



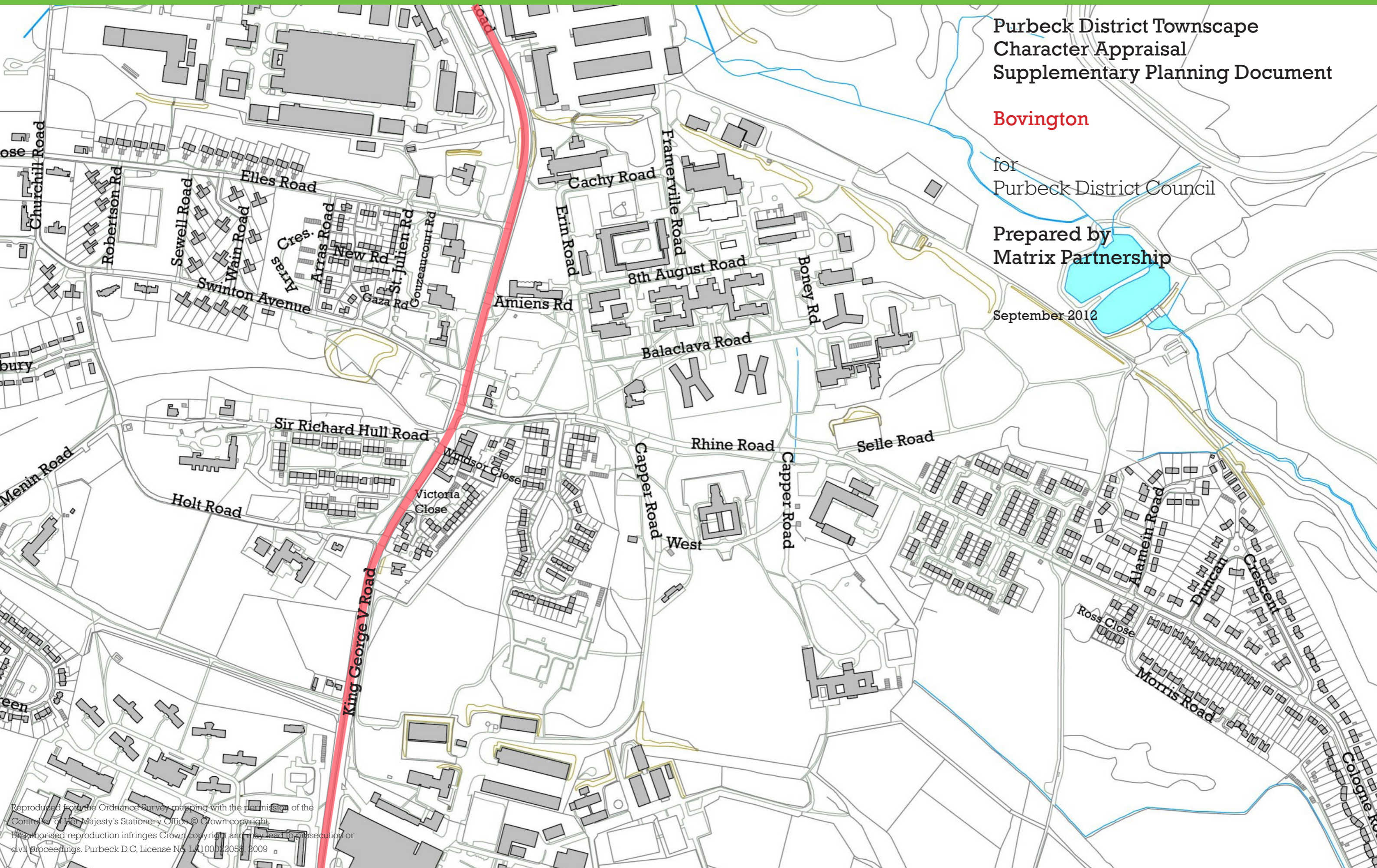
Purbeck District Townscape Character Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document

Bovington

for
Purbeck District Council

Prepared by
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September 2012





**Purbeck District Townscape
Character Appraisal for:**

Bovington

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Bovington

01.1

Introduction

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










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

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

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

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

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

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



Map of Purbeck identifying the settlements included in the study



Bovington Introduction 01.2

Purpose: What is a Townscape Character Appraisal?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Report Structure

1.2.7 The report is structured into 5 parts as follows:

Part 01. Introduction

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

Part 02. Town Context

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

Part 03. Town Analysis

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

Part 04. Character Types

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

Part 05. Townscape Analysis

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

Methodology

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

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

1.2.9 Desk Study

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

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

1.2.10 On-Site Survey

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

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

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

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

1.2.14 Stakeholder Consultation

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

One event was held for the three towns:

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

A second event was held for the villages:

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

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

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

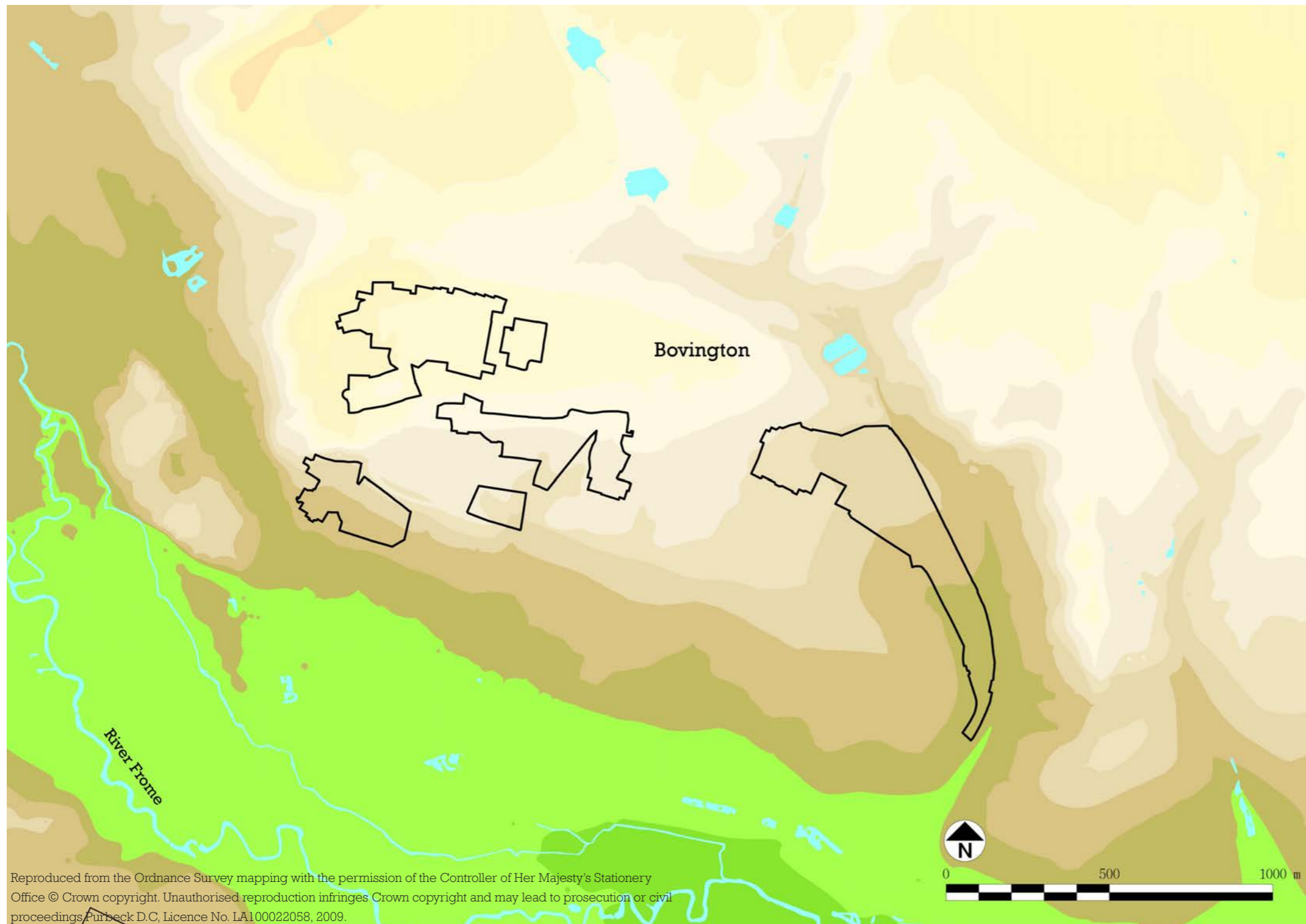


Bovington

Settlement context

02.1

Geographical context



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2.1.1 This drawing shows the topography of the landscape around Bovington. The dispersed settlement occupies a south-facing slope of the Frome Valley and part of a shallow tributary valley to the east. The higher areas to the north are part of an extensive area of sand and gravels, formerly heathland.

2.1.2 The settlement of Bovington is situated on the north side of the valley of the River Frome on a minor road that indirectly connects the A352 Wareham to Dorchester road to the south with the A35 Bere Regis to Dorchester road to the north. The essentially traditional and rural village of Wool, though much enlarged, is situated on the south side of the Frome Valley a little over 1 km to the south-east. Also on the southern side of the valley is the extensive campus development of Winfrith Technology Centre.

2.1.3 Bovington is fundamentally different from all the other towns and villages in the area because it was founded as an army camp in which active use it remains today. Latterly it developed permanent associated residential areas that are the subject of this study. The army camp wholly dominates that part of the settlement that is outside direct military control and generally it has the unmistakable character of an Ministry of Defence (MoD) establishment. Although most of the military camp is situated to the north of the settlement, the two elements are nonetheless somewhat intermingled and to the casual visitor there is no clear or obvious distinction between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) operational area, including barracks and its associated institutions and stores, and the Tank Museum, the Bovington First School and residential areas.

2.1.4 Obviously security fences and manned gates define the limits of operational areas, but otherwise in the southern part of Bovington there is often little obvious distinction between areas of military only and civilian access. The haphazard distinction between the two, and the essentially disparate nature of the settlement is confusing to the visitor.

2.1.5 In terms of Bovington's geographical context, the Frome Valley lies within an area of gentle, rolling topography that means that, as a landscape feature, it is not a very clearly defined feature to the observer 'on the ground'. The broad water meadows and meandering course of the river are rather more distinctive of the valley than are the valley sides that are scarcely more pronounced than the rolling topography elsewhere.



1. Bovington is situated on gently rising ground north of the Frome Valley, seen here from Bovington Lane.



2. Fields contained by woodland and play area west of Cologne Road



3. The Frome Valley and Wool Bridge south-east of Bovington and the chalk downs beyond.



4. To the north of Bovington there were extensive areas of heath, now mostly conifer plantations and training areas.

2.1.6 In this locality, the valley defines a break in the geology between the chalk downs to the south and the sandy heaths to the north. Bovington itself is situated on sands and gravels whilst Wool to the south is situated on chalk.

2.1.7 Bovington is situated on an area of broad, gently sloping land, generally without feature, that falls gently south towards the River Frome and its associated floodplain. To the east the land also falls gently towards a minor tributary of the Frome, part of which is occupied by an isolated part of the settlement. To the north there is an extensive area of sands and gravels that extends towards the valley of the River Piddle.

KEY POINTS

- Bovington is essentially an army camp with associated residential areas.
- The army camp dominates and merges with the settlement.
- The settlement is situated on the northern edge of the Frome Valley, north-west of Wool.
- The settlement is situated on gentle south-facing slope above the floodplain.
- Topography in and around the village is generally not prominent.
- Bovington is situated on an area of sands and gravels.



Bovington Settlement context 02.2 Landscape setting



Aerial photograph courtesy of Purbeck District Council - Getmapping.com

2.2.1 There are three principal types of landscape in the vicinity of Bovington that do much to define its setting and character.

2.2.2 To the south of the settlement is the valley of the River Frome with its broad floodplain. Although now quite well vegetated, the flat landscape is typified by long glimpsed views across the water meadows to distant trees and rolling hills, as can be seen from the A352 where it crosses the valley at Woolbridge. Slightly above the floodplain on gently rising land is an intermediate area of fields contained by dense hedges, extended belts and blocks of deciduous woodland, and in which the southern part of Bovington is situated. North of this intermediate area is an area of thin sandy soils that was formerly mostly open heath and on which the main body of the army camp and training areas are now situated.

2.2.3 The landscape of the area must have changed considerably in the last 100 years or so. Not only has the military presence greatly altered the scene, but extensive conifer plantations now dominate and largely define large areas to the north.

2.2.4 Bovington differs radically from the other settlements of Purbeck generally because of its military origins, independent of any very historic foundation, and because of its dispersed nature and poorly-defined centre. The army camp creates a generally orthogonal pattern of development whilst the associated settlement that is the subject of this study is defined by a series of rather isolated enclaves of residential development to the south, but intermingled with some army uses (including Stanley Barracks) and the Tank Museum.

2.2.5 The area in and around the settlement, south of the main body of the military camp is agricultural, or at least former agricultural land (now much used for playing fields, horse grazing, army training and including land associated with the museum), contained by broad belts and blocks of mostly deciduous woodland (substantially oak).

2.2.6 It is apparent that the amount of woodland in the area has increased significantly since the military camp was first established, but it has developed and matured, to the point that it now encloses and screens much of the development and forms a strong backdrop in most views.

2.2.7 Whilst previously there must have been extensive views southwards across the Frome Valley towards Wool and the rolling chalk downs beyond, these are now largely obscured. The most obvious remaining view is obtained from King George V Road looking south which, although much constrained by trees, does give a sense of the wider landscape setting with the chalk downs visible in the distance.

2.2.8 Conversely vegetation also screens Bovington from external views, and it is only from higher ground to the south of Wool that the roofs of the larger buildings can be seen in the distance. Approaching from the south along Bovington Lane there are only intermittent glimpses of the larger buildings through gaps in the roadside vegetation. Approaching from the north it is only the larger military buildings that can be glimpsed.








2.2.9 To the north, the character of the landscape changes significantly, not only because the sandy nature of the geology is more apparent, particularly in various isolated patches of remaining heathland, but because of the extensive coniferous plantations that exist in the area, interrupted by swathes of exposed sand and gravel in the military training areas.

KEY POINTS

- The landscape in the area includes floodplain, intermediate agricultural land and coniferous plantation including army training areas.
- The landscape has changed considerably in the last 100 years because of the military presence and extensive coniferous plantations.
- Bovington differs significantly from other settlements in the Purbeck area because of its relatively recent military origins, and because of its dispersed nature and poorly-defined centre.
- The area around the southern residential part of Bovington is essentially agricultural, but now with a variety of other uses, contained by broad belts of mostly deciduous woodland.
- Woodland now obscures former views to the south, but the principal remaining view is down King George V Road.
- Surrounding vegetation almost wholly obscures Bovington from external view.



2.2.10 This drawing shows how Bovington is situated between the valley of the River Frome to the south and the former heathland areas, now typified by conifer plantations, to the north and east. The residential part of the settlement is much dispersed and intermingled with military uses and the Tank Museum as well as irregular belts and blocks of essentially deciduous woodland.

-  River/water feature
-  Floodplain
-  Raised land above floodplain
-  Coniferous plantation
-  Mixed & deciduous woodland
-  Course of former railway line
-  Historic route
-  Principal view towards settlement from surrounding area

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Bovington
Settlement context
02.3
Landscape setting images



1. **Bovington seen from the north.** From the north Bovington is approached down a long straight road through woodland and army training areas. Large MoD sheds mark the northern edge of the settlement and there are glimpses of distant chalk downs to the south.



2. **Bovington seen from Bovington Lane to the south-east.** This view looks across gently rising land contained by hedgerows and deciduous woodland within which larger MoD buildings and the Tank Museum are seen.



3. Bovington seen from the chalk downs, near North Wood, south of Wool. The open nature of the landscape south of the Frome Valley contrasts with the wooded nature of the country to the north, including the extensive conifer plantations. Only the roofs of the larger buildings within Bovington are visible, seen in the distance at centre right.



Landscape map indicating the positions where photographs were taken.

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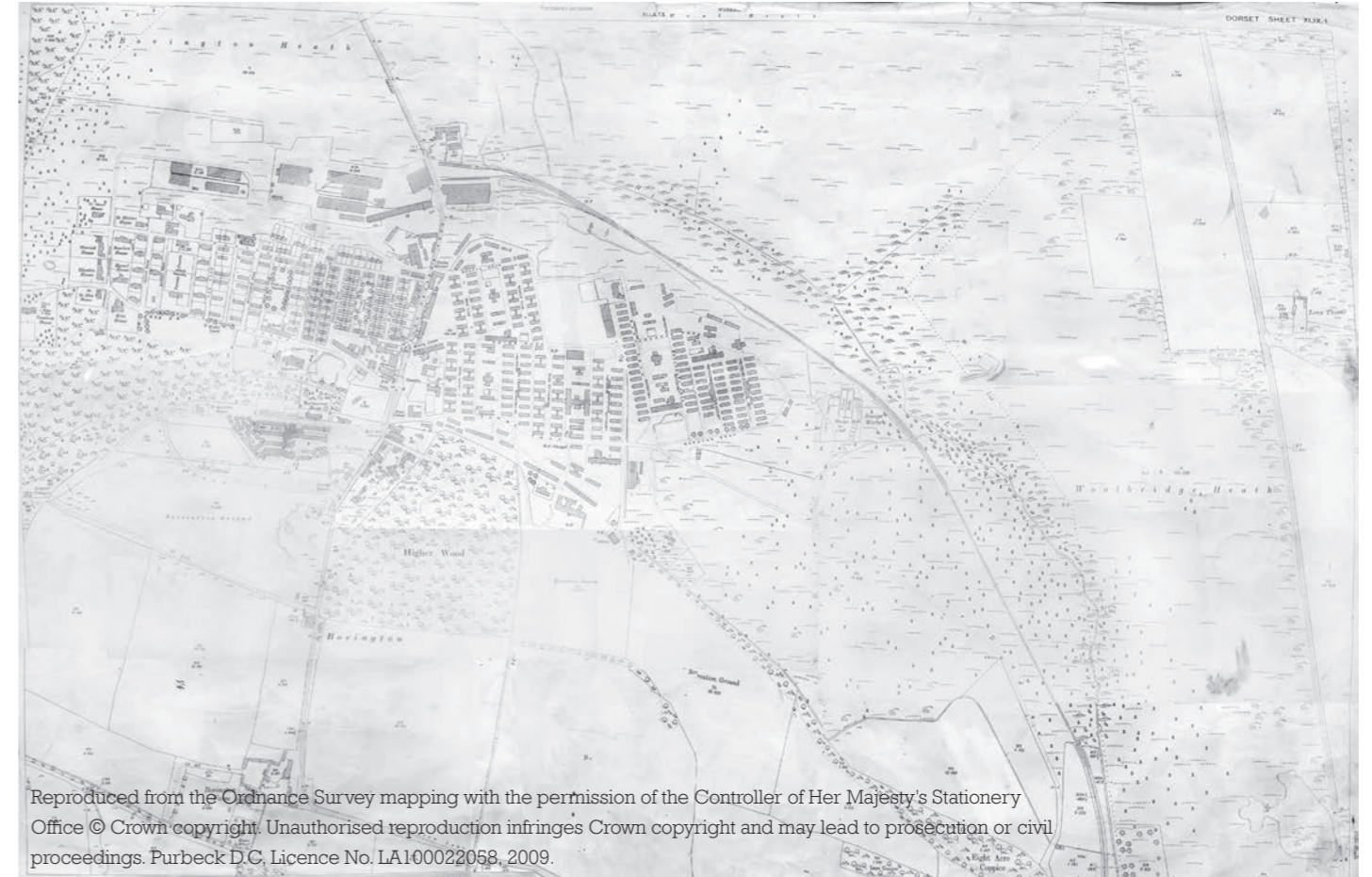
Bovington Settlement context 02.4 Historic background



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OS 1902

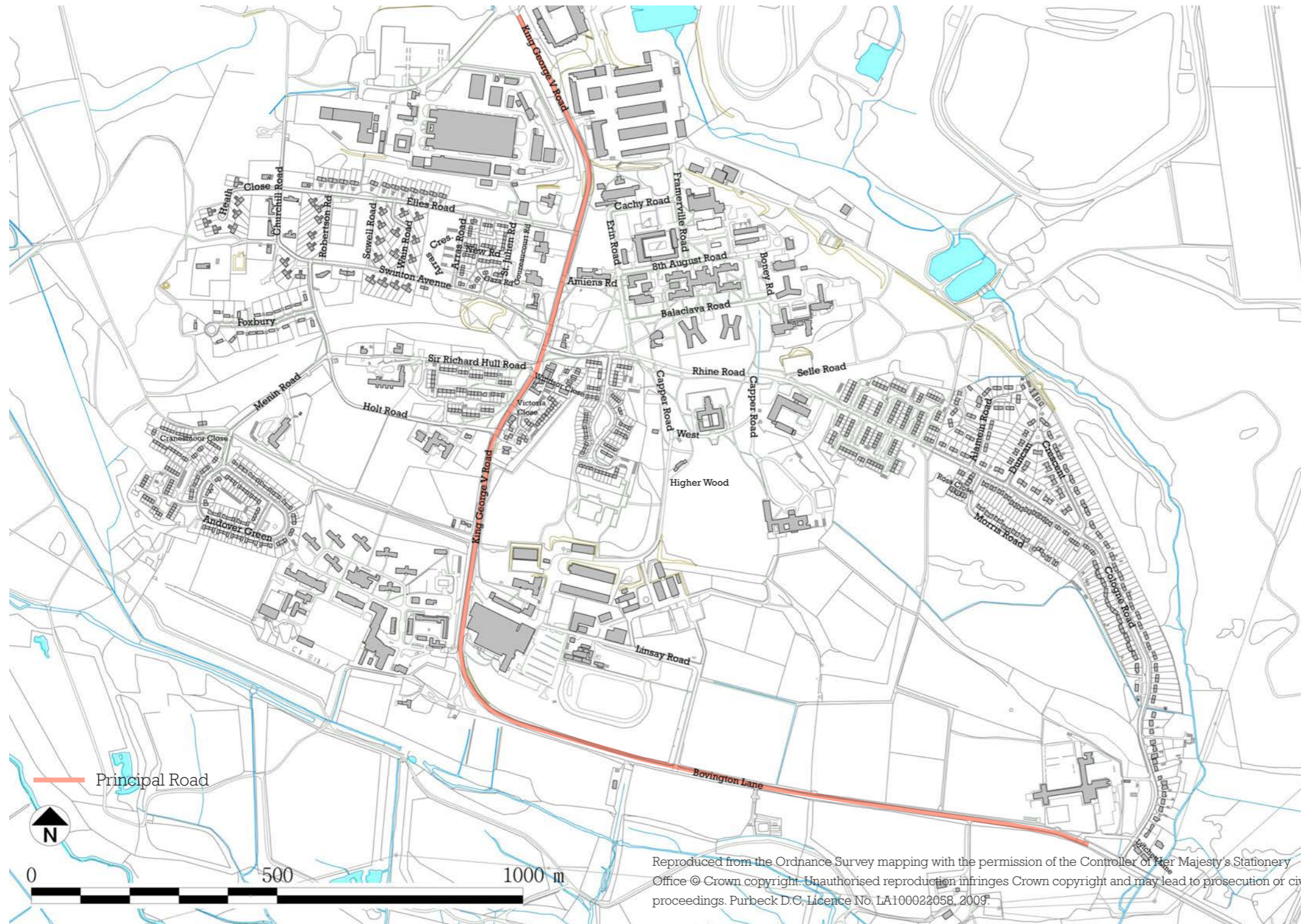
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OS 1927

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2.4.1 This selection of maps showing 20th century and contemporary Bovington illustrates the dramatic changes that have taken place during its development. In 1920, Bovington consisted solely of a farm and a few scattered cottages. Its military associations were already apparent, however, in the form of a rifle range. By 1927, the map is barely recognisable, with a large military camp, goods railway and roads replacing country lanes, heathland and fields. The contemporary map is different again, most of the buildings having been replaced, the railway removed, and the urban grain becoming less dense, with a greater number of buildings with large footprints.

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Bovington Settlement context 02.5 Historic evolution

2.5.1 In June 1916, during the First World War, the Heavy Branch of the Machine Gun Corps moved from Thetford in Norfolk to Bovington and Lulworth in Dorset. The main purpose behind the move was to create a centre for excellence to develop the new British invention, the armoured fighting vehicle. The War Office purchased 1000 acres of land, mostly heath, for this purpose.

2.5.2 Prior to the arrival of the military, human activity consisted largely of grazing on the water meadows beside the River Frome and other agricultural uses on the adjacent lower slopes. Bovington Farm, the main building of which still survives, was an isolated farmstead, together with a scattering of labourer's cottages at Bunker's Hill, mostly now demolished, approximately on the site of the present shopping centre. To the west a pair of cottages now called Andover Green Cottages still remain. Further north, fields, hedgerows and woodland gave way to untamed heath, part of the greater heath referred to by Thomas Hardy in his novels as Egdon Heath. The 1902 Ordnance Survey map does however show a firing range to the east of what is now called King George V Road that was used for infantry training with temporary tented encampments. This presumably had some bearing on the selection of Bovington as a new base, as no doubt did the isolated location on otherwise largely unused land where the latest secret weapon, the tank, could be developed away from prying eyes. When the first tanks arrived they were covered with sheets to disguise their appearance, and the residents of Bovington were ordered to draw their blinds and move to the back rooms of their houses, or, if outdoors, to turn their backs to the road as they passed.

2.5.3 The First World War resulted in the transformation of Bovington from a quiet rural backwater to an active and permanent military base. By 1915 wooden huts were built along the top of Bunker's Hill, using timber from the surrounding woods. With the establishment of a base for heavy armoured vehicles a new railway branch line, constructed substantially by German prisoners of war, was built to link the new base to the main line at Wool. This can be seen on the 1927 OS map, together with the sprawling barracks and large sheds to the north for stores and the development and servicing of the tanks. The railway was subsequently closed in 1928 but its course can still be identified in places, notably in the alignment of back garden

boundaries east of Cologne Road and Duncan Crescent.

2.5.4 After the First World War, Bovington continued to develop with timber structures being replaced with brick buildings, including married quarters. The civilian population lived mainly near the top of Bunker's Hill and to the west of Higher Wood in often improvised accommodation. Some lived in wooden houses, and some constructed houses by building around disused railway carriages placed side by side. During the 1920s, the majority of civilians made a living by meeting the demands of the military residents for goods and services. Gradually the population increased and diversified and this led to a change in priorities and demand for new facilities. The result was that there was quite a range of shops by the early 1920s. They were centred around Swinton Avenue and included several cafes, a fish and chip shop, photographer, newsagent, shoe repairer, barber and even the Garrison Cinema which was situated next to the power station (now demolished). Bovington Council School was built on Swinton Avenue in 1923. Other facilities included a church, a post office and an institute hall. There was another cinema off King George V Road (closed in 1928). In 1953 Bovington Middle School was built and Bovington First School opened in the late 1960s.

2.5.5 Prior to the Second World War, the buildings and facilities were modernized, and needless to say the camp was very active during the war itself, and continues in use today as the home of the Royal Armoured Corps.

2.5.6 Bovington might arguably claim to be the home of the tank, and it was very appropriate that Rudyard Kipling the poet and author when visiting Bovington in 1923 saw a number of surviving First World War tanks recommended that a museum should be set up. This was subsequently opened in 1947, and of course by then it included many examples of fighting vehicles from the Second World War. Today, the museum owns the most wide-ranging collection of tanks and armoured vehicles in the world and it has recently opened an additional 5,000 square metre exhibition space.

2.5.7 No history of Bovington would be complete without mention of the soldier and writer T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia). During the early

1920s Lawrence joined the Tank Corps and served briefly at Bovington camp. In 1923 he rented a near-derelict cottage just north of Bovington. Whilst he wrote very disparagingly of his time in the army, he greatly appreciated the surrounding country and the cottage that he rented and later bought. It was whilst riding his motorcycle near Bovington that Lawrence had the tragic accident as a result of which he died shortly afterwards. He is buried in nearby Moreton churchyard. His cottage, Clouds Hill, is now owned by the National Trust and is open to the public.



1. Bovington Farm predates the military camp and was part of a complex of farm buildings that has since been demolished.



2. Andover Green Cottages off Cranesmoor Close also predate the military camp.



3. Bovington is the home of the tank, apparent in the Tank Museum and other tanks on display, as here at the entrance to Stanley Barracks.



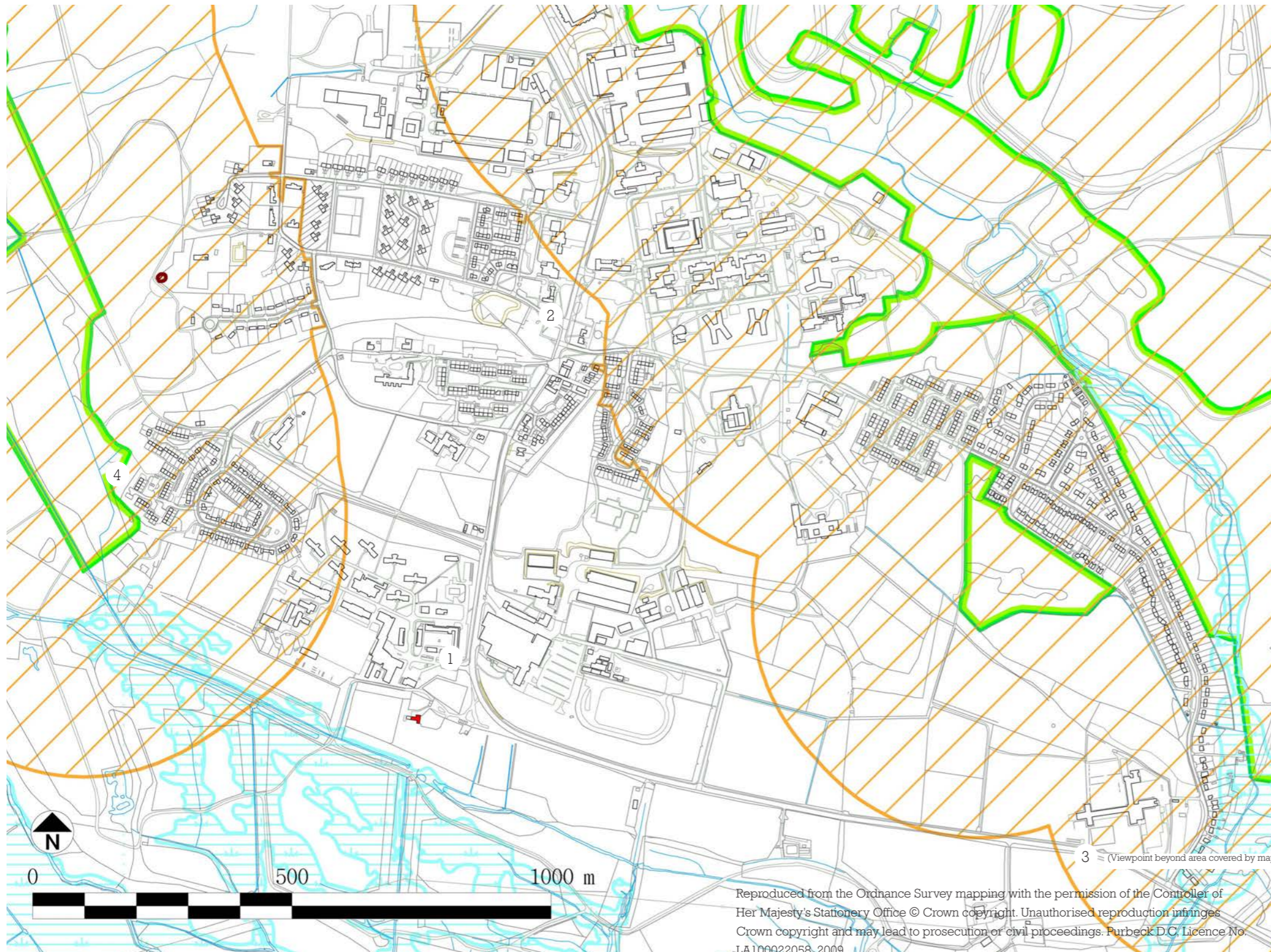
4. Several bungalows along Churchill Road appear to survive from the earlier days of the camp since they appear on the 1927 OS map.

KEY POINTS

- Prior to the arrival of the army, the area was mostly farmland to the south, including the floodplain of the River Frome and heath to the north.
- A few buildings in and around Bovington predate the military camp.
- In June 1916 the Heavy Branch of the Machine Gun Corps moved to Bovington to develop and train with the recently invented tank.
- A railway connection was built between Wool station and Bovington camp to transport tanks.
- Between the wars Bovington was gradually enlarged and modernized and today is home to the Royal Armoured Corps.
- Bovington Tank Museum contains an important collection of historic fighting vehicles and is an important tourist attraction.
- T.E. Lawrence served at Bovington camp in the 1920s and lived nearby at Clouds Hill.



Bovington Settlement context 02.6 Planning designations



- Listed building
- SAM
- Heathland 400m buffer zone
- SSSI
- Floodplain

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1. Bovington Farm is a Listed Building, once part of a larger farm complex.



2. Bovington does not have an environment that merits Conservation Area status. Illustrated here are local shops on King George V Road.



3. To the south of Bovington, the valley of River Frome is defined as floodplain, looking here towards Woolbridge Manor and Wool.



4. There are extensive SSSIs adjacent to Bovington, the heathland value of which prevents further residential development over much of the settlement, seen here from Andover Green.

2.6.1 In view of the recent origins of Bovington, it is unsurprising that the settlement contains only a single listed building, situated on its extreme southern periphery. This was the principal building of Bovington Farm, and is a fine red brick house with a formal front facade under thatch. Clearly this predates the founding of the military camp. Otherwise there are no other parts of the settlement that are of architectural or historic interest worthy of Conservation Area status. There is however a single tumulus just to the west of Bovington that is designated as a SAM (Scheduled Ancient Monument).

2.6.2 To the south, low-lying land on either side of the River Frome is identified as floodplain, as is the small tributary valley to the east of Cologne Road.

2.6.3 The principal planning constraints that affect Bovington relate to the ecological importance of adjacent areas. SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) flank the settlement and camp to east and west. Because of the highly sensitive nature of the heathland SSSIs, they are surrounded by buffer zones, the purpose of which is to discourage any damaging interference arising from additional development (pets in particular). These 400 metre buffer zones cover large parts of the settlement to east and west and therefore they represent a major constraint on further residential development.

KEY POINTS

- Bovington Farm is the only listed building in Bovington.
- No other part of the settlement is defined as having any special architectural or historic interest.
- There is a single tumulus to the west that is designated as a SAM.
- There are extensive SSSIs adjacent to Bovington, and the buffer zones around them are a major constraint on any further residential development.