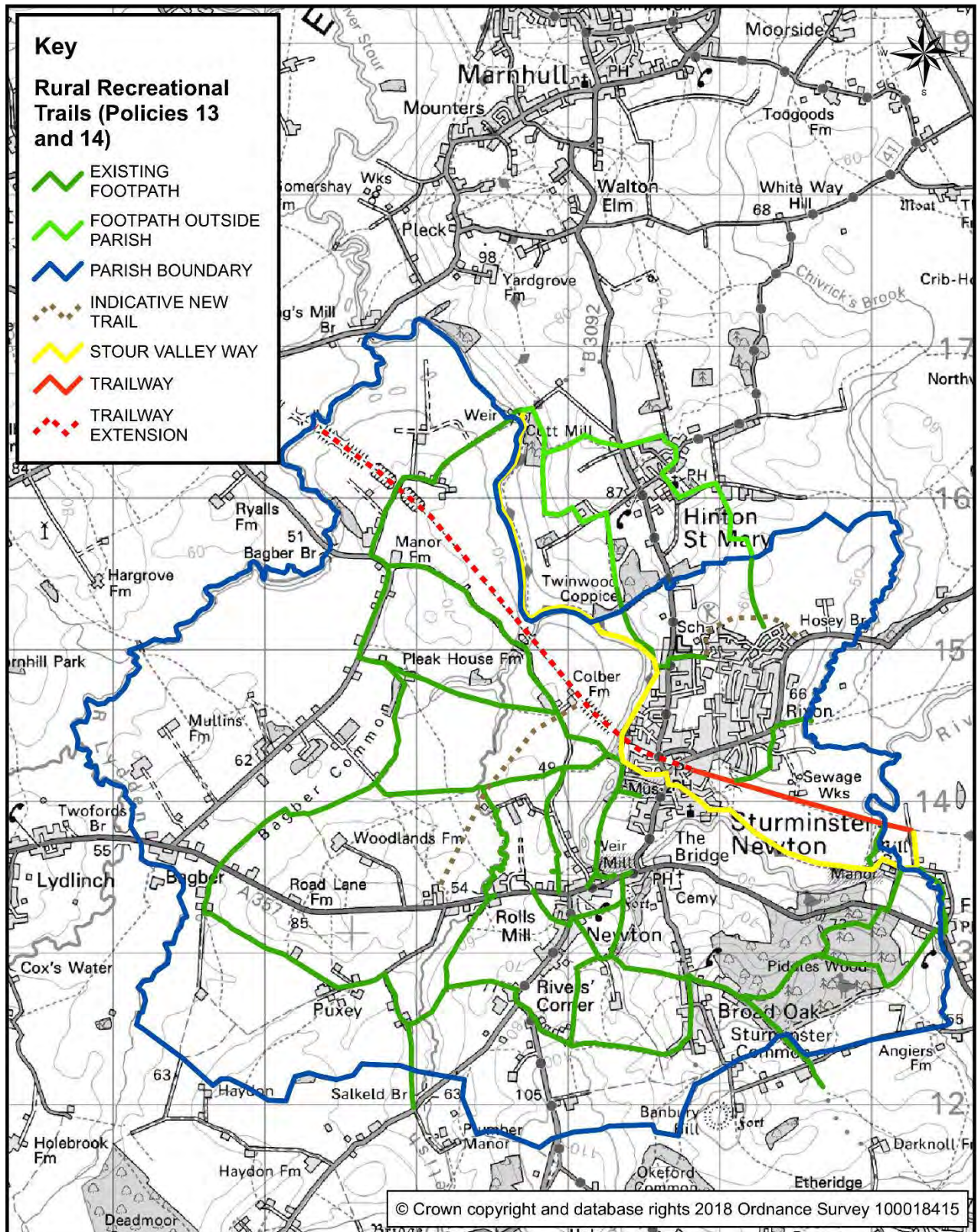
The Trailway and rural recreational trails

- 4.5.6 The Trailway is a walking, cycling and horse riding route that runs along the old Somerset and Dorset Railway line and connects some picturesque villages in the Blackmore Vale. The existing route from Sturminster Newton to Blandford Forum, passes beneath Hambledon Hill and alongside the meandering River Stour. The project to extend the Trailway westwards is particularly significant due to the major economic and social benefits this will bring to Sturminster Newton and the wider area.
- 4.5.7 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 over the River Stour before carrying on to the west. NDDC Local Plan Part 1 has specific policies relating to protection and extension of the Trailway to the west of the Town – please see Policies 4 (The Natural Environment – funding the trailway), 11 The Economy – supporting the North Dorset Business Park with a Trailway link and sustainable tourism), 13 (Grey Infrastructure – completing the Trailway), 15 (Green Infrastructure – improving the Trailway), 19 (Sturminster Newton – extension to the west).
- 4.5.8 The project will need to involve the landowners whose cooperation will be required 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 by the County Council Rangers indicates that a route through the town centre is unlikely to be suitable for equestrians, and, as such, an alternative route for these users (i.e. to bridleway standard) is being investigated.

Policy 13. The Trailway

The proposed Trailway extension follows the path of the former railway (as indicated on Maps 8 and 9). Where development is proposed that includes any part of this, the route should be safeguarded, in so far as this is practical, and its layout should be configured to provide a path suitable for cyclists and pedestrians in line with the standards set out in Policy 12.

Map 9. Policies 13 and 14 – The Trailway and other important rural recreational trails



- 4.5.9 In addition to the Trailway, there are a number of other well-maintained footpaths in the rural area that provide good links between settlements and also provide a valuable recreational resource. These include the Stour Valley Way and a well-used network of footpaths from Broad Oak, linking to Newton, Puxey, Fiddleford and beyond. The key routes are shown on Map 9.
- 4.5.10 Opportunities to add to this network, by completing some of the 'missing links' to a perimeter trail around Sturminster, may be delivered through the related urban expansion planned for the town. Policy 38 provides more detail on the traffic free future link between the Town and the North Dorset Business Park proposed in the Local Plan.
- 4.5.11 The Town Council, in conjunction with the Highways Authority, will seek to improve the network of recreational trails in the area, aimed at improving visitor experience and enhancing the recreational potential of these routes.

Policy 14. Rural recreational trails

Improvements to the network of recreational trails in the area, as shown on Map 9, will be sought. These will include:

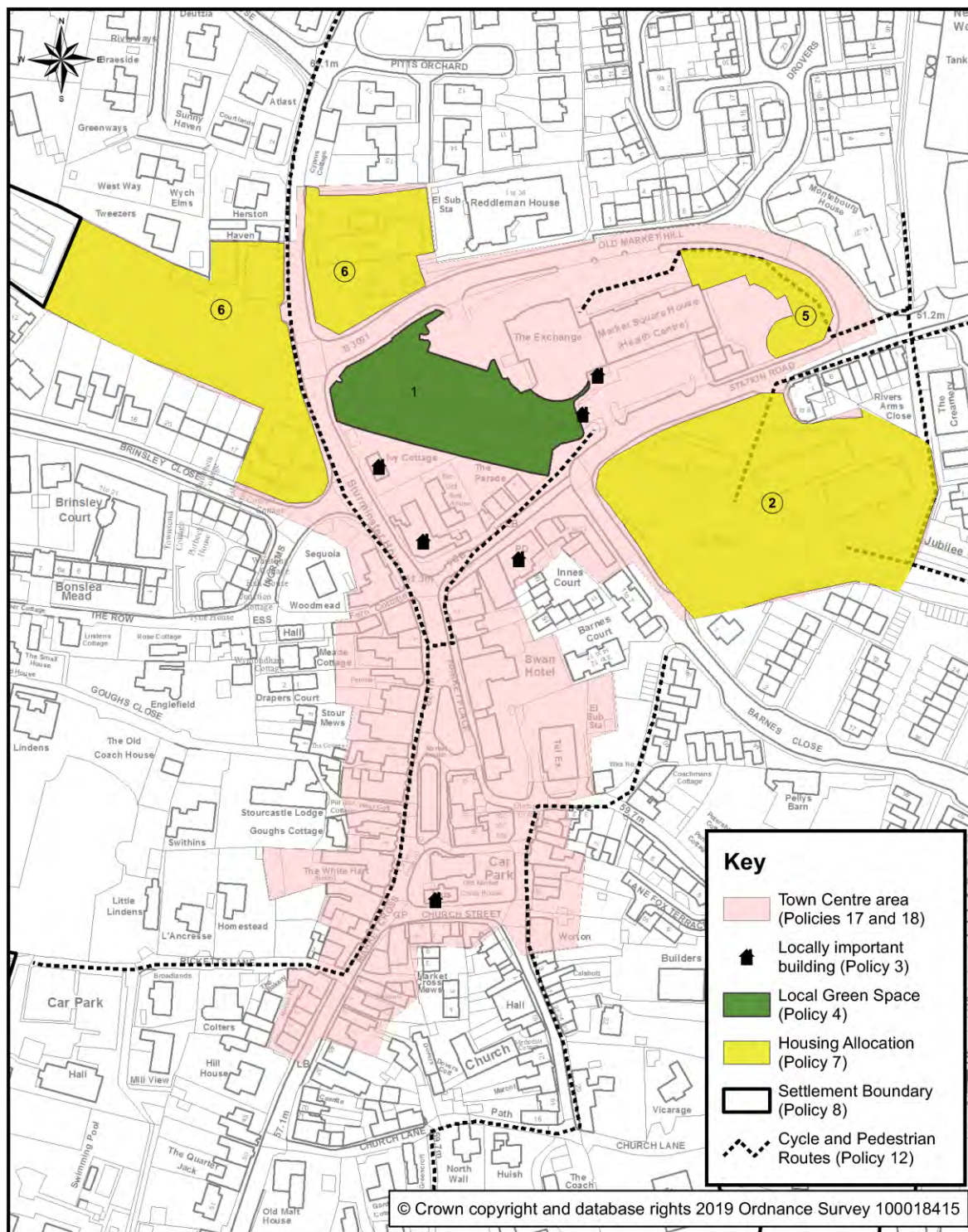
- > general improvements to the existing network to enhance recreational use*
- > the creation of a new link around the northern Perimeter (as indicated on Map 9), linking Manston Road to the Stour Valley Way, provided at the standards set out in Policy 12*
- > the creation of a new link from the Trailway to the North Dorset Business Park, as indicated on Map 9, provided at the standards set out in Policy 12*

4.6 Business Growth and Encouraging more Visitors

- 4.6.1 Our aims regarding business growth and increasing visitor numbers depend principally upon the future success of the town centre, the development and growth of traditional employment such as manufacturing and warehouse businesses, and the creation of new developments that will encourage people to visit the town and stay.
- 4.6.2 Agriculture remains a key part of the local economy in terms of its use of services and as a custodian of the countryside supporting tourism and protecting the environment of the area.
- 4.6.3 As most of the policies relating to these aims concern the town centre area or specific areas such as the North Dorset Business Park, there are no Parish-wide policies presented here.

5 Town Centre area

Map 10. Town Centre Area⁵



⁵ Please reference maps on pages 21, 25, 29, 35, 39, 42 and related policies for additional information relating to this area.

5.1 Introduction

Map 11. Definition of Town Centre (Policy 15) and Shopping Frontage Protection Zone (Policy 16)⁶

5.1.1 The town centre is the heart of the Parish and the main destination for most visitors. It contains the mix of 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. 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 visible line of the former railway track maintains the town's long association with the historic Somerset and Dorset Railway.



Concentration of town centre uses

5.1.2 The 'Town Centre Area' defines the boundary within which main town centre uses should locate, subject to certain criteria based on the main aims for the town centre. The town centre needs to embrace new challenges affecting high streets by accepting different, but appropriate new uses that make the most of the town's strengths.

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).

Some changes between these uses do not always need planning consent

Policy 15. Improving the Town Centre

Development proposals within the town centre area (as defined on Map 11) that demonstrate that they contribute to, and do not undermine, the improvement of the town centre as assessed against the following aspirations will be supported:

- > *maintaining a strong and vibrant retail presence within the town centre area, including the continued operation and expansion of the street market*

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- > *maintaining a range of services and facilities which attract visitors to the town (including cultural/arts/community venues, overnight accommodation and food/drink establishments)*
- > *providing opportunities for office-based employment, which complement and support the town centre's vitality and viability*
- > *providing opportunities for housing on otherwise underused upper floors*
- > *protecting and enhancing the area's historic and architectural charm*
- > *creating a safe and pedestrian friendly public realm*
- > *providing sufficient public and private car parking serving the town centre to cater for forecast needs*

Shopping Frontages Protection Zone

5.1.3 We have also defined the frontages where the loss of shop fronts and changes 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. The opening of the The Exchange, Co-op and other shops in the Station Road area has shifted 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. 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 policy for this area is similar to the flexible approach adopted in secondary shopping frontages in the Local Plan, but also allows for assembly and leisure uses to be located here, and other main town centre uses where there is an obvious risk that the premises would otherwise stand empty. The primary shopping area has not been defined in this neighbourhood plan, but it is intended that this will be defined as part of the Local Plan Review.

Policy 16. Uses in the shopping frontages protection zone

Within the main shopping frontages as shown on Map11, 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, alterations not in keeping with the character of the area and guidance in Policy 18, and the introduction of security shutters that would have a similarly detrimental impact, will be resisted.

5.2 The Character of the Town Centre Area

- 5.2.1 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.
- 5.2.2 The course of the former railway 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 developments have worked well, although others have not found the organic rhythm and charm that is inherent in the historic core to the south. This is particularly the case with the more massive and bulky structures along Old Market Hill.

- 5.2.3 The following policy has been drafted to guide new and infill development across the whole Town Centre Area.

Policy 17. Protecting 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 appreciation of the area's unique history. 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. 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.

Character description

Predominant character of the area and positive features:

Layout:

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

A network of narrow lanes and shared surface roads radiating from the town centre reflect the historic layout and development pattern of the old town and create enticing entrances to side streets. Plot shapes create 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 the 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 storeys 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:

Mainly edge of pavement development but generally free from extensive signage and clutter

Landscaping:

There is noticeably little green landscaping in the town centre, but this is felt to be appropriate in the areas designated as shopping frontage. 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 leafier feel

Important public spaces and views

- 5.2.4 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.
- 5.2.5 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. It provides a central open meeting place with many events taking place throughout the year. This is protected under Policy 4. The extension of the Trailway (under Policy 13) will also provide an important green corridor through this area.
- 5.2.6 The views into, and through, the historic centre are particularly important, with glimpses from the core area through to the back streets adding to its townscape character.

Important character buildings and features

- 5.2.7 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 homes such as The Town House and Worton House. A number of additional buildings/architectural features have been highlighted for the local interest and contribution they make, as described in the table below. Due to their contribution to the history or character of the area, these will be protected under Policy 3. 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 8. Town Centre Area – Locally Important Buildings/Architectural Features

<i>Ivy Cottage, Bath Road</i>	<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>
<i>Post Office, Station Road</i>	<i>Unassuming building with a long history of serving the town. Current shop front design is not in keeping with its heritage and detracts from the street scene</i>
<i>Symonds and Sampson's, corner of Bath Road and Station Road</i>	<i>Prominent building just off Market Place. The old police station constructed in 1859. County police sign still visible in stone on front wall, and the clock is a prominent feature</i>
<i>Town Museum, Market Cross</i>	<i>Although originally a much older building, it was rebuilt in the 1940s. It adds significantly to the attractiveness of the Town Centre in a prominent location</i>
<i>The Exchange, Station Road</i>	<i>Important hub in the town, providing purpose-built facilities for key civic and cultural functions, located on the site of the old cattle market</i>
<i>Market column outside The Exchange</i>	<i>Sculpted column commemorating Sturminster Newton's Livestock Market</i>

Shop fronts

- 5.2.8 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 individual businesses, and the town centre as a whole, attractive to potential customers. Proposals to restore traditional shop fronts will be encouraged.
- 5.2.9 Retailers may need some flexibility to adapt their shop front designs to meet evolving customer and market trends, and this 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.

Policy 18. Shop fronts

The design of new shop fronts and alterations to existing 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 the street scene more than the status of the building and its 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 general principles outlined below and the broader guidance contained in the North Dorset Guide to Shop Front Design.

Shop front design – general principles

THE STREET SCENE: 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 shop fronts. 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 shop front 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.

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



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

be resisted. A more modern, complementary style may be appropriate on other buildings subject to suitable scale/proportions, materials, colour palette and architectural detailing.

SECURITY MEASURES: 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 stall risers, 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.

5.3 Town Centre Traffic Management and Public Realm Improvements Project

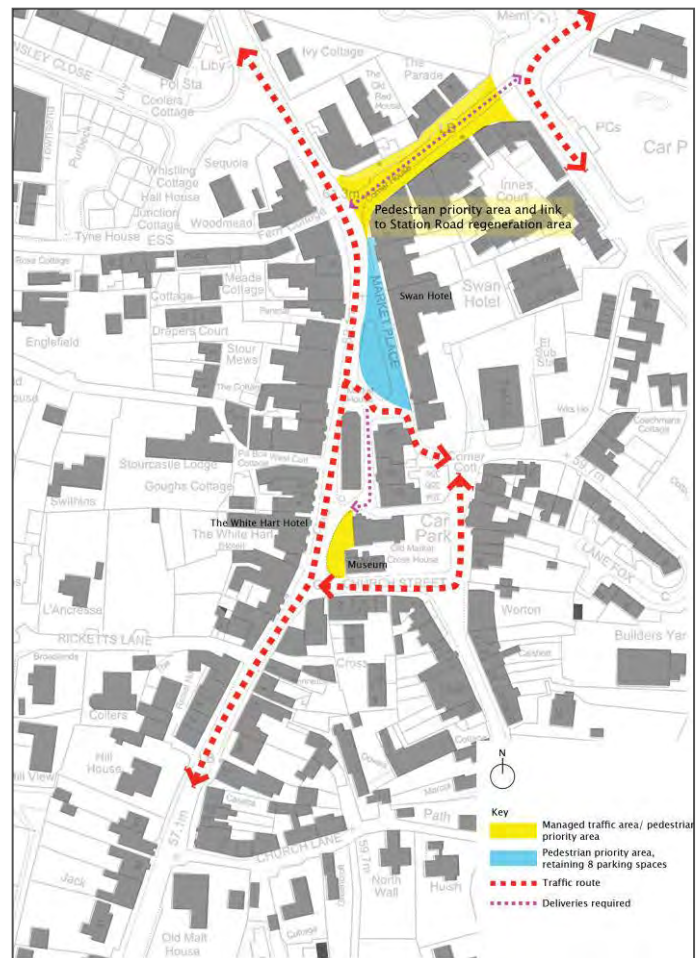
Map 12. Public Realm Improvement Area⁷

5.3.1 Having welcoming, pedestrian-friendly public areas – where people walk, linger and socialise outside – is one of the key components of 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 vehicular movement being prioritised at the expense of pedestrians.

5.3.2 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.

5.3.3 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.

5.3.4 The Market Place is the focal point of the historic town centre, and could be readily enhanced by considered environmental improvements such as planters or small trees in tubs, 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 attractive and useable public space for sitting out and socialising. The road 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 pedestrians (though the western pavement through the narrows could also be widened very slightly to make it safer for buggies and the like).



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5.3.5 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 building and making it more difficult to walk through. This area should be free of cars and 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.

Photo 5 Museum showing parking



Photo 4 Market Square showing parking



Town centre public realm improvements – our key objectives

- > To 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 eight short-stay disabled/shopper spaces and allow adequate access for deliveries
- > To make the area immediately west of the Museum an attractive open space for pedestrians and visitors to linger
- > To improve the ability for pedestrians and visitors, including those with buggies or young children, to move around the town centre area safely through clearly discernible shared surfaces, crossing points and adequate pavement widths
- > To improve Station Road as an attractive pedestrian thoroughfare linking the historic centre to The Exchange, whilst still allowing adequate access for deliveries
- > To retain the historic charm of the town centre, reducing clutter and using good quality materials throughout

5.3.6 In pursuit of these objectives, the Town Council, in conjunction with other relevant public bodies, will work together to develop a scheme of public realm enhancements in the town centre area aimed at improving the visitor experience and enhancing the historic character of the area. Details of the scheme will be subject to public consultation.

5.3.7 It is important that this project is completed in conjunction with or prior to the Station Road development and includes improvements to the linkage to the historic town centre along Station Road as a pedestrian route. This will avoid the risk that new development might attract customers away from the market and the older shops and, as a consequence, undermine their viability. The opportunity should also be taken to re-think the over-engineered roads in the northern section of the town centre, to provide an environment that is more pedestrian-friendly and appropriate to the town's Conservation Area.

5.3.8 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 in the town centre should not be reduced, particularly as further residential and other developments in the town centre may increase the demand for spaces.

5.3.9 The following policy sets out the general principles for remodelling the public realm in the town centre, derived from our understanding of the main issues, our objectives and best practice.

Policy 19. Town centre public realm improvements

The remodelling of the public realm in the town centre shown on Map 12 will be supported and should accord with the following principles:

- > designs should be based on encouraging a low speed environment of 20mph without the need for 20 mph signs or the inclusion of pedestrian barriers*
- > 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*
- > street clutter should be reduced – including poles and painted directions and markings on the road surface. Consideration should be given to whether each piece of signage is necessary, and the extent to which it could be more discreetly placed (e.g. by wall mounting or shared poles)*
- > 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 encouraged in the main public spaces. Utility covers (e.g. manholes) should be integrated into the street surface with the use of the same material*
- > 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*
- > 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*

5.4 Important Infrastructure, Routes and Connections

Community buildings

- 5.4.1 There is a wide range of community buildings 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 15 and 16. The White Hart and Swan Inn both provide useful meeting and socialising venues, as well as attracting visitors to the town.

Important Pedestrian Routes

- 5.4.2 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 recreational trail and also highlights the importance of 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 Clarkes Yard (formerly Snook's Yard). The design of the Trailway also provides the potential to introduce planting along this route corridor, effectively bringing the countryside through the town. As this key route crosses a number of areas, a general policy on its protection and future extension is included in this Plan (Policy 13).

- 5.4.3 The north-south links through the town centre include the B3092 on the western side (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 desired 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.
- 5.4.4 In terms of the routes through the centre, there is a 'missing link' from Market Hill to Lovers Lane, which should be secured through the development of the Station Road area. Lovers Lane itself, although a vital pedestrian link in the town, is narrow, hemmed in by high fences and poorly lit. The opportunity to improve it has been taken successfully with the recent development of the old Gasworks. In the longer-term it may be rerouted through the land currently used for the telephone exchange.

5.5 Areas of change

- 5.5.1 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 is understood that it could become available for redevelopment towards the end of the plan period.

The regeneration area in the northern part of the town centre

- 5.5.2 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 shown on Map 10. These are:
- Area 2** - land south of Station Road, including Streeters, Hansons, The Original Factory Shop and the Station Road car park
- Area 5** - land at the eastern end of the Medical Centre/Exchange site on the junction between Market Hill and Station Road
- Area 6** - land around the junction of Bath Road and the B3091 (the main site known as Clarkes 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)
- 5.5.3 The whole 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 Lovers 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 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.
- 5.5.4 The following sets out our objectives 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.

Regeneration area –our key objectives

- > to 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.
- > to 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.
- > to 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.
- > to extend the Trailway through the centre, reflecting the line of the former railway.
- > to support the continued functioning and success of The Exchange and Medical Centre.
- > to allow the existing businesses to continue, while accommodating a range of town centre uses, including offices, leisure/tourist facilities and housing.

Station Road (Map 10 area 2)

5.5.5 The future of the Station Road area was the subject of public consultation in 2008, following which a design brief was prepared to guide its development. The redevelopment of the Creamery site, in the east of the area, has been completed but a potential scheme for the remaining western part has not yet progressed. This may be due to a range of factors including development economics (which may mean that some elements like decked parking may not be affordable) and the 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.

Figure 2. Artist's illustration of how the area could be developed

5.5.6 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, an understanding of the local community's vision for the area that will be used to guide future development and influence investment decisions should help achieve a better end-result. It is envisaged that any redevelopment would retain, or provide suitable alternative premises for the existing businesses to continue.

5.5.7 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.

- 5.5.8 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.
- 5.5.9 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. External funding may need to be secured if the delivery of this public space would not otherwise be viable. 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. To create an attractive, traffic-free public space in this location, careful consideration should be given to how the traffic is routed to serve the new development and Barnes Close beyond. 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.
- 5.5.10 The retention of the overall number of parking spaces at their current level (about 120 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 regeneration area. Therefore, some flexibility can be included in the policy provided 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.
- 5.5.11 The lower end of the existing car park needs to be designed to provide an arrival point for the Trailway in the town. Consideration should also be given to whether it could also allow the creation of a stopping point for the potential heritage railway line linking Sturminster Newton and Shillingstone (see Section 12, Infrastructure Improvements and Future Projects).
- 5.5.12 It is considered that about 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 existing supermarket. Whether the new site could include an additional 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.
- 5.5.13 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 20. Station Road

Proposals for the mixed-use development of the Station Road area (as identified on Map 10 area 2) will be supported provided they 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 residual site to achieve the remaining outcomes.

- > Creation of a large outdoor motor 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, cycle parking provision 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 users of the Trailway. 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 and Trailway)*
- > The extension of The 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 and 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 emphasise the 'arrival points' for visitors and create clear visual and functional links from these points to and from the connecting routes with the historic part of the town centre that are safe, convenient and attractive.

Building heights will be generally 2-2.5 storeys 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 could 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 historic development.

Development of the Station Road area would benefit from the preparation of a Planning and Development Brief.

Market Hill (Map 10 area 5)

5.5.14 Land on the north side of Station Road on the eastern end of Market Place House is the last remaining parcel of land to be developed from the previous livestock market area. It had become an eyesore which local residents have been keen to see improved. SturQuest, our local community partnership, engaged 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.

5.5.15 It is a relatively small site, with frontage on three sides and a parking/servicing area for the adjacent

The Community Garden Project – an example of community effort and collaboration

In 2016, a local landscape designer produced a plan for the community garden. Funds 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 is now maintained by Sturminster Newton Town Council, the labour and plants were provided by enthusiastic local groups and individuals.

supermarket 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.

5.5.16 Its proximity to the town centre makes it ideally suited for more elderly persons' accommodation.

Policy 21. Market Hill site

The redevelopment of the Market Hill site, as shown on Map 10 area 5 will be supported, provided all the following criteria are met:

- > *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 sight 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 entrance to the town centre from the east.*

Clarkes Yard and other land at the Bath Road/Old Market Hill junction (Map 10 area 6)

- 5.5.17 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. The potential site area also includes 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.
- 5.5.18 The road frontages of all of these sites are particularly prominent in the street scene due to the more elevated nature of the land relative to Old Market Hill, and to Bath Road as it descends into the historic part of the town centre. This is emphasised further by their position on an important road junction which acts as an arrival point to the town centre. As the sites may well come forward separately, due to the different land ownerships, it is important that their designs take account of the potential future redevelopment of the remaining area so that the area as a whole presents an attractive and consistent frontage onto the adjoining roads. Further evidence of the importance of attractive frontages at this site is contained in Matrix's Character Appraisal report of October 2015 "It should be noted that all the potential redevelopment sites currently have unattractive frontages, and that there is therefore a real opportunity to significantly enhance this part of town through the redevelopment process".
- 5.5.19 Clarkes Yard was created by 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 1863. There are trees along the western edge of the site and an attractive and 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.
- 5.5.20 If the landowner is willing, an alternative option to housing would instead be to 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.

5.5.21 Access into these sites will require careful consideration, given their proximity to a road junction and the long-term strategy of routing the Trailway 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.

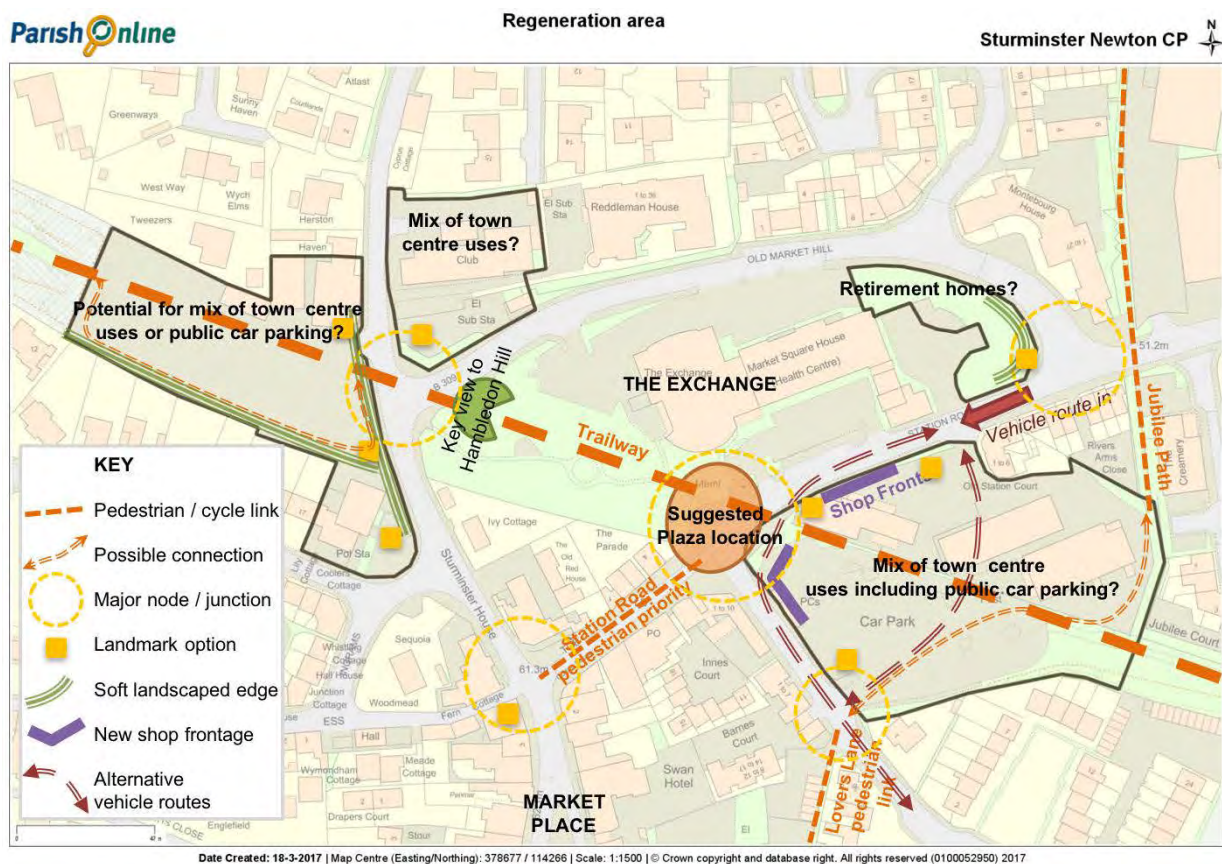
Policy 22. *Clarkes Yard site and other land at the Bath Road/Old Market Hill junction*

The redevelopment of Clarkes Yard and other land at the Bath/Old Market Hill junction adjoining (as shown on Map 10 area 6) will be supported, provided all the following criteria are met:

- > *it is for housing or main town centre uses that would be compatible with existing uses in the immediate locality*
- > *soft landscaping is included along the road frontage creating an attractive street scene*
- > *the scale of development is no more than 2½ storeys, and includes a mix of heights, and interest and variation in the building design. One or two landmark buildings facing onto the main roads (Bath Road and Old Market Hill) should be provided to reflect the importance of the junction as a key arrival point to the town centre, and be designed to have clear visual and functional links with the historic part of the town centre*
- > *the layout of the development enables the continuation of the Trailway through this area, in line with Policy 13*
- > *community buildings are either retained within the development or relocated to a suitable alternative site, in line with Policy 10*

Development of Area 6 on Map 10 would benefit from the preparation of a Planning and Development Brief.

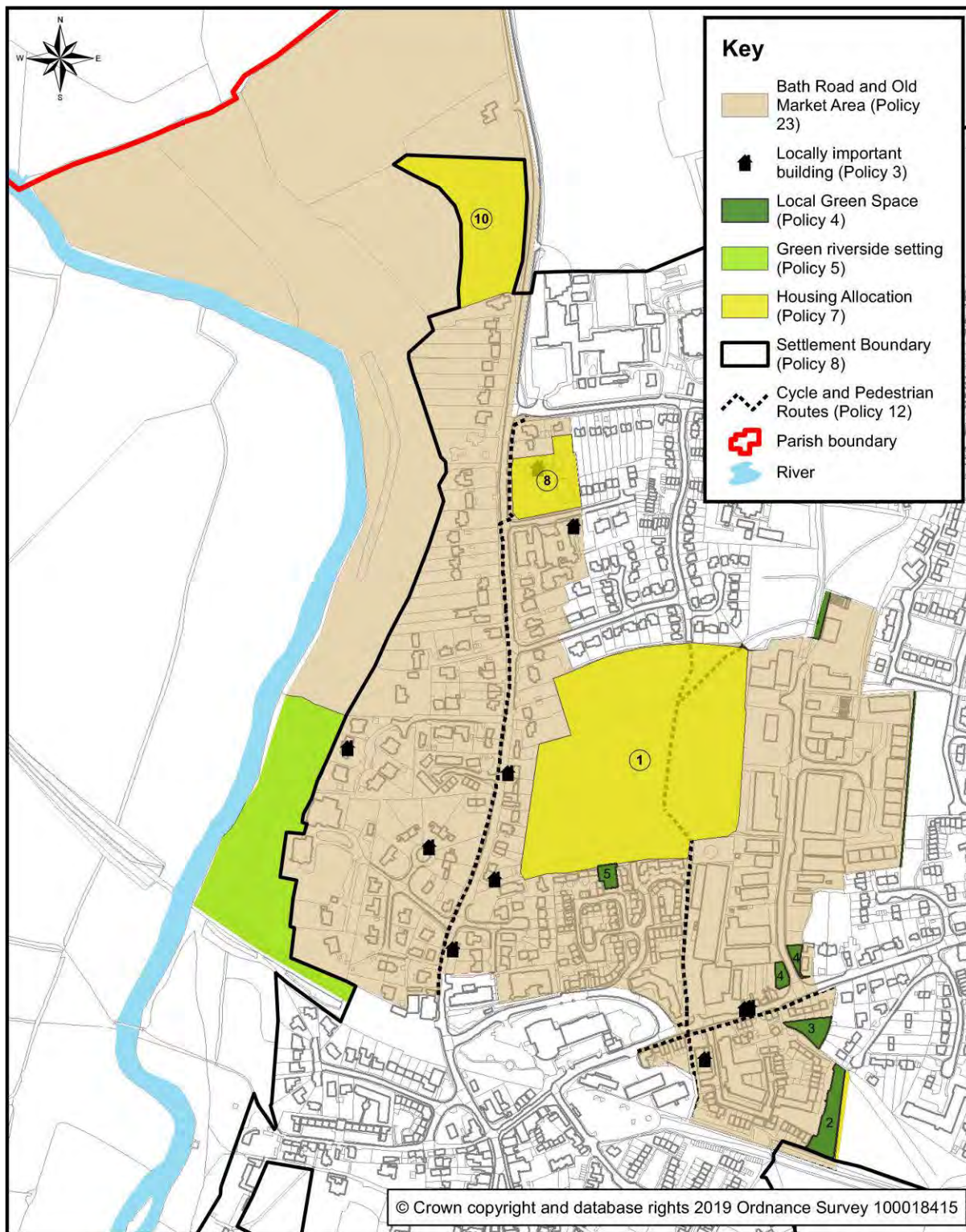
Figure 3. Town Centre Regeneration Area – concept and issues diagram⁸



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6 Bath Road and Old Market Area

Map 13. Bath Road and Old Market Area⁹



⁹ Please reference maps on pages 21, 25, 29, 35, 39, 42 and related policies for additional information relating to this area

6.1 The Bath Road and Old Market Area: an Overview

- 6.1.1 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.
- 6.1.2 The Bath Road (B3092) running north along a slight ridge, with the River Stour to its west, provides access to 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 employment within Butts Pond industrial estate. The industrial buildings are largely hidden from view, on the lower ground between the Bath Road and Rixon ridges, but they generate considerable vehicular movements from the single access close to the town centre.
- 6.1.3 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.

6.2 The Character of the Area

- 6.2.1 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.
- 6.2.2 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 it is relatively recent 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 23. Protecting 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 and seeking opportunities for improvement (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 one to two-storey and be subservient to the landscape, using design and materials to avoid being prominent in views from the west (see Policy 2) 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.

<u>Character description</u>	<u>Predominant character of the area, positive features and opportunities for improvement:</u>	
	Bath Road Area	Old Market Area (excluding Butts Pond)
Layout:	Ribbon development in comparatively generous plots along Bath Road with relatively spacious cul de sac development on level ground closer to the town centre. Buildings avoid the lower slopes west of Bath Road	Relatively dense developments accessed by a series of twisting culs de sac. Buildings front positively onto the roads. The traditional layout of the Gavel is considered a good example, although off-road parking in new developments needs to be sufficient to avoid the street clutter experienced in this area
Scale and form:	Generally, one and two-storey (with more bungalows on the western side of Bath Road, and some more prominent buildings on the eastern side)	A variety of building heights of two to three storey, but with some 3½storey, 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 in new developments
Built styles and features:	Some older traditional houses but mostly Edwardian and inter-war. Building character is mostly individual but there are examples of Arts and Crafts influences	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 homogeneity in any one area makes for a cohesive group
Materials:	<p>Walls: Various materials including painted render, local stone, exposed timber frame, but generally red brick.</p> <p>Roofs: Mostly red-brown tiles</p>	<p>Walls: 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. The choice of materials in new developments should avoid those that deteriorate and thereby damage the overall appearance of the development over time.</p> <p>Roofs: Red/brown tiles and slates</p>
Fronts and boundaries:	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	Properties generally front the pavements with very limited front garden areas. Some railings and elevated pathways add further variety to the scene
Landscaping:	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	Vegetation is very limited as there is little opportunity for any substantial planting; however, the little that exists helps soften the urban feel. Opportunities should be sought for landscaping to soften the character of similar new developments

Important green spaces and views

- 6.2.3 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 local residents have used the Market Fields informally, 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. It also marks the start of the more rural character of the B3091 as it runs east towards Manston, although the current use of the verges for parking does detract from this. The local green spaces that will be protected are listed under Policy 4 and shown on Map 3.
- 6.2.4 The main views towards 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

- 6.2.5 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 3.

Table 9. Bath Road and Old Market Area – Locally Important Buildings

Buffets House, Buffets Close	<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 area's farming presence and history</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 and Hinton Way, Bath Road	<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 farmhouse and the adjoining Pilgrims Close was probably a farm cottage. Wood View was former farm buildings. The grouping is one of the earliest settlements in Bath Road</i>
Stour View Complex, 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>
2 Pond Cottages and Rosemary Cottage, Pond Cottages	<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 that blends with old industrial building with new glass fronted offices. Maintains a link with Sturminster's past as a major cheese manufacturing industry</i>

6.3 Important Infrastructure, Routes and Connections

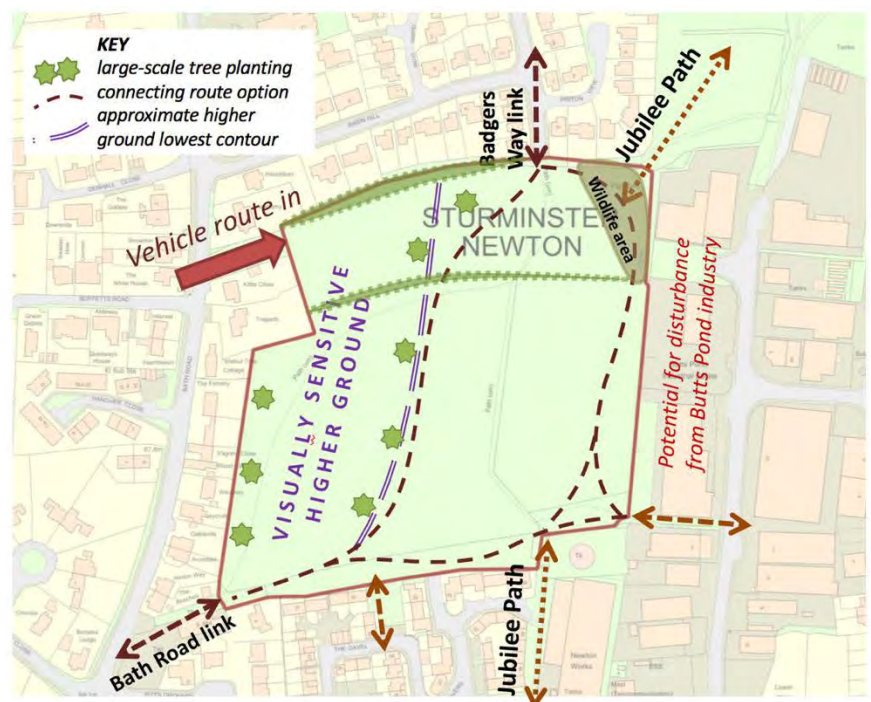
- 6.3.1 The main community buildings within this area are the Stour View day-care centre, which provides vocational training opportunities, and across the road from this, the Stour View Complex, which provides a day service for adults with physical and learning disabilities. There is also a dental practice and amateur boxing club. The community buildings and associated land in this area that will be protected are listed under Policy 10 and shown on Map 7.
- 6.3.2 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 4.
- 6.3.3 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 buildings 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. 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 across the Bath Road, linking to the proposals for a rural recreational trail around the northern perimeter of the town (see Policy 14).

6.4 Areas of Change

Market Fields site, east of Bath Road (Map 13 area 1)

Figure 4. Market Fields site – concept and issues diagram¹⁰

- 6.4.1 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.



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

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Path crosses the site linking from the north-eastern 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.

- 6.4.3 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.
- 6.4.4 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 light in colour 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.
- 6.4.5 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 size of the copse using native trees.
- 6.4.6 There may also be noise and disturbance from the industrial activity at Butts Pond, and therefore a buffer will be needed between this area and any housing.
- 6.4.7 At about 4.6ha, the site 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, agreed wildlife mitigation and other requirements). 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 24. Market Fields site, east of Bath Road

The development of the Market Fields (as shown on Map 13 area 1) will be supported provided all the following criteria are met:

- > *it is for housing and other uses that are compatible with a quiet, largely residential area and adjoining local nature reserve. 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, and mitigate any harm, in terms of*
 - *suitable wildlife areas including the creation of wildlife corridors through the site linking to Butts Pond LNR and retention of species-rich hedgerows where practical, and any further measures that may be required as part of an approved biodiversity mitigation plan*
 - *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 made suitable for cyclists in line with Policy 12.*

- > 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 two 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 provide protection from disturbance from the continued functioning of the Butts Pond Industrial estate

Any proposals will need to be prepared in full consultation with Natural England, fully evaluate the importance of the area for Great Crested Newts and retain sufficient land to enable habitat enhancements to ensure the long-term viability of the local great newt population occupying the adjacent Butts Pond Local Nature Reserve. The retained areas should be secured by their incorporation into the Local Nature Reserve and an appropriate level of financial contribution provided for the long-term management of the site.

Former council offices at Stour View (Map 13 area 8)

6.4.8 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.

Photo 6 Front of Dorset County Council Offices

6.4.9 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 it is also a potentially prominent site in wider views, being on the ridge that runs along Bath Road.



Policy 25. 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 13 area 8) 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 (Map 13 area 10)

- 6.4.10 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. 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.
- 6.4.11 The roadside hedgerow is species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations. The provision of suitable landscaping should help provide mitigation for any biodiversity loss, and overall biodiversity gains should be secured through an approved Biodiversity Mitigation Plan.

- 6.4.12 Because of the current speed limit and alignment of the road, care will need to be taken to provide suitable access points and shared access arrangements may be needed in places. Further consultation with the Highways Authority is advised to agree detailed access arrangements.
- 6.4.13 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. The site should therefore be released (and potentially phased) to meet evidence of likely demand, which can be assessed according to the statutory self-build register or through marketing responses. The development of the individual sites would best be managed through obtaining outline permission for the site as a whole, that sets the design code and legal requirements for custom/self-build, and establishes the access arrangements, landscaping and biodiversity mitigation. Reserve matters applications can then be brought forward as buyers for the plots are found.

Figure 5. Land at Yewstock Fields - concept and issues diagram¹¹



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- 6.4.14 The development of this site also provides an opportunity to create a link from the Stour Valley Way through to the proposed northern perimeter trail around the town, if the more northerly route indicated on Map 9 is not achievable.

Policy 26. Land at Yewstock Fields

The development of land at Yewstock Fields (as shown on Map 13 area 8) will be supported provided all the following criteria are met:

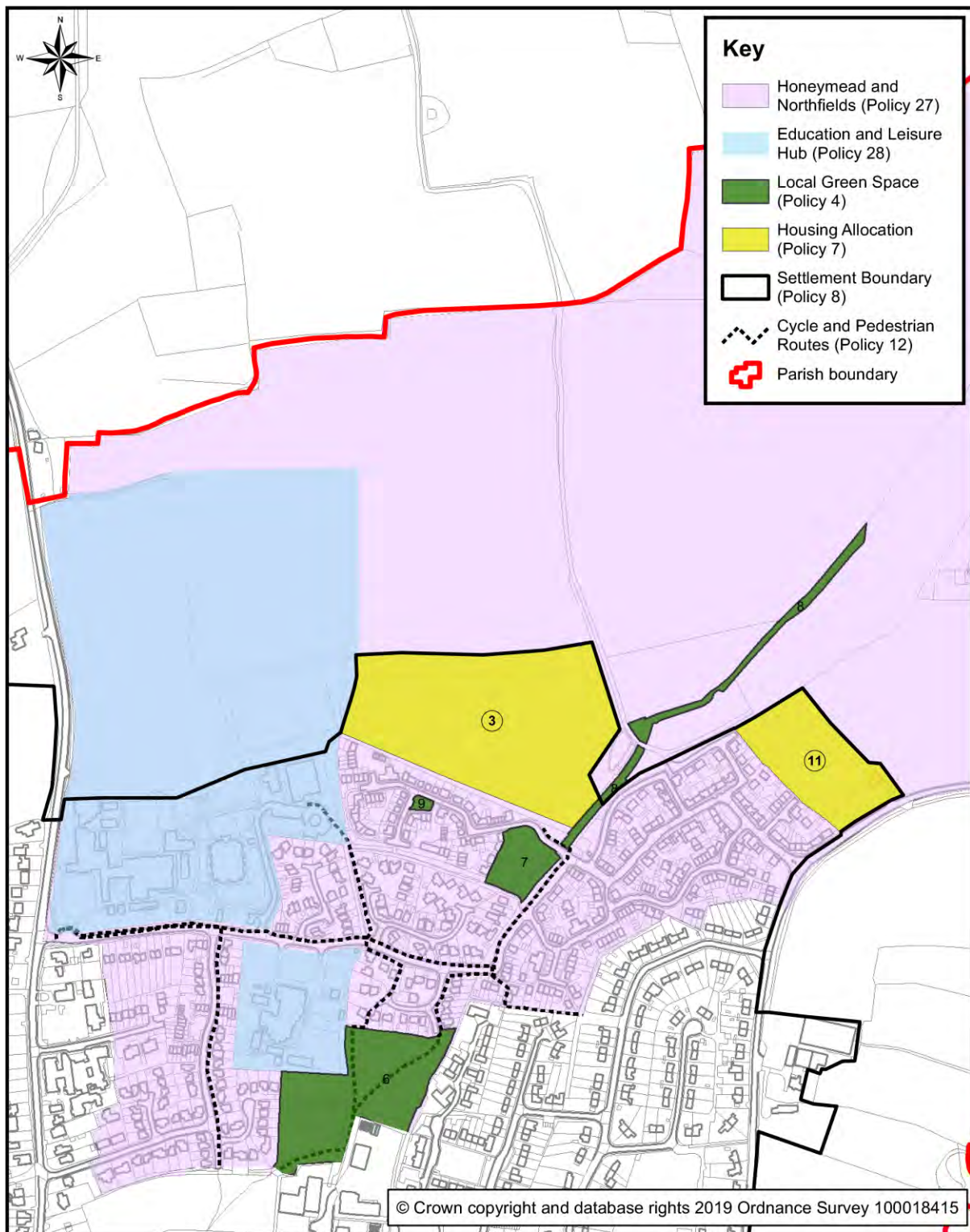
- > the land is made available as plots for custom/self-build housing and phased according to evidence of demand*
- > the layout follows the pattern of ribbon development (sizeable, single-depth plots with large front gardens) and set-back building line established along Bath Road*
- > no building or structure is permitted on the lower slopes (below 65m AOD)*
- > the scale of development is 1 to 2 storeys, and built character is individual, with detailed design and materials that blend sensitively to its environment, as well as soft landscaping 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, and any further measures that may be required as part of an approved biodiversity mitigation plan*
- > 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 safeguarded for connection of the northern recreational trail to the Stour Valley Way*

6.5 Changes to the Settlement Boundary

- 6.5.1 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 existing built-up areas and surrounding countryside. The changes are:
- > 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 8.
 - > Include the green at Stourcastle, which is designated Local Green Space
 - > Include the Land at Yewstock Fields allocation.

7 Honeymead and Northfields

Map 14. Honeymead and Northfields area¹²



¹² Please reference maps on pages 21, 25, 29, 35, 39, 42 and related policies for additional information relating to this area

7.1 The Honeymead and Northfields Area: an Overview

- 7.1.1 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.
- 7.1.2 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 the 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.
- 7.1.3 The area 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. It 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 to Sturminster Newton.
- 7.1.4 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.

7.2 The Character of the Area

- 7.2.1 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 three-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), have also detracted from the overall character of the estates.
- 7.2.2 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 practical difficulties for other 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.
- 7.2.3 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. .
- 7.2.4 The following policy has been drafted to guide future development.

Policy 27. Protecting 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.

<u>Character description</u>	<u>Predominant character of the area and positive features:</u>
<i>Layout:</i>	<i>More irregular layout of circuitous through routes and cul-de-sac layouts, linked with pedestrian/cycle routes. Building line and orientation is generally varied</i>
<i>Scale and form:</i>	<i>Predominantly two 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 three storey townhouses or large, bland apartment blocks, should be avoided</i>
<i>Built styles and features:</i>	<i>Variety and interest, and integration of local materials and styles, are 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>
<i>Materials:</i>	<i>Walls: Red brick, pale bricks and painted brick Roofs: Generally red and brown tile or slate</i>
<i>Fronts and boundaries:</i>	<i>Frontages vary from edge of pavement to small front gardens (more common in the slightly older estates)</i>
<i>Landscaping:</i>	<i>The inclusion of verges, planting and trees provides a really positive contribution to the street scene. Street furniture and lighting is fairly typical of residential urban areas</i>

Important green spaces and views

- 7.2.5 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 green space 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 at Field Close and Long Close that are considered worthy of special protection are listed in Policy 4 and shown on Map 3.
- 7.2.6 The most important views are those on the two approaches towards and leaving the town, both along Bath Road and Manston Road.

Photo 8 High School Play Fields



Photo 9 Field at the top of Manston Road



Important character buildings and features

- 7.2.7 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 coppice act as important landmarks in a number of views from the town.
- 7.2.8 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.

7.3 Important Infrastructure, Routes and Connections

- 7.3.1 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 community buildings and their grounds that will be protected are listed in Policy 10 and shown on Map 7.
- 7.3.2 There is 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 4 (Map 3).
- 7.3.3 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.
- 7.3.4 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 Section 4.5. 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 Lane, Northfields and potentially the new developments. 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 an enhanced crossing point with some traffic calming would increase safety and security for pedestrians and cyclists (see Section 4). 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.
- 7.3.5 There is an opportunity within the proposed new development to provide a recreational pedestrian and cycle route around the northern perimeter of the town, linking the new North Honeymeads site with Bath Road and the western footpath network (see Policy 14). This will enhance the enjoyment of the wider countryside, link with other routes and create an alternative off-road route between the school, leisure facilities and Manston Road.

7.4 Areas of Change

The Education and Leisure Hub

- 7.4.1 Sturminster Newton High School, the youth centre, the town's leisure centre and football grounds, and Yewstock School, with its recently completed 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.
- 7.4.2 The expected increase in the town's population will put pressure on these education and leisure facilities. The landowners and service providers are working together to make sure the facilities can expand and adapt to meet the anticipated demand. This could include provision of a site for the relocated primary school and pre-school. Other potential facilities include a dance studio/extended 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 elsewhere in the town).

- 7.4.3 A coordinated approach is needed 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 the wider community use of school facilities. This coordinated approach could be demonstrated by the provision of a masterplan (as part of any planning application) that has been drawn up and agreed by the main landowners and service providers.
- 7.4.4 Such coordination applies not only to the provision of 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 possible closure of the swimming pool at the William Barnes site, the closest pool in which local children may 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 one could be accommodated in the overall plans, were the funding situation to change.
- 7.4.5 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 buildings, benefiting from the different peak load times.
- 7.4.6 The increase in vehicular 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.
- 7.4.7 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 landform, 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 good quality, contemporary design that reflects its role and function of the main buildings, and makes a clear architectural statement about how the town is moving forward in the 21st century, would be particularly appropriate.
- 7.4.8 Any flood lighting, landscaping scheme and biodiversity mitigation measures should be guided by an expert assessment of the site and potential impacts.

Policy 28. Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub

Proposals will be supported for a comprehensive and joined up approach to the development, over time, of the following facilities within the Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub (as shown on Map 14):

- > *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 and opportunities to share facilities (such as changing rooms)*

- > *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, in particular to create a soft edge to the surrounding countryside, and ecological measures in accordance with an approved Biodiversity Mitigation Plan*
- > *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 site for a swimming pool*
- > *exploration of the potential for a district heating system, potentially linked with the adjoining proposed housing development*

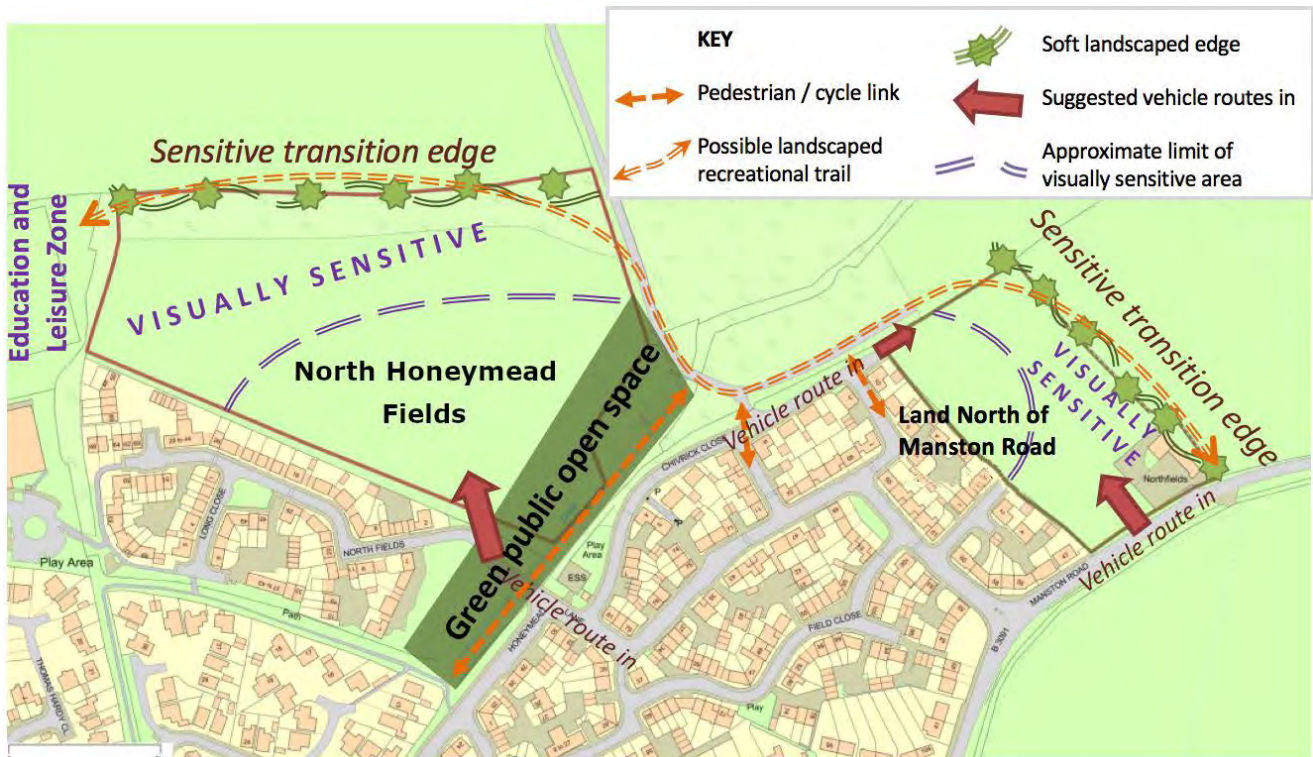
The main buildings should be designed as landmark buildings in line with Policy 1.

The provision of flood lighting should be designed to be the minimum required to operate effectively.

North Honeymead Fields (Map 14 area 3)

- 7.4.9 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.
- 7.4.10 The area is relatively level farmland on the edge of the town, adjoining the existing housing estate. It rises very gently to the west, and can be seen from Hambledon Hill. The northern boundary is defined by a 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 exists between the Green Lane and the new development and should be retained 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.
- 7.4.11 At about 3.7ha, the site could accommodate about 100 dwellings, although this will depend on their type and layout. 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 limited number of small-scale workspaces or a small shop.
- 7.4.12 The design and layout should respect the character of the area, as set out in Policy 27. In particular, two and a half to three 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.
- 7.4.13 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.
- 7.4.14 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 buildings in the adjoining education and leisure hub.

Figure 6. North Honeymead Fields and North of Manston Road sites – concept and issues diagram¹³



Policy 29. North Honeymead Fields

The development of North Honeymead Fields (as shown on Map 14 area 3) will be supported provided all the following criteria are met:

- > *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 (e.g. through light coloured rendering), buildings either on the higher ground to the west or on land close to the countryside edge*
- > *the layout includes the provision of a landscaped recreational trail around the northern edge linking to the Leisure Centre, the retention of species-rich hedgerows and any further measures that may be required as part of an approved biodiversity mitigation plan. 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*
- > *parking spaces, sufficient for the likely future occupants, are conveniently located to the dwellings they serve, 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, ensures that the issues associated with parking along Honeymead Lane are not made worse and facilitates safe pedestrian movements*
- > *the potential for a district heating system, potentially linked with the adjoining education and leisure hub, has been explored and, if feasible, provision made for this within the development*

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Land North of Manston Road (Map 14 area 11)

- 7.4.15 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 1.8ha the site is appropriate for about 30 dwellings that 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 high quality larger homes.

Photo 6 Land at the north east of Manston Road



- 7.4.16 The design and layout should respect the character of the area, as set out in Policy 27. 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.
- 7.4.17 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.
- 7.4.18 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.
- 7.4.19 The Minerals Planning Authority should also be consulted regarding the potential to exploit the building stone deposits that exist on part of the site if these may otherwise be made unobtainable as a future resource.

Policy 30. Land North of Manston Road

The development of land North of Manston Road (as shown on Map 14 area 11) will be supported provided all the following criteria are met:

- > it is for housing or other uses that are compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. The inclusion of some high quality larger homes 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, allows for the retention of the species-rich hedgerows and any further measures that may be required as part of an approved biodiversity mitigation plan.*

- > *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*
- > *parking spaces, sufficient for the likely future occupants, are conveniently located for the house they serve, and the streets and planting so designed to avoid on-street parking clutter*

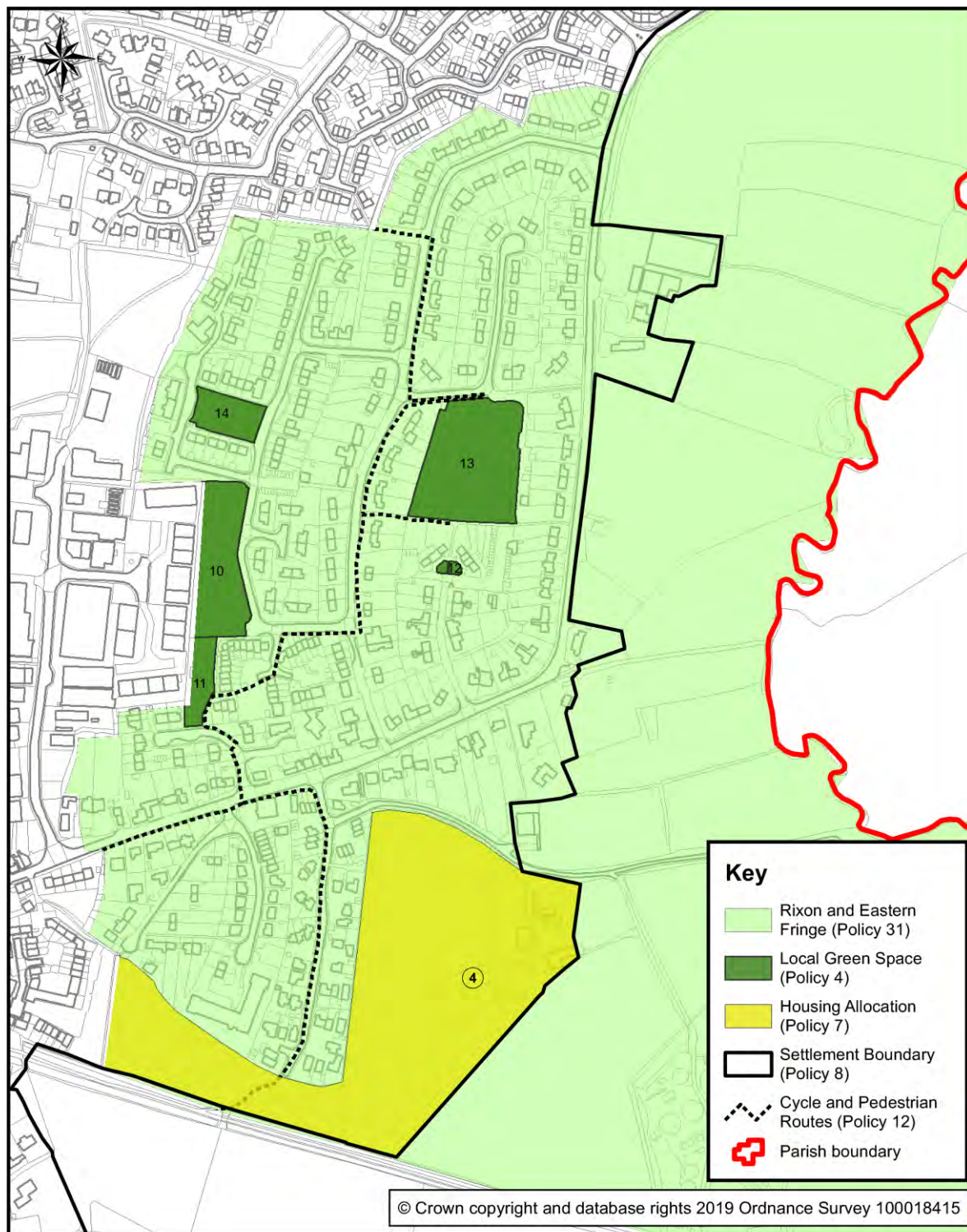
7.5 Changes to the Settlement Boundary

7.5.1 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 8 (Map 5) are :

- > 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 buildings outside of the settlement boundaries
- > Include the North Honeymead Fields allocation
- > Include the Land North of Manston Road allocation.

8 Rixon and Eastern Fringe area

Map 15. Rixon and Eastern Fringe area¹⁴



¹⁴ Please reference maps on pages 21, 25, 29, 35, 39, 42 and related policies for additional information relating to this area

8.1 The Rixon and Eastern Fringe Area: an Overview

- 8.1.1 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.
- 8.1.2 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 preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan has identified that the housing area could be extended to also include land east of Elm Close. Development of this additional area is however constrained by the sewage treatment works, with its associated unpleasant smells, and its potential visual impact on the wider countryside.

8.2 The Character of the Area

- 8.2.1 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.
- 8.2.2 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. The main exception to this is Sturminster Storage and the adjoining dwellings. Land east of Manston Road is considered unsuitable for further development, particularly because the topography makes it difficult for landscaping to soften the visual impact of building in extensive 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*

	<p><i>Roofs:</i></p> <p><i>Generally red-brown tile</i></p>
Fronts and boundaries:	<p><i>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</i></p>
Landscaping:	<p><i>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</i></p>
<p><i>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 that 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.</i></p>	

Important green spaces and views

- 8.2.3 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 and designated for special protection under Policy 4 and shown on Map 3. 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 and there are proposals for new green spaces to be created as part of the development off Elm Close.
- 8.2.4 There are some particularly attractive views from Manston Road across the countryside and to Hambledon Hill and Melbury Beacon to the east.

Important character buildings and features

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

8.3 Important Infrastructure, Routes and Connections

- 8.3.1 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.
- 8.3.2 Local residents have raised general concerns about the speed of traffic along Manston and Rixon Roads, and large lorries turning into Butts Pond. There are several key pedestrian routes linking from the residential areas to the town centre and also linking to the cluster of community buildings 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 frequently speed around 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 route is only 20m longer and much safer and is one of the highway improvements shown in Table 7. 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.
- 8.3.3 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 (see Policy 32). 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 would need some improvement to provide a safe route.

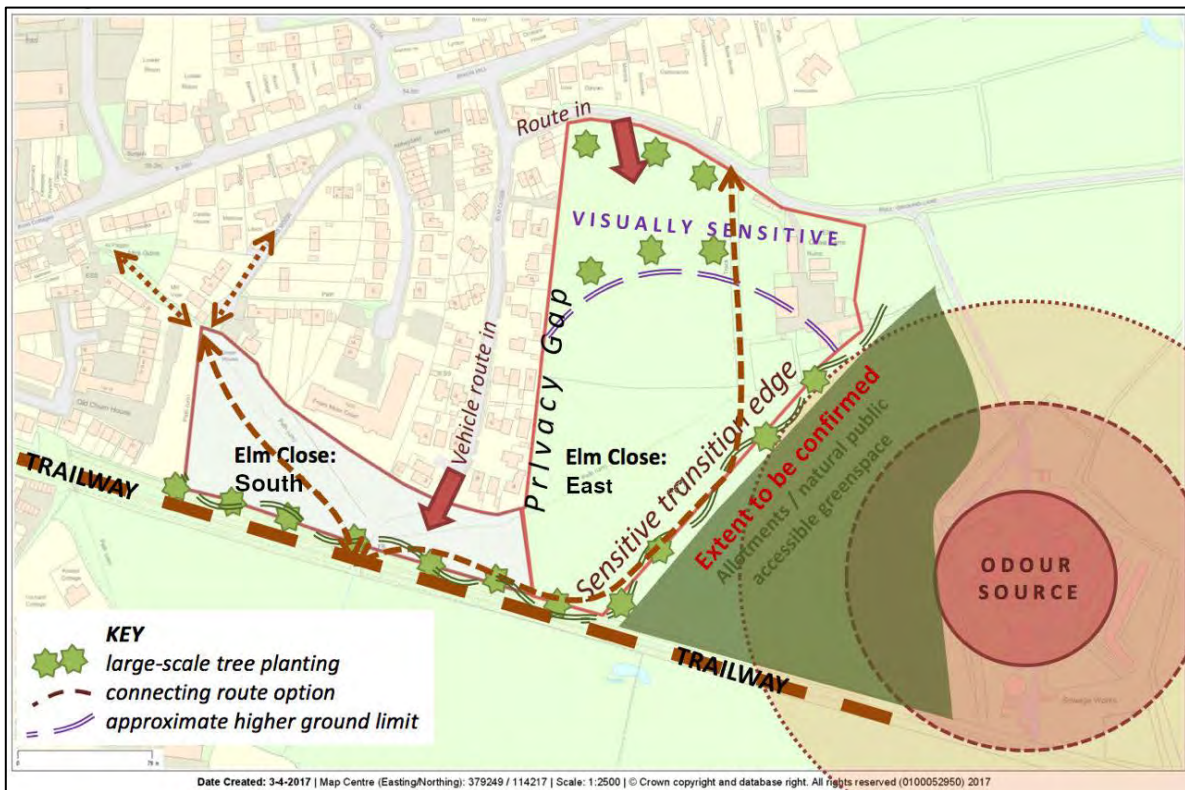
8.4 Areas of Change

Land off Elm Close (Map 15 area 4)

- 8.4.1 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. It makes sense for both sites to be considered together, in order that any potential issues and opportunities can be better dealt with. To this end the 'additional' area of land is also allocated. Land further to the east has also been suggested for development. However, beyond the existing farm buildings the land is part of the wider, undeveloped countryside, orientated away from the town, and is not considered suitable.
- 8.4.2 The sewage treatment works lie to the south east, giving rise to odour concerns that will preclude residential development in areas where odour levels are likely to be unacceptably high. An assessment of odour levels will need to be agreed with Wessex Water, to define the extent of any housing development on land to the east of Elm Close. 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 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. 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.
- 8.4.3 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. Care will need to be taken in the design and layout to avoid what could be an estate development that lacks character. There should be variation to add interest, more typical of organic development where an area has evolved over a long period of time. With the inclusion of planting within this northern section of the site, as well as 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 two storeys, with some lower rise units on the more elevated or sensitive areas. There is potential for some two and a half storey dwellings to be included within the more visually contained areas closer to the Trailway and town centre.
- 8.4.4 The inclusion of allotments within this area was highlighted in the Local Plan, and this (together with publicly accessible natural green space) would be an efficient use of land closer to the sewage treatment works. The allotments should be brought forward at an early stage.
- 8.4.5 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
 - > 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, and
 - > the continuing need for access by larger vehicles to the sewage treatment works

- 8.4.6 The density of development here should be lower than the adjoining built-up areas. Although the exact extent of the developable area to the east of Elm Close has yet to be agreed with Wessex Water, it is likely to be of sufficient size to include a mix of housing types, including affordable homes. The area closest to the town centre would be particularly suited to providing accommodation for older people or those with more restricted mobility.

Figure 7. Elm Close South and Elm Close East sites – concept and issues diagram ¹⁵



Policy 32. Land South and East of Elm Close

The development of land off Elm Close (as shown on Map 15 area 4) will be supported provided all the following criteria are met:

- > 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. This should include consider the cumulative impact of the whole site, take into account the local highway issues identified in this Plan, consultation with local residents and Wessex Water, and must be agreed with the highways authority. This should guide traffic routing and management measures, and include provision for safe pedestrian crossing of Rixon Hill near Rixon Close
- > an archaeological evaluation is undertaken in agreement with the County Archaeologist to provide a thorough understanding of the significance of the archaeological interest of the site and used to inform development proposals including potential conservation and enhancement measures
- > there is an agreed and appropriately phased green space strategy for the whole site, and the spaces and landscape scheme are designed to provide multiple benefits in terms of:

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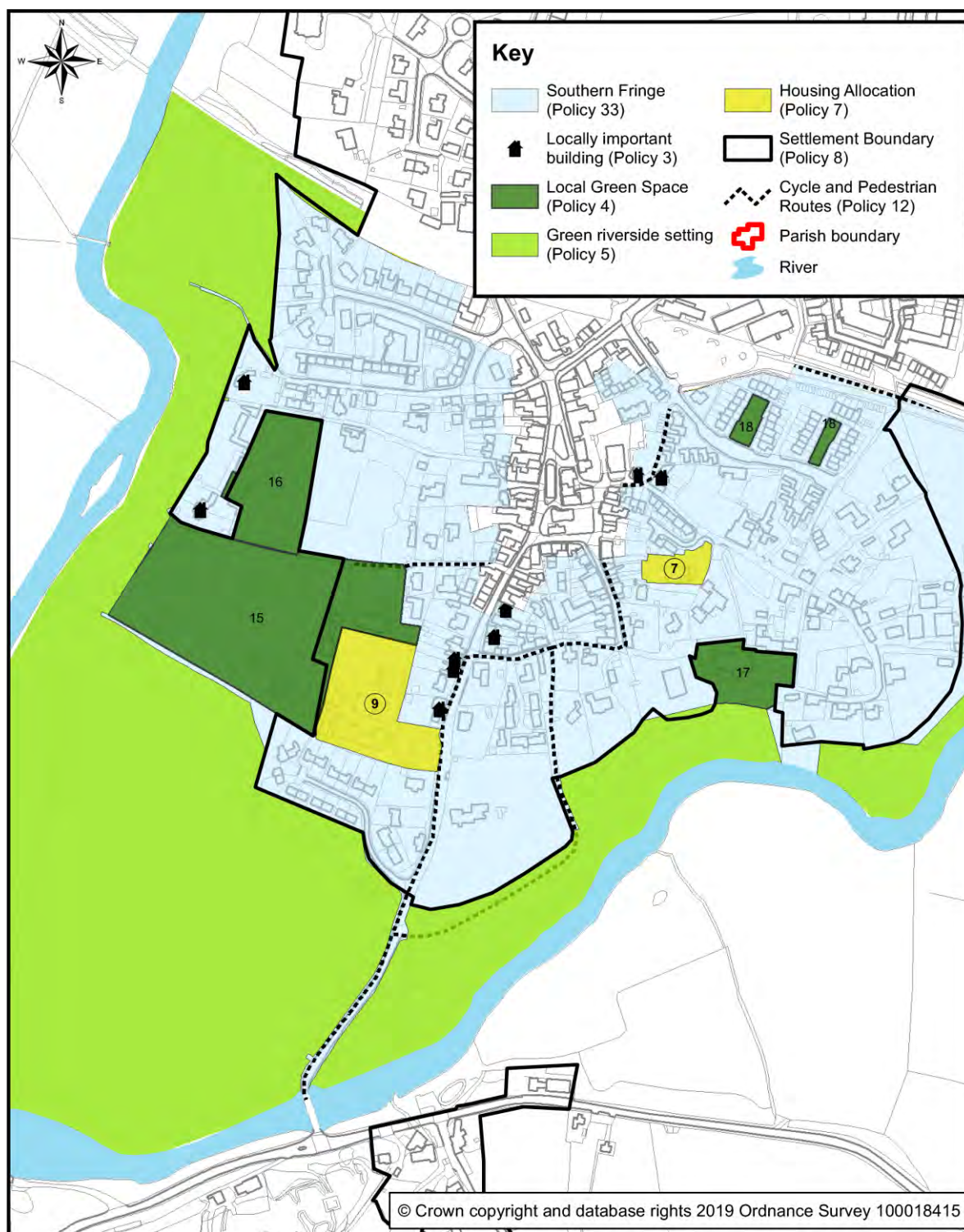
- *wildlife mitigation, including the retention of mature trees and species-rich hedgerows and any further measures that may be required as part of an approved biodiversity mitigation plan*
- *tree planting on the higher ground to the east of Elm Close, with sufficient space for these to develop into large-scale mature specimens in order to soften the impact of built development in distant views*
- *the provision of a soft edge to any built development when viewed from the Trailway*
- *an attractive setting for pedestrian/cycle routes, linking from Manston Road/Rixon Hill through to the Trailway*
- *informal recreation opportunities in line with the adopted standards*
- *the provision of allotments and publicly accessible natural green space on the remaining land between the housing and the Trailway*
- *provision for sustainable drainage as informed by a flood risk assessment*
- > *any buildings over two storeys are located within the lower part of the site, but should be no more than 2½ storeys*
- > *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 views from the Trailway (given the elevated nature of the Trailway and the fact that this will be one of the first impressions of the town). Built structures should avoid light-coloured rendering and bright or highly reflective materials where potentially visible in views from the Trailway or the A357*
- > *the amenity and privacy of existing residents adjoining the site is safeguarded, through the appropriate design, scale and layout of new development*
- > *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.*

8.5 Changes to the Settlement Boundary

- 8.5.1 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 changes are:
- > A minor amendment to include all the existing buildings at the Sturminster Storage site east of Manston Road
 - > Include the Land South and East of Elm Close allocation.

9 Southern Fringe

Map 16. Southern Fringe area¹⁶



¹⁶ Please reference maps on pages 21, 25, 29, 35, 39, 42 and related policies for additional information relating to this area

9.1 The Southern Fringe Area: an Overview

- 9.1.1 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.
- 9.1.2 The Southern Fringe area is the 'entrance' to the town from the south. The green areas that surround the town at this point 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.
- 9.1.3 The built-up area around the historic core is mainly residential in character and mix, reflecting its incremental change and development over many centuries.
- 9.1.4 All of the area within the settlement boundary, together with 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.
- 9.1.5 The area is not expected to change significantly over the plan period. There are sites, such as William Barnes Primary School and Hammond's Yard, which may 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.
- 9.1.6 Particularly relevant in this area are the Neighbourhood Plan's objective to protect and make the most of our heritage and to ensure that development minimises its impact on the environment.

9.2 The Character of the Area

- 9.2.1 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. Townscape character changes as the road 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 carriageway.
- 9.2.2 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.
- 9.2.3 At the fringes of the town centre are quiet, peaceful back lanes that 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 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.
- 9.2.4 Although there has been some more modern 'estate-style' development within this area, such as at Durrants 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 33. Protecting 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 complementary to the surrounding character of the area and its buildings

<u>Character description</u>	<u>Predominant character of the area and positive features:</u>
<i>Layout:</i>	<i>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</i>
<i>Scale and form:</i>	<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 positive lack of uniformity between neighbouring buildings given the sporadic nature of past development</i>
<i>Built styles and features:</i>	<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 are a common feature</i>
<i>Materials:</i>	<i>Walls:</i> <i>Red brick, limestone and painted plaster</i> <i>Roofs:</i> <i>Generally red-brown tiles, slate and some thatch</i>
<i>Fronts and boundaries:</i>	<i>Frontages vary considerably from edge of pavement development to houses set well back within plots, orientated irrespective of roads and plot orientation. Boundaries are often substantially defined by walls, hedges and outbuildings</i>
<i>Landscaping:</i>	<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>
<p><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 that 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 defined in Policy 5 (Map 3), will not be supported</i></p> <p><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></p>	

Important green spaces and views

- 9.2.5 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. The Memorial Recreation Ground off Ricketts Lane is particularly important in providing opportunities for informal sport and recreation, close to the town centre. The churchyard around St Mary's Church and old burial ground are quieter spaces, and these and other green spaces within the built-up area that are of particular value to local residents are protected in Policy 4 and shown on Map 3.
- 9.2.6 The area has many notable urban views. These are formed by the slightly winding nature of the roads and back lanes, the architecture and character of their historic buildings, and the boundary treatments, all of which combine to provide an interesting sequence of views to the traveller. Particularly notable for this are Bridge Street and Penny Street.

- 9.2.7 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 should be carefully considered due to the need to retain the open but well treed 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

- 9.2.8 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 3.

Photo 10 Church Street looking south



Table 10. Southern Fringe – Locally Important Buildings

The Quarterjack, Bridge Street	<i>3 storey building in prominent position entering the town. In the late 1800s and early 1900s 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 1900s 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>Built by Robert Young as his home - local poet and diarist of life in 19th C Sturminster Newton. Important historic connection.</i>

- 9.2.9 Particularly notable tree groupings that will be protected are listed in Table 3 and covered by Policy 6. They are shown on Map 4. These include trees in private gardens that were identified as Important Open and Wooded Areas in the 2003 Local Plan.

9.3 Important Infrastructure, Routes and Connections

- 9.3.1 Key community buildings 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 community buildings should be protected. The primary school and pre-school may be relocated to the north of the town as a replacement school is needed and may not readily be accommodated on the existing site (see Policy 28). Important Community Buildings to be protected are listed in Policy 10 and shown on Map 7.
- 9.3.2 The Memorial Recreation Ground is designated as a local green space and therefore protected under Policy 4 (Map 3).
- 9.3.3 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.
- 9.3.4 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. The specific locations are listed on Table 7 and shown on Map 8. 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 that would provide a safer alternative to Ricketts Lane.
- 9.3.5 Lovers Lane, although a vital pedestrian link in the town, is narrow, hemmed in by high fences and poorly lit. The opportunity to improve it has been taken successfully with the recent development of the old Gasworks. In the longer-term, it could be rerouted through the land currently used for the telephone exchange.

9.4 Areas of Change

- 9.4.1 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:

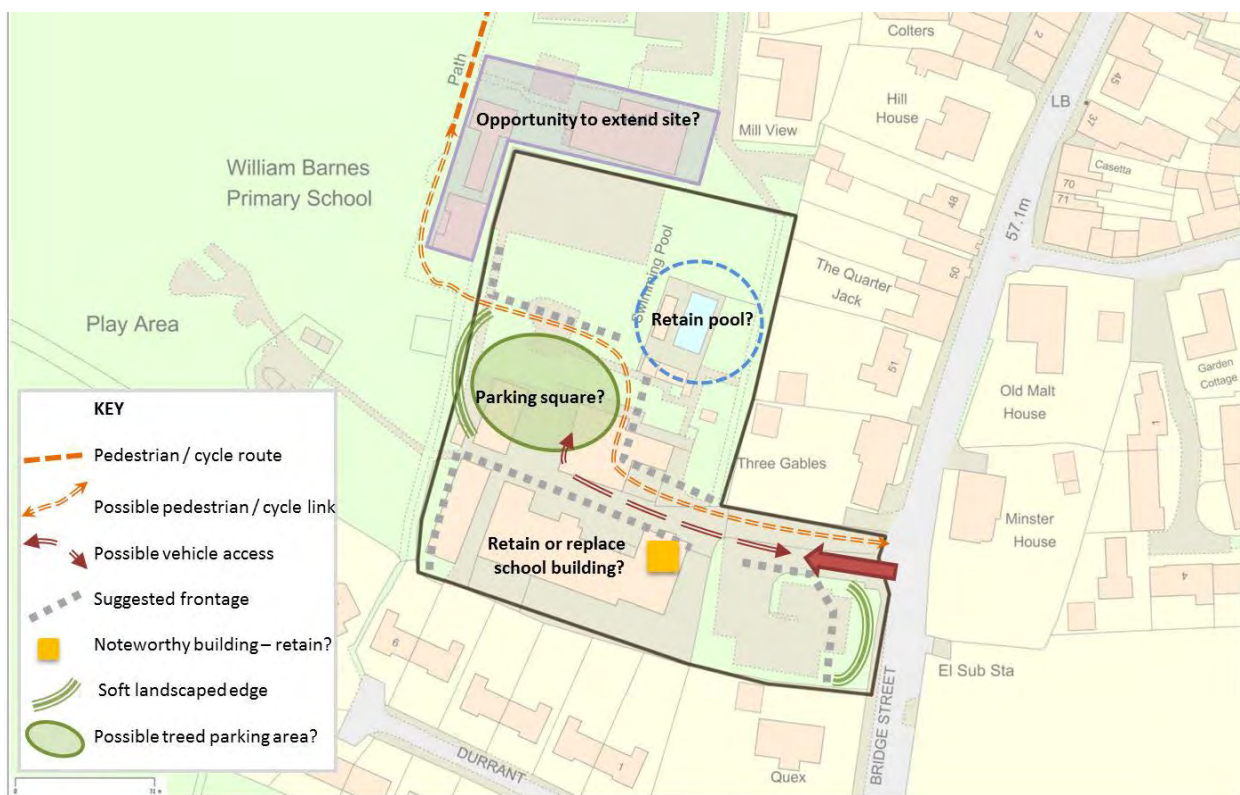
The William Barnes Primary School site (Map 16 area 9)

- 9.4.2 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 by the Education Authority, but there is limited space and it may make more sense to relocate the school to another site in the town. One option is to relocate close to the High School, which could have the advantage that the two schools can work more closely together.
- 9.4.3 If the school is relocated, the site could be redeveloped for other uses. Whether the current swimming facilities could be retained and operated as a community asset can be explored, but will ultimately depend on the feasibility of such a proposal (including its long-term viability). The site, if it becomes vacant, would provide a suitable location for new housing, or other uses that would be compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. It is about 0.8ha, 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 for older people. It would also suit the inclusion of high quality larger homes.

- 9.4.4 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 introduces 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.
- 9.4.5 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). Consideration should be given to the frontage facing 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.

Figure 8. William Barnes Primary School site – concept and issues diagram¹⁷



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 Durrants Close.

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Policy 34. William Barnes Primary School site

The re-use or redevelopment of the William Barnes Primary School site (as shown on Map 16 area 9), if no longer required for education, will be supported provided all the following criteria are met:

- > 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 provided to create an attractive edge to this important green space*
- > a new pedestrian/cycle route is created linking Bridge Street 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*
- > measures required as part of an approved biodiversity mitigation plan are secured*

Consideration should be given to incorporating the Town Council buildings, car park and the Scout Hall if this is feasible and would result in an improved overall development while retaining provision for their needs at the time. The retention or replacement of the swimming pool would be supported, if feasible.

Hammonds Yard (Map 16 area 7)

- 9.4.6 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.
- 9.4.7 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.
- 9.4.8 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.
- 9.4.9 At just over 0.1ha, 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 older persons' accommodation.

Policy 35. *Hammonds Yard site*

The redevelopment of Hammonds Yard (as shown on Map 16 area 7) will be supported provided all the following criteria are met:

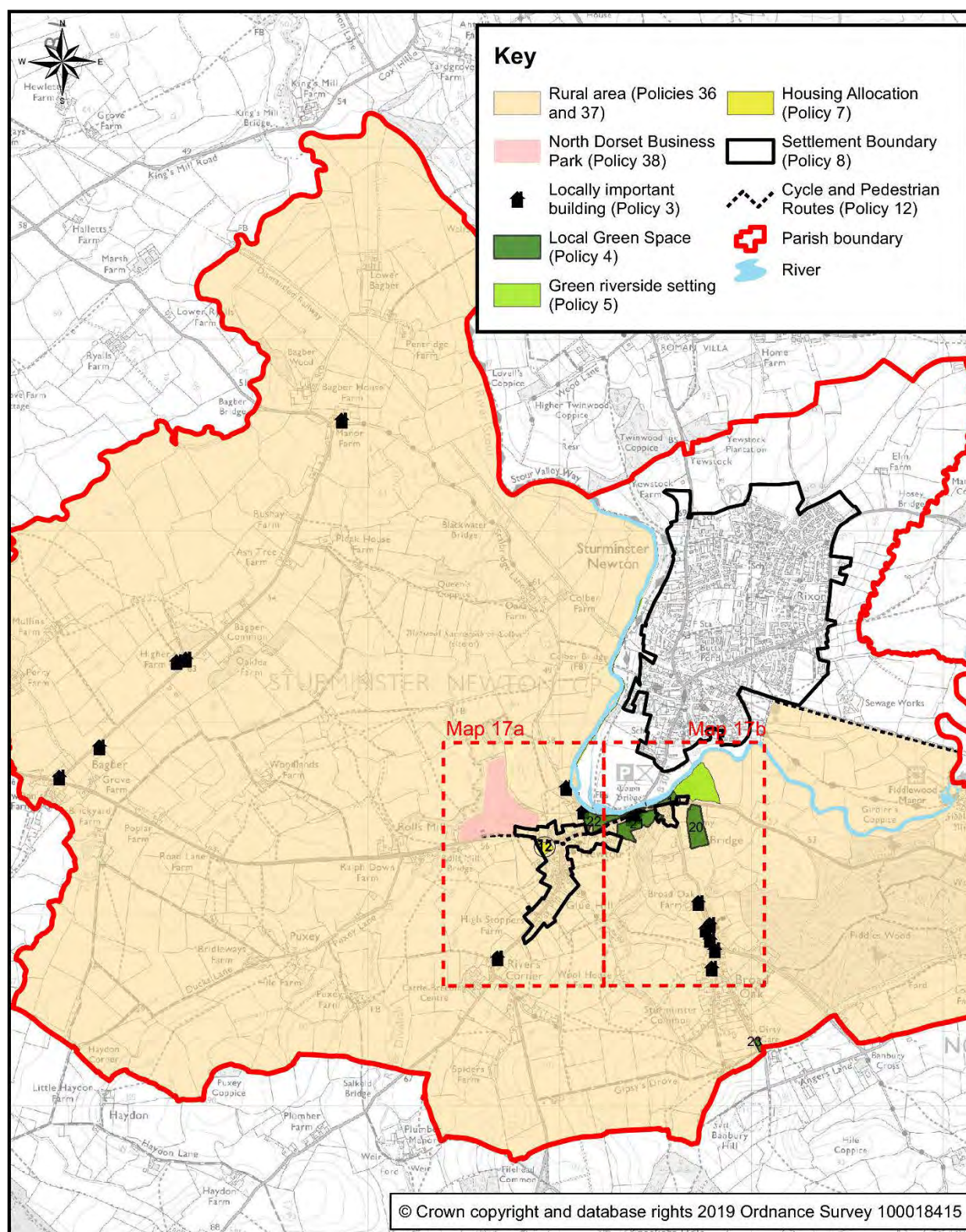
- > It is for housing or other uses that are compatible with a quiet, largely residential area. Housing more suitable to older people would be appropriate in this location*
- > the frontage onto Penny Street is designed to be discrete and to avoid an unsightly gap in the sequence of views along this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

9.5 Changes to the Settlement Boundary

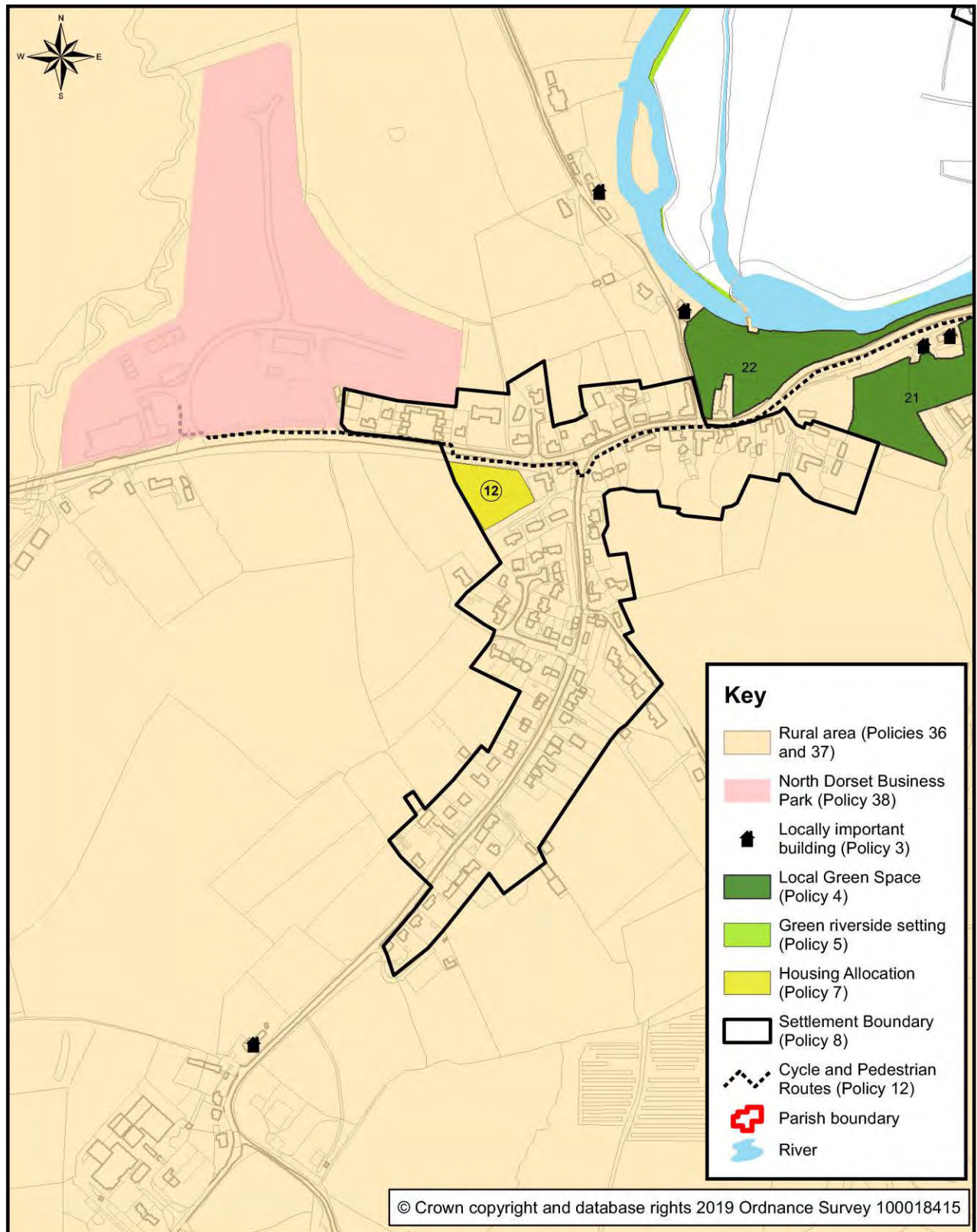
- 9.5.1 As part of the Neighbourhood Plan, the settlement boundaries adopted in the Local Plan have been checked to make sure they still provide an appropriate division between the built-up areas and surrounding countryside. The key changes under Policy 8 (Map 5) are amendments to exclude areas designated 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

10 Rural area – Newton, Town Bridge, Glue Hill, Bagber and beyond

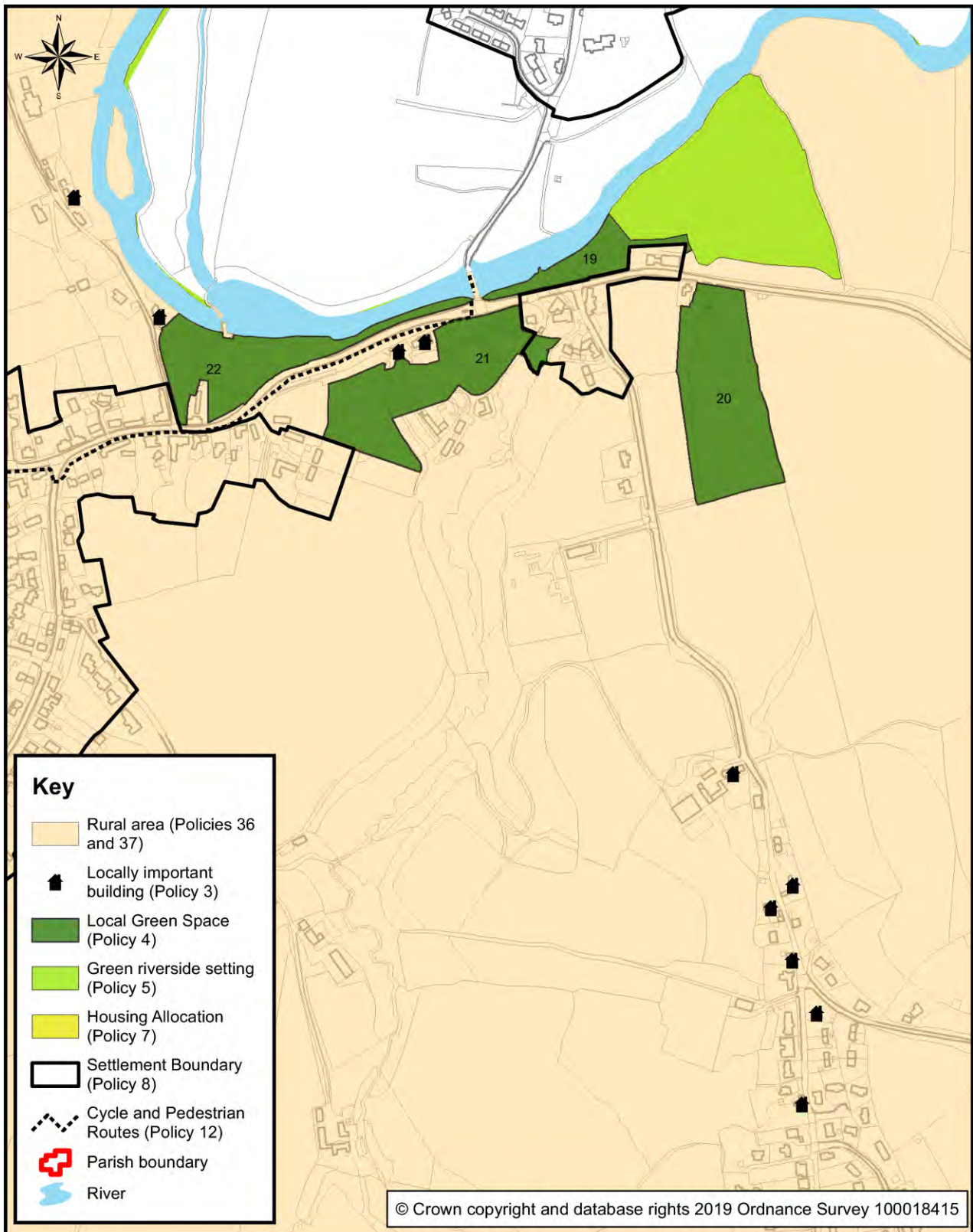
Map 17. Rural area – Newton, Town Bridge, Glue Hill, Bagber and beyond map



MAP 17a Rural area – Newton & Glue Hill inset



MAP 17b Rural area –Town Bridge inset



10.1 The Rural Area: an Overview

- 10.1.1 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 the Parish's 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. The remains of the Castle (a medieval fortified manor house), 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 is in discussion with the new owners to try to find a solution.
- 10.1.2 Newton, Glue Hill and Town Bridge are to some extent the 'southern' part of the town, beyond the River Stour. But 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.
- 10.1.3 The Local Planning Authority, in commenting on the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, suggested that significant development in or adjoining the village of Newton may not be appropriate because the area is poorly connected to the main built up area of the town. In the adopted Local Plan Newton is considered part of the town, and not a separate village. However, its status as a settlement could usefully be reconsidered as part of the Local Plan Review if it is not an appropriate location for the town's future growth.
- 10.1.4 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 at the business park, the level of development anticipated is minimal, with two small sites allocated for housing development.
- 10.1.5 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 buildings. The road connecting Broad Oak to the A357 and the sub-standard (due to poor visibility) junction with the A357 is unsuited to additional traffic that would result from further development.
- 10.1.6 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.
- 10.1.7 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.

10.2 The Character of the Main Settlements in the Rural Area

- 10.2.1 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.
- 10.2.2 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 completed 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.

- 10.2.3 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 an iconic building. It is leased by the Town Council and managed and operated by the Sturminster Newton Museum & Mill Society.
- 10.2.4 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.
- 10.2.5 Broad Oak is another scattered linear development that 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.
- 10.2.6 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 36. Protecting 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 of up to two storeys in height – a feature that should be continued.

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 that can be undermined by development up to the road edge. There is particular variety in orientation in the Town Bridge area. Boundaries are marked often with stone 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 that can clearly be viewed from the surrounding countryside. Larger scale (over two 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

10.3 The Character of the Countryside

- 10.3.1 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.
- 10.3.2 Over the past few decades there have been substantial changes in local farming with many working farms becoming larger and more commercially driven, and 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 food production and maintains the countryside 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 buildings should be carefully considered as these can otherwise be extremely conspicuous, detract from the landscape character and reduce the tourism appeal of the area.
- 10.3.3 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.
- 10.3.4 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.
- 10.3.5 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 as a guide).

Policy 37. 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).

Character description

Predominant character of the area and positive features:

Landscape:

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.

Settlements:

Scattered farms, typically on the higher ground, and cottages. No major development in the open landscape of the river corridor

Road network	<i>Diverse pattern of lanes and roads – sometimes narrow and twisting, and often with wildflower-rich verges</i>
Views:	<i>Due to the open nature of the undulating land, there are many fine views in and around this area of the Parish</i>
Buildings:	<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>
Vegetation:	<i>Dense hedgerows surround fields 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>
<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.</i>	
<i>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.</i>	

Important green spaces and views

- 10.3.6 The landscape around Sturminster Newton is part of the Blackmore Vale and has a real beauty and sense of place. It is perhaps difficult to pick out any one place or places 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 an ancient woodland and is protected by 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 the Mendip transmitter to the north, Lydlinch Church to the east and the Dorset Gap and Bulbarrow Hill to the south.
- 10.3.7 The focus on designating Local Green Spaces has been primarily within or adjoining the existing settlements, where spaces have a dual role including some form of community function (such as land around the Mill, the cemetery, the riverside meadows opposite the Bull Tavern and the community orchard in Broad Oak) or relate to a particularly important historic feature (such as the Castle). The wider setting of the town provided by the water meadows associated within the River Stour area also considered to be a particularly important area (although too extensive for Local Green Space designation). These protected green spaces are listed in Policies 4 and 5 and shown on Map 3.
- 10.3.8 There is also a Care Farm near Fiddleford Manor, where lavender and other edible and bee friendly plants are grown and harvested, and several Open Days held throughout the year. Although this site is not designated as a Local Green Space, such projects are supported and valued by the community.

Important character buildings and features

Photo 11 Manor Farm



Photo 12 Rural cottage



10.3.9 There are many 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 3 and are shown on Maps 17 and 17a.

Table 11. Rural area – Locally Important Buildings

Toll House, Bagber	<i>Former toll house</i>
Chapel Meadows, 6 Chapel Cottages, Bagber Common	<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, Lower 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 individually designed building on the river frontage notable due to the striking 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>
Keepers Cottage adjacent to the Cemetery on the A357	<i>19th Century Victorian Gothic-style lodge for the Cemetery. Now in private ownership. Retains original iron railings and key original detailing.</i>

- 10.3.10 Particularly notable tree groupings include areas along the rivers and dismantled railway line and around the Mill. Individual trees around Broad Oak are also of significance where they mark old field boundaries. Trees around the North Dorset Business Park are important in screening the larger industrial buildings. Such trees would be protected under Policy 6 and are described in more detail in Table 3 and shown on Map 4.

10.4 Important Infrastructure, Routes and Connections

- 10.4.1 There are few community buildings and associated land located in this rural area. The two key ones, protected under Policy 10 (Map 7) are the Mill, which is an important building and heritage centre, and the Bull Tavern, which is the local pub for the area south of the Town Bridge (see also Policy 39).
- 10.4.2 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 4 (Map 3)

10.5 Areas of Change

- 10.5.1 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 (Map 17a)

- 10.5.2 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 potential for long-term 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.
- 10.5.3 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.
- 10.5.4 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 is 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.
- 10.5.5 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, in relation to these features, the siting, scale and massing of buildings and materials used in the development, will all influence its overall visual impact.

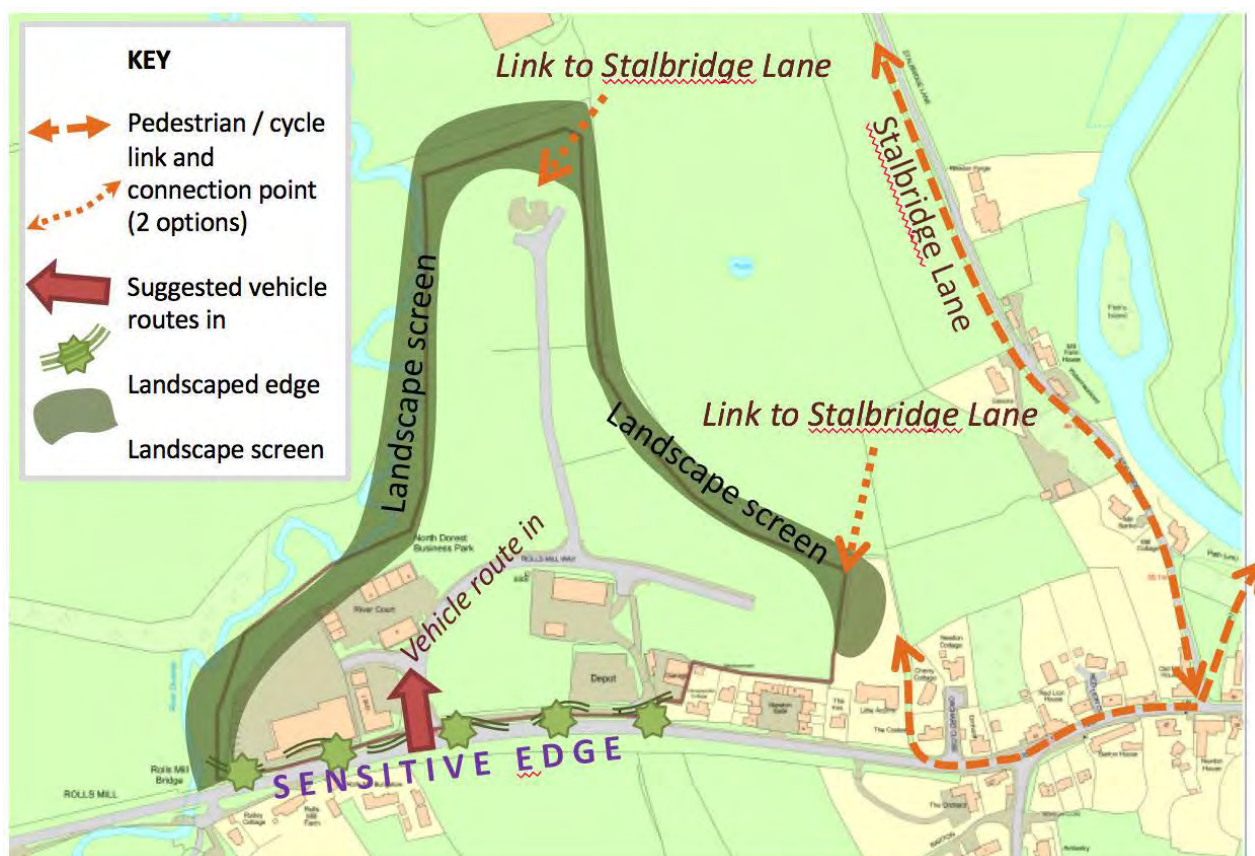
- 10.5.6 Links between the business park and the town do need to be improved for cyclists and pedestrians, as it is a feasible distance for people working there to walk or cycle. The most direct and accessible route is along the pavement by the A357. This is in good condition although there is a problem 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 avoiding heavy traffic, but more direct and all-weather routes would make walking and cycling more attractive. There are practical and other issues to be overcome but the intention is to link the northern and eastern ends of the site to Stalbridge Lane, and thereby on towards the extended Trailway.

Policy 38. Land at North Dorset Business Park

The development of land at the North Dorset Business Park as shown on Map 17a, will be supported for employment uses, provided all the following criteria are met:

- > the primary use falls within B1/B2/B8 type use or is for education/training facilities, ancillary retail of bulky goods 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 an occupying business use would not be likely to have an adverse impact on existing businesses or nearby dwellings, by virtue of its operation, emitted noise or smell, times of 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 extended Trailway, from the northern and eastern edge of the site via Stalbridge Lane.*

Figure 9. North Dorset Business Park – concepts and issues diagram¹⁸



Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse (Map 17a area 12)

- 10.5.7 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.
- 10.5.8 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.
- 10.5.9 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 some high quality larger homes.

Policy 39. Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse

The development of land adjoining Barton Farmhouse (as shown on Map 17a area 12), will be supported for housing, provided all the following criteria are met:

- > *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 native*

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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 and Conservation Area, and where development is typically more dispersed and softened by planting*
- > *any further measures that may be required as part of an approved biodiversity mitigation plan are secured*

Conversion of rural buildings

- 10.5.10 National changes to the current planning system 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 currently no rights to extend such buildings or provide a garden area if there is no associated land, and any applications to do so will be scrutinised through the normal planning process. The Local Plan policy allows a wide range of uses, but has more restrictive conditions than the permitted development rights in terms of location, and does not allow extensions to the building (unless to meet essential functional requirements of the intended use) or changes to its curtilage.
- 10.5.11 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 strengthen the viability of farming enterprises, and to actively improve local character.
- 10.5.12 A bat survey should be undertaken and if evidence of bats is discovered, a biodiversity mitigation plan will need to be approved and submitted with a planning application in line with the Dorset Biodiversity Protocol.

Policy 40. 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, will be supported in line with the Local Plan policies or provided it is demonstrated that the following criteria are all met:

- > *the building is no longer suitable in the context of modern farming techniques,*
- > *the change of use would support the on-going viability of an established farming enterprise, and would not cause significant environmental harm,*
- > *any physical changes would 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 would be in keeping with the rural character of the area*

10.6 Changes to the Settlement Boundary

- 10.6.1 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.
- 10.6.2 Under Policy 8 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 and more closely follows the existing field boundaries. 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. In summary, the main changes are:

- > Exclude the areas around Sturminster Mill, the remains of Sturminster Castle and Castle Farm, Sturminster Newton Town Cemetery and the field adjoining, to its east, the Bull Tavern (which is designated in the Local Plan as an Important Open and Wooded Area
- > Exclude Rolls Mill (North Dorset Business Park)
- > Exclude corner of field adjoining Hillcrest Close
- > Include the Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse allocation.

10.6.3 We have also considered whether the remaining hamlets such as Broad Oak, Glue Hill and Bagber should 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.

11 How the Plan will be Implemented

Introduction

- 11.1.1 We have worked closely with the local community in the preparation of this plan and it is clear that continuing dialogue is essential if future development is to be consistent with its aims and proposals.
- 11.1.2 The Town Council will work with its partners to ensure local residents, businesses and other relevant groups and organisations can continue to be involved in shaping the proposals for our Parish. This includes reviewing the need to update the Plan as the town's needs change over time and considering new developments with developers throughout the planning cycle – from emerging designs, planning application preparation through to construction. We have therefore set out in this section how this will be achieved.
- 11.1.3 A Neighbourhood Plan becomes part of the development plan for the area after it has passed the referendum process and is officially 'made'.
- 11.1.4 The local planning authority (North Dorset District Council at time of publication in 2017) makes decisions on planning applications.
- 11.1.5 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 on behalf of the local community. The Town Council will use the Neighbourhood Plan as a basis for making such recommendations and will consult with the community as 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

- 11.1.6 The Local Plan (Policy 24) requires developers to engage with the local community and offer realistic opportunities for local people to influence development proposals where practical and feasible to do so.
- 11.1.7 Anyone contemplating a planning application in Sturminster Newton is encouraged to consult the policies and proposals in this plan. The Town Council encourages applicants to discuss their proposals with neighbours and others likely to be affected. This pre-application engagement is especially important on larger or particularly sensitive sites where there is likely to be a great deal of public interest in the proposed plans. We have procedures in place that can help with this.
- 11.1.8 If a developer wishes to present their ideas to members of the Town Council informally there are opportunities every month to do this and we would be happy to explain the arrangements we can put in place.
- 11.1.9 As with all planning applications in the Parish, local residents, businesses and developers can submit comments on applications to the local planning authority. If these are copied to the Town Council they will be considered by the Town Council in deciding its response to the local planning authority.
- 11.1.10 In all cases, please contact the Town Council at:
- > Address: Old Market Hill, Sturminster Newton DT10 1FH
 - > Phone: 01258 475136
 - > Email: admin@sturminsternewton-tc.gov.uk

Reviewing the Plan

11.1.11 This 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. Monitoring (such as whether an appropriate mix of housing is being achieved) may also highlight the need for action. The Town Council will need to decide if this is the case and schedule work to re-examine and amend the content. 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 Plan remains up-to-date.

Local Plan Review

11.1.12 Drafting the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan raised a number of points that could usefully be considered through the future review of the Local Plan. These are summarised here for ease of reference:

- > the limited potential for long-term growth may justify amending the status of the town as a main location for meeting strategic growth
- > the settlement status of Newton and the area around the Town Bridge, and whether these should be downgraded from their current 'town' status if not considered an appropriate location for the town's future growth
- > including any built-out allocations within the settlement boundary
- > reviewing the Important Open and Wooded Areas noting those that have not been carried forward as Local Green Spaces or otherwise protected in this Plan
- > testing the viability of including higher options standards in Building Regulations (Part M) for accessible homes, and if feasible including a policy requirement that will deliver such homes as part of the housing mix.

Status of Supplementary Planning Documents specific to Sturminster Newton

11.1.13 At the time of writing this plan there were three supplementary planning guidance documents written specifically for the area. These have been reviewed and, where appropriate, their withdrawal has been suggested in order to avoid unnecessary overlap.

Table 12. Supplementary Planning Documents

DOCUMENT	CONSIDERATION	SUGGESTED STATUS
North Dorset Business Park Design and Development Brief (2012)	<i>The concepts and key planning principles have been carried forward into this Neighbourhood Plan, leaving just background information</i>	<i>This document provides useful background information on this important employment site but can be formally withdrawn as supplementary guidance</i>
Station Road Area Design & Development Brief (2008)	<i>The concepts and key planning principles have been carried forward into this Neighbourhood Plan, leaving just background information</i>	<i>This document provides useful background information on this important redevelopment site but can be formally withdrawn as supplementary guidance</i>
Town Design Statement (2008)	<i>Reviewed and used to formulate the design and character policies contained in this Neighbourhood Plan</i>	<i>This document provides a finer grain of detail than could be included in this Neighbourhood Plan and should be retained as supplementary guidance. Any conflict between with Neighbourhood Plan policies should be resolved in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan.</i>

12 Infrastructure Improvements and Future Projects

12.1.1 Although a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule for North Dorset has been subject to examination, and the examiner concluded that it is an appropriate basis on which the District Council could introduce CIL, the District Council has not approved and implemented the Charging Schedule. Consequently, the District Council continues to make use of planning obligations, in line with the tests set out in the CIL regulations in terms of securing contributions in respect of proposals for new development. To this end any monies collected from developments in the Parish will be spent on infrastructure and other qualifying projects in Sturminster Newton Parish. It is anticipated that CIL will be reviewed at an appropriate time by the new Dorset Unitary Authority.

Potential projects

12.1.2 The Local Planning Authority has indicated that it will work with partners and developers to ensure that the level of social infrastructure across the District is maintained and enhanced. It recognises in the Local Plan that the proposed growth in the local population will require some existing facilities in Sturminster Newton 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; and
- > upgrading and expansion of the Leisure Centre.

12.1.3 As part of the work on the Neighbourhood Plan other potential projects were identified by our own work with the community in addition to the strategic projects mentioned above. This list in the following table 13 is not exhaustive and may need to be updated. However, it provides a clear indication of the type of projects that local people have agreed would be worthwhile. The scope of any project will be limited by available funds, as it will have to be funded by statutory bodies, developers or other available sources. The Town Council has commenced some of these projects and will include them in its annual business plan subject to funding constraints and agreement with other key stakeholders.

Table 13. Identified Local Projects identified for funding

Project description	Who is responsible for delivery	For more information...
Regeneration of the Station Road Car Park area – Policy 20 and 22		
<p>The Town Council will work together with the freeholders of the sites in the Station Road area and at Clarkes Yard to consider the viability of a consolidated scheme. Key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial discussions with individual freeholders – complete – agreement to explore further • NDDC (the largest freeholder) – engagement of possible developer – under negotiation 	<p>Town Council – overall project coordination</p> <p>The District Council or its successor – engagement of partner to develop site</p>	See Section 5.5

<i>Project description</i>	<i>Who is responsible for delivery</i>	<i>For more information...</i>
Town centre traffic management and public realm improvements project – Policy 19		
<p>The Town Council, in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority and the Highways Authority, will work together to try 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. Major improvements may be linked to the regeneration of the Station Road Car Park area. Key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of public realm improvements in the project to regenerate the Station Road area – part-funded by CIL contributions – Town Council Economic Development Team • Use of CIL funding from other developments and application for grants for incremental improvements • involvement of local retail businesses – recent meetings are considering improvements to the visual appearance of the centre (flowers, encouraging owners to redecorate shop fronts etc.) 	<p>Town Council –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project initiation, coordination and management • determination of allocation of CIL from development • identification of additional funding <p>Local Planning Authority – approval of changes and allocation of CIL</p> <p>Highways Authority – Design and approval of changes to road layouts</p> <p>Businesses – improvements in the town centre appearance</p> <p>Retailers – shop frontages improvements, ‘in bloom’ etc.</p>	<p>See Section 5.3</p> <p>Details of the scheme will be subject to public consultation</p>
Town centre parking signage, charges and fees – Policies 19 and 20		
<p>The Town Council (through the town’s Economic Development project) will work together with the owners/operators of town centre car parks, to try to bring about a more coordinated approach, and fairer and appropriate parking charges, for the town centre. Optimum location of parking for visitors, workers and disabled visitors will be considered. Key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of parking signage and usage • Improvement of signage – approved by the Highways Authority • Parking scheme to incentivise visitors – new meters being installed that can print vouchers • Negotiations with other car park freeholders to incorporate into an overall approach. 	<p>Town Council – project management and coordination and improvement of Town Council signage</p> <p>The District Council or its successor – implementation of changes to parking charges</p> <p>Highways Authority – parking signage</p> <p>Charles Higgins Partnership (owners of the parking around The Exchange and Coop) – agreement to incorporation into any coordinated scheme</p>	<p>See Section 3.6, 5.3.8, 5.5</p>
Economic Development Plan – Policies 15, 19, 20, 22, 38, 39		
<p>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. Key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Economic Development Plan document – completion April 2017 	<p>Town Council through its established Economic Development project</p>	<p>See Section 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 4.6, 5.3, 5.5, 10.5</p>

Project description	Who is responsible for delivery	For more information...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation projects under way include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tourism Association ○ Education and Skills ○ Web site and marketing ○ Enterprise Hub feasibility study for North Dorset Business Park ○ Town Business Manager ○ Car parking improvements – see above • Projects yet to start: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Station Road Regeneration ○ Public Realm Improvements 		
Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan – Policies 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18,19		
<p>The Town Council will work with the Local Planning Authority to draw up a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, to provide further guidance on the architectural and historic interest of the area and how it should be conserved and enhanced. Key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Officer – advice on structure, approach and threats • Town Council to include in 2018 business plan 	<p>Town Council to initiate review of Conservation Area in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority</p> <p>Conservation Officer to complete a Conservation Plan</p>	See Sections 3.3, 4.2, 5.1,5.2,5.3
Local Heritage List of locally valued historic buildings – Policies 1, 3		
<p>The Town Council will forward the identified Locally Important Buildings to the Local Planning Authority, to consider whether it may be expedient to include these on the Local Heritage List (LHL).</p>	<p>Town Council to submit list of Locally Important Buildings</p> <p>Local Planning Authority to incorporate into LHL</p>	See Section 4.2 and sections 5-10
Improvements to the key foot/cycle paths across the town – Policies 12, 13, 14		
<p>The Conditions Report on the key walking and cycling 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 and the Rangers to try to bring about possible improvements. Key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with landowners, Highways and Rangers to clarify implementation costs, work and schedule • Review possible improvements and alternatives for access from the town to the North Dorset Business Park • Include identified and agreed improvements in the Town Council Business Plan as funding becomes available 	<p>Town Council to initiate and manage project.</p>	See Section 4.5
Improvements to open spaces and play provision – Policy 11		
<p>The Town Council will work with partners to improve the main open spaces and play provision in the town. The main priorities for improvement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Sturminster Newton United Football Club (training and all-weather pitches) – discussions under way with the High School 	<p>Town Council to manage projects and to support other organisations in acquiring and establishing additional leisure and recreation facilities</p>	<p>See Section 4.5, 5.4</p> <p>Contact the Town Council</p>

<i>Project description</i>	<i>Who is responsible for delivery</i>	<i>For more information...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> equipped play for all age ranges at the War Memorial and Rixon Recreation Grounds - Skate Bowl project under way allotments on land off Elm Close – provision subject to development of this site. 		
Completion of, and continuing improvements to, the Trailway and other rural recreational trails – Policies 13, 14, 20 and 22		
<p>The Trailway 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, and the Town Council will encourage landowners and the Highways Authority to improve the recreational value of these trails. Key steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with landowners and Rangers to clarify implementation costs, work and schedule Include identified Town Council actions in the Town Council Business Plan 	<p>Town Council – project management and coordination</p> <p>Rangers – implementation of the paths and negotiation with freeholders</p> <p>Open Spaces Group – requirements for signage, layout and design</p>	<p>See Sections 4.5, 5.4</p> <p>Contact the Town Council or Open Spaces Group</p>
Tree protection project and planting scheme – Policies 2, 6		
<p>The Town Council will forward the trees identified as particularly significant to the Local Planning Authority to consider whether it may be expedient to make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) in the interests of amenity.</p> <p>The Town Council will also consider setting up a tree planting grant scheme using some of the developer funds to enhance the area</p>	<p>Town Council – provision of list of trees and groups of trees to be subject to TPO</p> <p>Town Council to fund tree planting as appropriate</p> <p>Local Planning Authority to implement TPOs for the list</p>	<p>See Section 4.2.17-19</p> <p>Contact the Town Council or Open Spaces Group</p>

12.1.4 Inevitably, new project opportunities will arise that may come into fruition during the lifespan of this Plan. One longer-term potential project (outlined below) is an example that came to light just prior to finalising the 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 14. Possible future projects: Somerset and Dorset Railway

<i>What could this mean?</i>	<i>For more information...</i>
<p>An enthusiastic group of volunteers has restored and reopened nearby Shillingstone Station and has collected a wide range of rolling stock, 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 has an aspiration to reopen the line for as continuous a length as possible (similar to other ‘heritage’ railway lines that operate successfully and profitably throughout the country), including the three-mile-long link to Sturminster Newton.</p>	<p>Studies are at a very early stage</p>

A new heritage railway might have a considerable positive impact on Sturminster Newton. If potentially viable and technically feasible it may be supported by the Town Council provided there is clear public support from the local community, and it would not be harmful to:

- > the use of the Trailway as a walking, cycling and equestrian route,*
- > the amenities of residents and other neighbouring uses*
- > the landscape and other environmental assets of the Parish.*

Appendix A Evidence Base

The policies in the Plan are based on extensive evidence gathering. Where relevant, key evidence is mentioned in the preamble to the policy statements in the document. The following sets out the detailed evidence base supporting the Plan and can be accessed by contacting the Town Council who will be happy to help with access. Links next to each document will take you to a copy of the document on-line.

PLAN SECTION	CONTENT and relevant NP policies	Core document	Additional supporting evidence
General documents (GEN)	Overarching policy documents – relates to all policies or general background	Climate Change Review https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5MwxCcGJYYzRkUVU/view?usp=sharing	Sturminster Newton Ward Profile – background data on the NP Area https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5bnE4NGxuc0F1Slk/view?usp=sharing
Design, landscape and environment (CHAR)	<p>Work stemming from the landscape character review</p> <p>Policy 1. Design and character of buildings and their settings</p> <p>Policy 2. Important views and landscape sensitivity</p> <p>Policy 3. Locally Important Buildings</p> <p>Policy 4. Local Green Spaces</p> <p>Policy 5. Other Green Spaces</p> <p>Policy 6. Trees in the landscape</p> <p>Policy 8. Settlement boundary revision</p> <p>Policies 17, 23, 27, 31, 33, 36, 37 Area Character policies</p>	<p>Summary Report on Character Assessment work https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5THpzSE52OWtWTUk/view?usp=sharing</p> <p><i>Additional core documents:</i></p> <p>2008 Town Design Statement https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5TGVRcFlpeS13a28/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Matrix Character Appraisal https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5UmlNSEhxUJrWkU/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Matrix Character summary boards used in Nov 15 Exhibition https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B0iabMkuwQJ5eWRjZmlzNE1TbFk?usp=sharing</p> <p>Settlement boundary paper https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5bU</p>	<p>Work Done – data folders containing detailed assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Spaces • Trees • Buildings • Views <p>https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B0iabMkuwQJ5VUYtN3VBSIhzRDA?usp=sharing</p> <p>Design Principles draft and comments by NDDC Planning https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B0iabMkuwQJ5cDMydldPX3NFQU0?usp=sharing</p> <p>ND Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – wind solar https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMku</p>

PLAN SECTION	CONTENT and relevant NP policies	Core document	Additional supporting evidence
		9qLUFzMDdWX0E/view?usp=sharing	wQJ5NHQ2V0VJaEhCaTA/view?usp=sharing Matrix - Evidence and Document Review https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5Tk00WnJqRnFxbjQ/view?usp=sharing Dorset Historic Towns Appraisal https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B0iabMkuwQJ5ZnRwTHoydzBVaEk?usp=sharing National Character Area Appraisal – Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5QUNEeTF2S3NSN0E/view?usp=sharing DERC Protected Species List https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5QnBRMIBYUIY1Nlk/view?usp=sharing
Housing (HSG)	Policy 7. Housing numbers and locations Policy 9. Housing types Policy 20. Station Road site Policy 21. Market Hill site Policy 22. Clarkes Yard site and other land at the Bath Road/ Old Market Hill junction Policy 24. Market Fields site, east of Bath Road Policy 25. Former council offices at Stour View Policy 26. Land at Yewstock Fields	Housing Supply Paper – https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5QXhyc052R1ZnOE0/view?usp=sharing Housing Needs Paper – https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5U2Z6MXpkVlhqaE0/view?usp=sharing North Dorset DC Annual Monitoring Report 2016 – progress on implementing the Local Plan Part 1 Jan 2016 https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5YXFzQ3VDUmxLcVE/view?usp=sharing North Dorset 2012 SHMA Summary Report - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5TX	Minerals Safeguarding Areas – https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5WkQ1aEhaSkNSc2M/view?usp=sharing Station Road Creamery Design Brief April 2008 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5LThpYUQ1WjIVd1U/view?usp=sharing ND Viability Update report – 2016 – viability of CIL and Affordable Housing - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5bzNkT3liUmFvOTQ/view?usp=sharing Sturminster Newton Ward Profile – background data on the NP Area

PLAN SECTION	CONTENT and relevant NP policies	Core document	Additional supporting evidence
	<p>Policy 29. North Honeymead Fields</p> <p>Policy 30. Land North of Manston Road</p> <p>Policy 32. Land south and east of Elm Close</p> <p>Policy 34. William Barnes school site</p> <p>Policy 35. Hammonds Yard site</p> <p>Policy 39. Land adjoining Barton Farmhouse</p>	<p>BWMERQc2RxWkU/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Eastern Dorset 2015 SHMA summary report – https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5aG12VXdKRmhRR0U/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Ecology Report – SN potential development sites Sept 2016 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5cDJUeVJJNkZhUVE/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Elm Close Farm - Odour Report Jan 2015 – https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5a0RqbExRWUxek0/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Elm Close Farm – East – Bull Ground Lane – Ecology Report - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5cWdQa1paeG9pdWM/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Elm Close Farm - South – Ecology Report - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5R3Z2SnFLUkpfS2M/view?usp=sharing</p>	<p>https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5TzE3eVZtQnFFT2M/view?usp=sharing</p>
Community Assets (COM)	<p>Policy 10. Important Community Buildings and associated land</p> <p>Policy 11. Open space and recreation provision and standards in new housing developments</p> <p>Policy 28. Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub</p>	<p>Sturminster Newton Community Assets Review Jan 2017 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5MVFPbXItUWFDRU0/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>N Dorset Local Plan – Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2014 – also sets out priorities for CIL - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5amZXUmhBTy1oN1k/view?usp=sharing</p>	

PLAN SECTION	CONTENT and relevant NP policies	Core document	Additional supporting evidence
Movement around the Parish (TRAN)	<p>Policy 12. Delivering a safe and convenient travel network</p> <p>Policy 13. The Trailway</p> <p>Policy 14. Rural recreational trails</p> <p>Policy 15. Improving the Town Centre – safe and pedestrian friendly public realm, and provision of sufficient parking.</p> <p>Policy 20. Station Road (Area 1) -extension of Trailway</p> <p>Policy 22. Clarkes Yard site and other land at the Bath Road/ Market Hill junction - pedestrian and cycle route network – route of Trailway</p> <p>Policy 24. Market Fields site, east of Bath Road – pedestrian and cycle routes</p> <p>Policy 28. Honeymead Lane Education and Leisure Hub - pedestrian and cycle routes</p> <p>Policy 30. Land North of Manston Road – provision of a landscaped recreational trail</p> <p>Policy 32. Land South and East of Elm Close - Pedestrian and Cycle Route and Trailway</p> <p>Policy 34. William Barnes Primary School site – Pedestrian and cycle routes</p> <p>Policy 38. Land at North Dorset Business Park – Pedestrian and cycle route to the NDBP</p> <p>Table 13. Identified Local Projects identified for funding – projects to improve transport network – cycle ways, Trailway and pedestrian routes.</p>	<p>Report on the Transport and Route evidence base for Sturminster Newton - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5dk4xVUN4M1FkT0E/view?usp=sharing</p>	<p>Dorset County Council Parking Guidance - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5VzNQeTh5UDRMaU0/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Dorset County Council Highways and Principle Rights of Way - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5aHNSNzR3S3dKYIU/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Presentation by Matrix on the SN Heritage Railway Opportunity - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5bWtPMDZHWUIMRIk/view?usp=sharing</p>

PLAN SECTION	CONTENT and relevant NP policies	Core document	Additional supporting evidence
Business Growth and Encouraging more Visitors (BUS)	<p>Policy 38. Land at North Dorset Business Park</p> <p>Policy 40. Re-use of redundant agricultural buildings which includes provision for residential uses</p>	<p>North Dorset Business Park Design and Development Brief April 2012 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5S2Juc2swVnl4cU0/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>Report on Farming Consultation October 2015 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5T3J1azhJdktXYjQ/view?usp=sharing</p>	<p>Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Workspace Strategy Oct 2016 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5Z1ExUjY3TTNmajA/view?usp=sharing</p>
Town Centre (TC)	<p>Policy 15. Improving the Town Centre</p> <p>Policy 16. Uses in the shopping frontages protection zone</p> <p>Policy 17. Protecting Town Centre Area character</p> <p>Policy 18. Shop Fronts</p> <p>Policy 19. Town centre public realm improvements</p> <p>Policy 20. Station Road site</p> <p>Policy 21. Market Hill site</p> <p>Policy 22. Clarkes Yard site and other land at the Bath Road/ Old Market Hill junction</p>	<p>Town Centre Health Check Report January 2017 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5MjIhSnF3dklfU0E/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>NDDC Shopfronts Guidance – January 2015 https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5V3RyTTBLNmR3bTA/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>NDDC Joint Retail Study March 2008 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5LXpsMXJidXlWdEk/view?usp=sharing</p> <p>2008 Town Design Statement – ref Policy 20 https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5TGVRcFlpeS13a28/view?usp=sharing</p>	<p>Station Road Design Brief 2008 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0iabMkuwQJ5bHQ5WVBmZkNRdEk/view?usp=sharing</p>