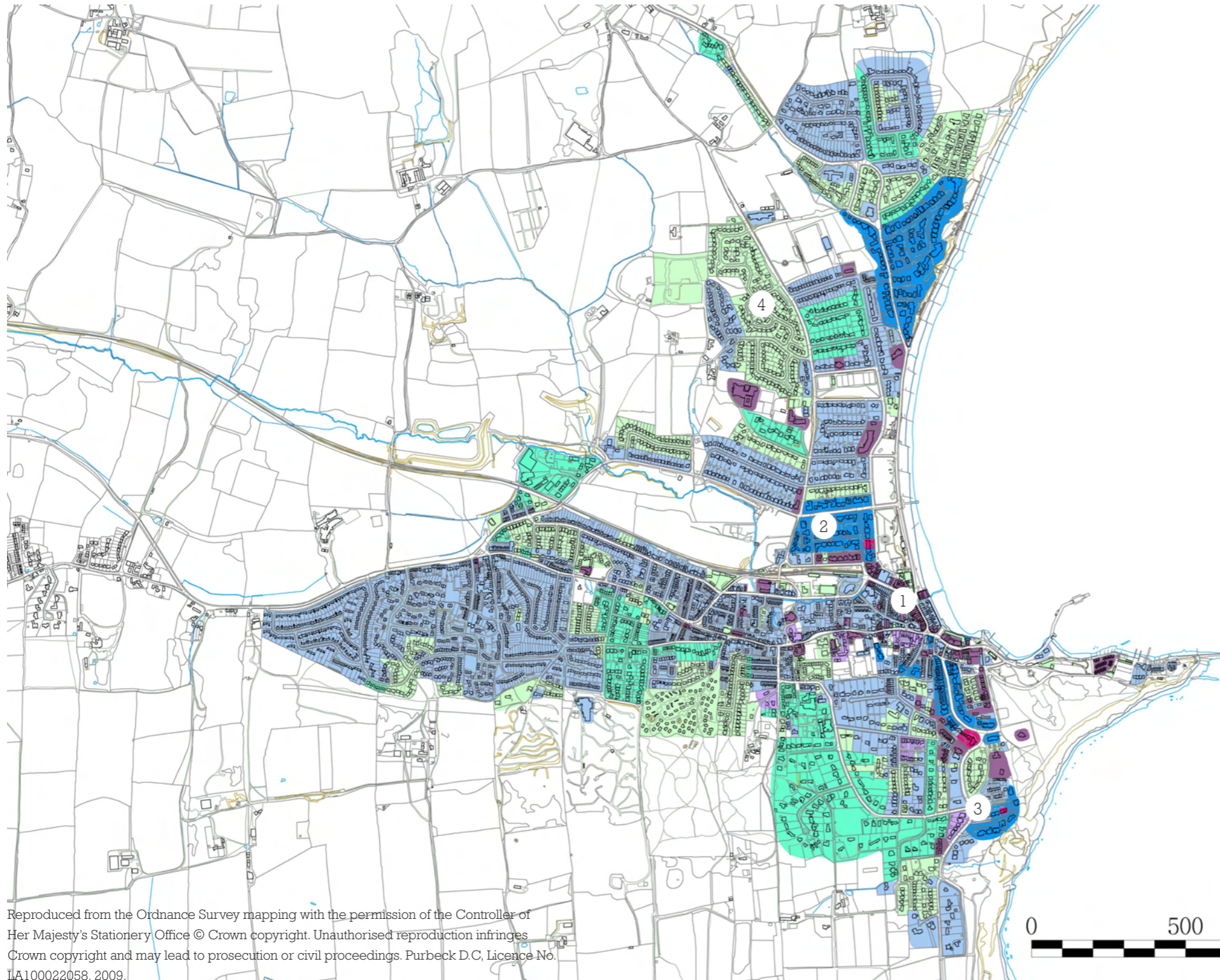




Swanage Town analysis 03.4 Building heights



- 1 (including 1.5) storey
- Mixed 1 and 2 storey
- 2 (including 2.5) storey
- Mixed 2 and 3 storey
- 2.5 - 4 storey, (large scale/massing)
- 3 (including 3.5) storey
- 5 storey plus



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1. Large parts of the town centre are between 2.5 and 3 storeys in height and situated on the back of the pavement creating a strong sense of enclosure.



2. A number of areas contain a mix of building heights, mostly up to 4 storeys, resulting in a relatively high density environment.



3. A flat development taking advantage of changes in ground level to provide 4 and 5 storey buildings.



4. Many post-war developments comprise housing estates or speculative infilling between 1 or 2 storeys in height.

3.4.1 The range of building heights within Swanage is influenced by both the era of the development and its location within the town. Many areas contain a mix of building heights, although each area is generally within a common range of height and scale.

3.4.2 The town centre contains the most complex arrangement of building heights. Station Road, Kings Road East and the north side of the High Street comprises tightly arranged buildings of between 2 and 2.5 storeys in height. Within this broad area are small or modest groups of mixed 2 and 3 storey and 3 to 3.5 storey buildings. The relatively tight arrangement of the streets, their somewhat organic alignment, together with this range of building heights creates a sense of scale and enclosure that signals this area forms the heart of the town. These characteristics remain notable as far west as Court Road although the height and density of the buildings diminishes with distance from the town centre.

3.4.3 Several exceptions to this within central Swanage include the area immediately south of the Station, which is itself low lying, and contains a number of low profile buildings including the health centre, Co-op supermarket and fire station. Their low height is exaggerated by their spacious layout and wide separation. Equally, a series of single storey buildings fronting Shore Road at its junction with Station Road appears of a somewhat uncharacteristically low scale for their central location.

3.4.4 A number of areas around Park Road, Rempstone Road and Victoria Road contain a wide range of building heights between 2.5 and 4 storeys, with many buildings of a relatively large scale and massing. These are generally large houses (predominantly Edwardian) and later flat developments. The degree of enclosure can be significant, although this varies according to the area. Very occasionally, isolated buildings of 5 storeys or more are found situated within these areas. Several such sites take advantage of steep changes in ground level to achieve additional height. Development of this scale is not common to Swanage and one example at the top of Park Road is uncharacteristically dominant in the townscape.

3.4.5 The majority of the remainder of the town is mostly various forms of suburban extension, from the Edwardian Period onwards, and comprises Edwardian streets with houses of 2 to 2.5 storeys in height, and later estates of bungalows, 2 storey houses or a mixture of the two.

3.4.6 A number of holiday caravan parks on the southern slopes of the town comprise extensive areas of single storey mobile homes. Despite their low profile their light materials and the elevated nature of these sites towards the top of the hill slope results in these areas becoming somewhat prominent in many views.

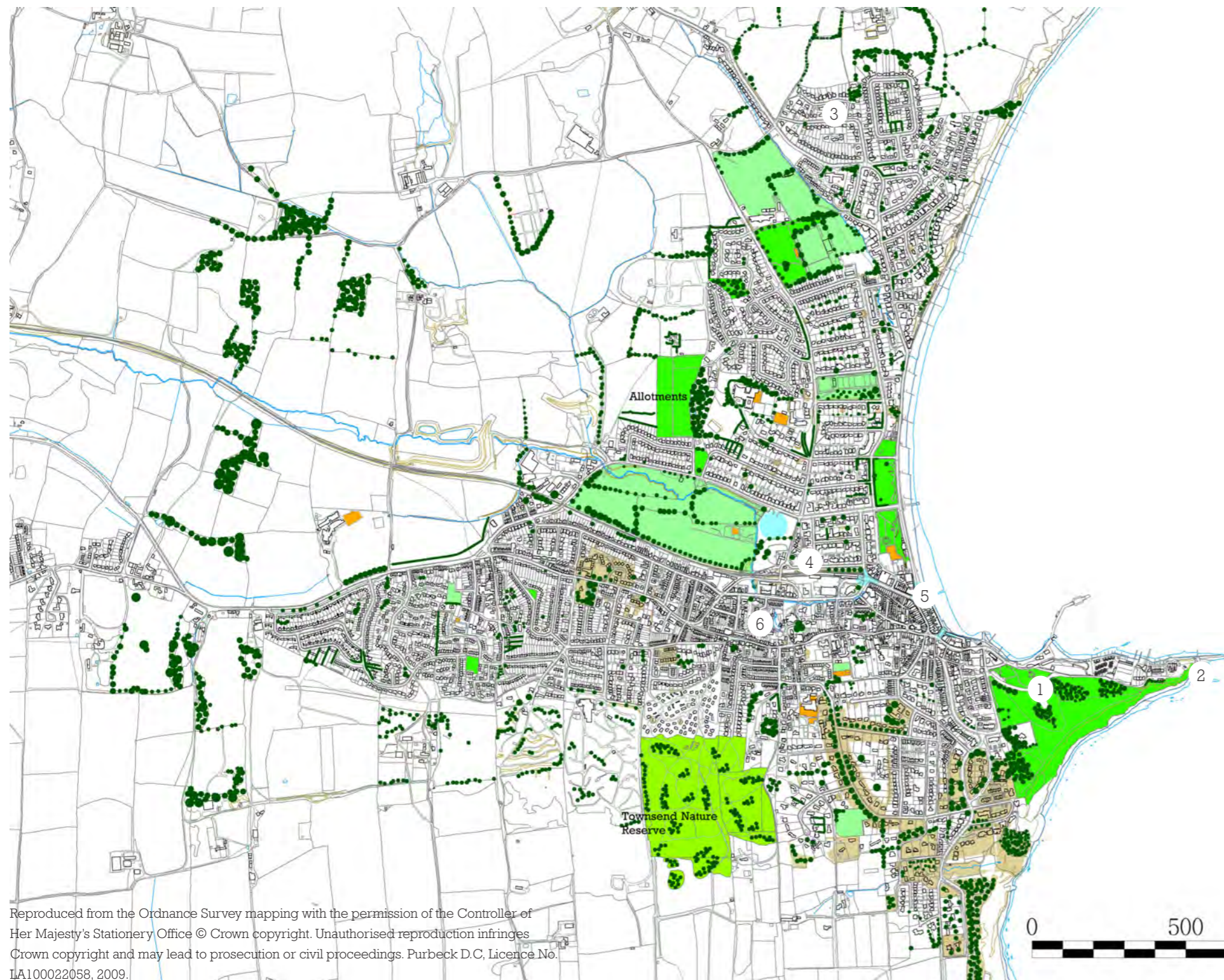
3.4.7 Notably prominent buildings include the flats at the corner of De Moulham Road and Walrond Road, The Haven on Peveril Point and the tennis dome at the Harrow House International College. These buildings are situated on prominent elevated sites and when combined with their height and design appear somewhat dominant and incongruous with their surroundings. In contrast Purbeck View School and the Harrow House School building are both prominent buildings, but their design and location is such that they appear as positive landmarks.

KEY POINTS

- The town centre contains a complex mixture of building heights, mostly between 2 and 4 storeys.
- Kings Road West contrasts with most of the town centre having a range of low-rise buildings including the station, Co-op supermarket and health centre.
- Several locations contain mixed building heights of up to 4 storeys, resulting in some areas of relatively high density.
- Some sites use steep changes in ground level to achieve taller buildings.
- The majority of the town's residential areas are between 1 and 2 storeys in height.
- Caravan parks comprise single storey mobile homes, but these can appear prominent due to their materials and location on the elevated hill slopes.



Swanage Town analysis 03.5 Landscape and open spaces



-  Playing field
-  Public green space
-  Nature reserve
-  Visually significant trees [not all trees shown]
-  Visually significant hedges [not all hedges shown]
-  Urban open space
-  Playground or play area
-  TPO - area
-  TPO - individual tree



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1. There are a number of formally planned gardens and parks in Swanage, such as Prince Albert Gardens.



2. This informal open space at Peveril Point falls within the Conservation Area as well as other planning designations.



3. Hedges, smaller trees and shrubs in front gardens make an important contribution to the streetscene.



4. Trees and vegetation form a green backdrop in this view from the railway bridge.



5. The beach with the chalk ridge as a backdrop.



6. There are also distinctive urban open spaces, such as the area around former mill pond next to St. Mary's Church.

3.5.1 Section 02.2 Landscape setting, has already identified the importance of the wider landscape context of Swanage as well as issues associated with the town's edges. In views from within the town it was also noted (caption for Panorama 5) that the backdrop of hills is an important feature, as indeed is the sea.

3.5.2 Although the distant hills are important, unsurprisingly other landscape elements in and around the town also make a significant contribution to its character.

3.5.3 Arriving at the main entrance to the town along the A351 there is an unusual development pattern with cottages facing onto the road on one side and open land opposite. This open land is important insofar as it provides the motorist with a memorable entrance to the town with a first distant glimpse of the sea and the Needles and the Isle of Wight in the distance.

3.5.4 There are several open spaces within and around the town, and perhaps the most distinctive is the extensive open space on Peveril Point. This space directly adjoins the town, close to the town centre, and it is consequently an immediately accessible and popular open space that also has importance in views of the town in its wider context from Ballard Down to the north.

3.5.5 Immediately north of the town centre, and situated adjacent to the beach are the Shore Road municipal gardens with their bandstand and planted borders, typical of their kind. These gardens provide an open backdrop to the seafront which forms an important element of the townscape character of the resort. A more enclosed park, at Beach Gardens is situated a short distance to the north. This park is very traditional in character with its many mature trees, bowling green, pavilion and tennis courts. Further north there is another less manicured park, Day Park, that includes the town's football ground and there is also extensive open space and a fine belt of mature trees at St. George's Playing Field and Kirkwood Park pitch and putt course in the valley floodplain just north of the railway.

3.5.6 Other notable tree cover is to be found in the Bon Accord Road, Queens Road, Durlston Road area west of Peveril Point where mature street and garden trees make an important contribution to the character of this area. Similarly, mature tree cover on higher ground

in the locality of the language school at the end of Walrond Road makes a significant contribution to the landscape setting of the town.

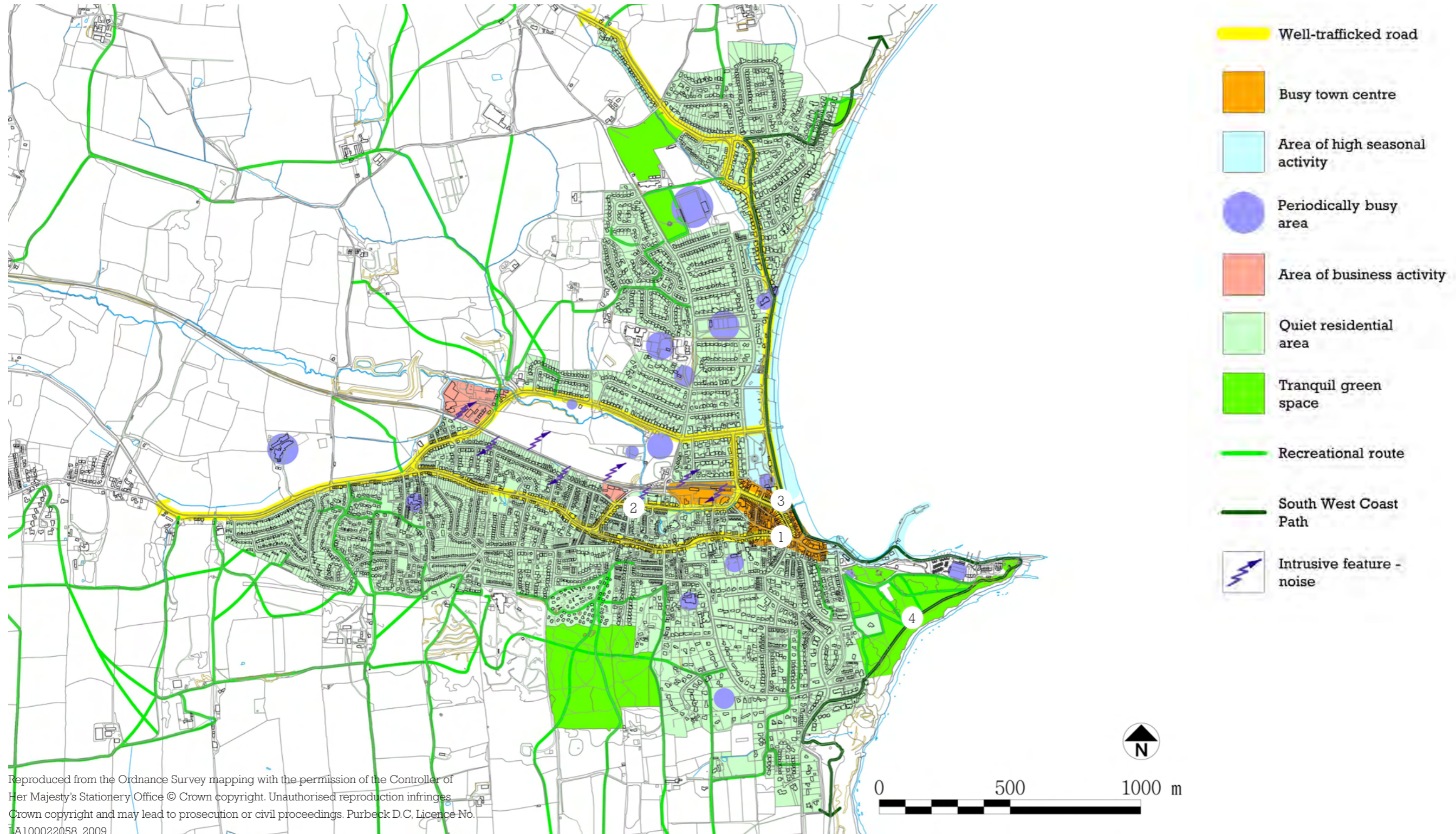
3.5.7 However, despite this and other planting around the town, Swanage at large is not particularly leafy in character. Incidental trees in back gardens can be important in providing treed backdrops to local views, and often small trees and shrubs in front gardens can make an important contribution in providing a green element to streets where large trees may be absent.

KEY POINTS

- Distant hills and the sea provide a landscape context to many views within the town.
- Open land adjacent to the A351 makes a memorable entrance to the town by allowing a first glimpse of the sea.
- The town has several valuable open spaces within it including green space at Peveril Point and the Shore Road Gardens which provide a green backdrop to the seafront.
- Although there are some well treed localities within the town, it is not particularly leafy in character and large trees in back gardens and small trees and shrubs in front gardens can often make an important contribution to street views.
- Swanage also contains a number of distinctive urban public spaces, such as the cross and mill pond at Church Hill, The Square and the hard landscaped seafront along Peveril Point Road.



Swanage Town analysis 03.6 Vitality and tranquillity



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1. Swanage town centre retains a degree of activity throughout the year, although it can feel quiet during the winter months.



2. Swanage steam railway is a unique aspect of the town and provides an interesting vibrancy to Swanage.



3. A quiet Shore Road and beach during the winter months. In contrast, on hot sunny days the beach is very popular with visitors.



4. Peveril Point provides a tranquil and distinctive open space for informal recreation.

3.6.1 As a resort town, Swanage has a significant variation in activity and tranquillity between seasons.

3.6.2 However, as a thriving community in its own right, the town centre retail area, which extends along the lower part of the High Street, Institute Road and along Station Road to the supermarket, retains a degree of year-round activity. Although Swanage can feel very quiet at times during the winter months, it rarely has the sense of desolation that some less balanced resorts can have off-season or indeed the same frenetic activity that other resorts can have at the height of the season.

3.6.3 The main road into Swanage, the A351 from Wareham and Corfe Castle, is invariably busy with traffic activity extending into the town along the principal roads including the High Street, Victoria Avenue, Court Hill and the eastern part of Kings Road as well as Shore Road/Ulwell Road to Studland. However, traffic can decrease markedly as soon as the motorist turns off these main thoroughfares into the network of residential streets. These extend over the greater part of the town and most of these roads have a generally quiet residential character.

3.6.4 The steam railway introduces periodic noise and a unique vibrancy during the day with passing trains, although any disturbance is temporary, and the railway does not operate all year around. Conversely, road traffic can create near constant intrusion during the day and even extending into the night.

3.6.5 Local nodes of activity occur mostly in the eastern part of town, principally around schools.

3.6.6 It will be noted that there are no clearly defined local centres within the town beyond the town centre, although Herston has one or two shops.

3.6.7 However it is during the holiday season that the increase in activity is most apparent, although the upper part of the beach is not used as much as the lower part.

3.6.8 The principal tourist node of the town coincides with the town centre retail area, with tourist activity concentrated in the area between the car parks, the supermarket and the railway and bus stations at one end and the beach and the front at the other. Needless to say, tourist activity along the beach front can be significant on fine summer days in

marked contrast to off-season and inclement periods. However, beyond the central area of activity between Shore Road and the pier, the beach rarely gets very busy. The expansive open space on Peveril Point never loses its sense of tranquillity, and even the municipal gardens adjacent to Shore Road and the beach remain largely quiet in character despite being so close to the beach. Other parks away from the main tourist areas invariably remain tranquil in character. However, it should be noted that the caravan parks around the edge of town can of course become very active during the summer months.

KEY POINTS

- Although a resort, the town centre retail area in Swanage remains active in character throughout the year.
- Traffic noise and movement is associated with the A351 and other principal roads.
- The majority of Swanage consists of quiet residential streets.
- Local nodes of activity occur mostly in the eastern part of town, centred principally around schools, and are periodically busy.
- There are no clearly defined local centres within the town beyond the town centre.
- The principal tourist node in Swanage coincides with the town centre retail area, with a busy beach and front in fine summer weather.
- Green spaces in and around the town are tranquil in character.

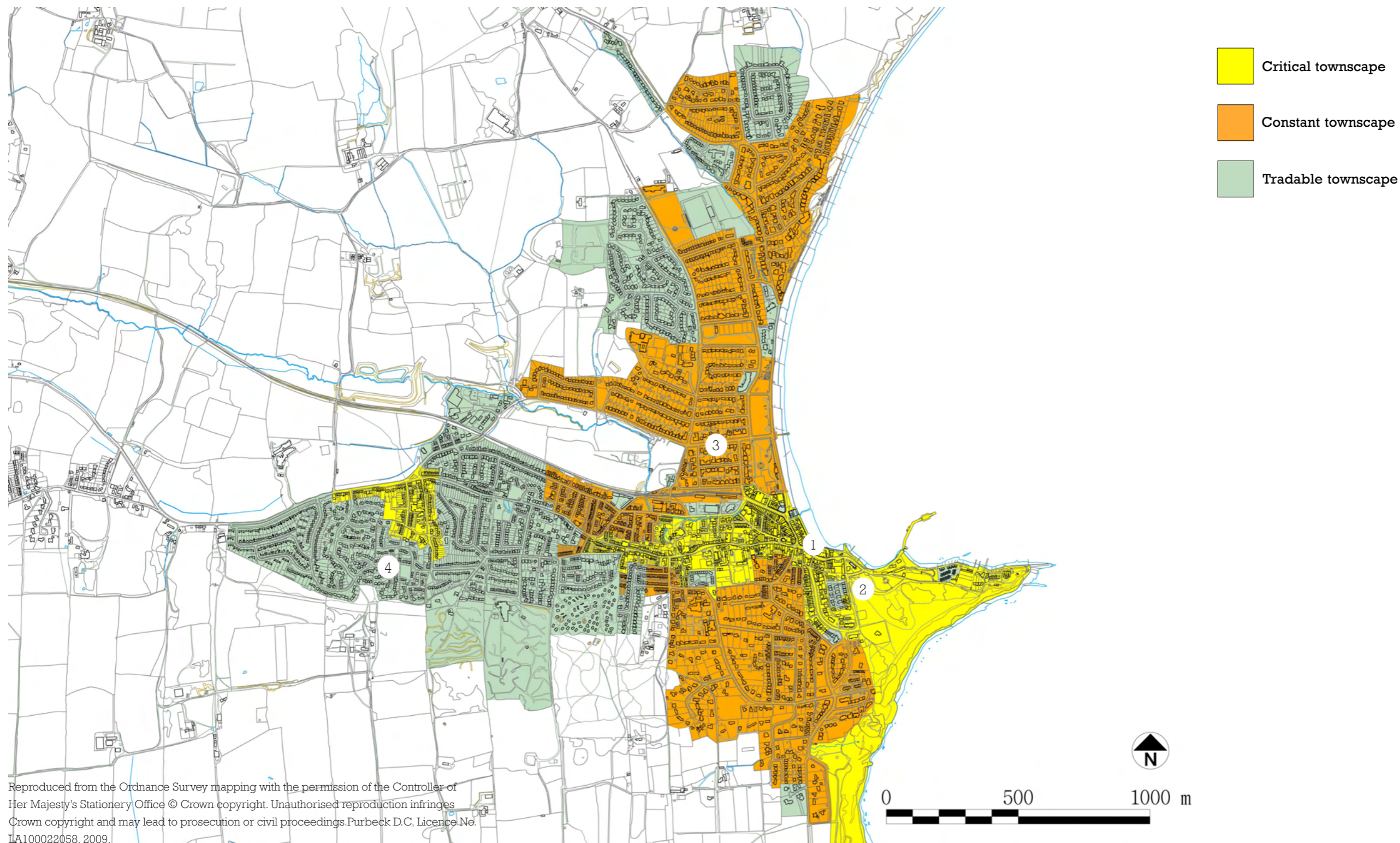


Swanage

Town analysis

03.7

Townscape quality



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1. Some buildings, such as the Mowlem, have a negative impact on their surroundings, despite being located within an area of high quality critical townscape.



2. Areas of critical townscape largely relate to those parts of the town with high architectural and historic interest.



3. Many parts of Swanage are identified as constant townscape, which exhibit attractive, elegant qualities that contribute to the broader character of the town.



4. Large areas of the town, notably, later large scale housing estates, represent ubiquitous forms of development and are identified as areas of tradable townscape.

3.7.1 The quality of Swanage's townscape has been assessed on the basis of whether particular areas can be considered to make a positive, negative or neutral contribution to the appearance of the town.

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

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

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

3.7.2 Critical

The Critical townscape quality area of Swanage covers the original town centre including the eastern part of the High Street as well as Institute Road and the later Station Road, as well as the Seymer Road and Park Road area adjacent to the Peveril Point open space. Qualities of value include vernacular building patterns and buildings, tight urban streets and spaces with high quality buildings and detailing, and good frontages onto the sea and open spaces. Also included in the Critical category are the old centre of Herston village with its vernacular and other distinctive buildings and the fine open space on and around Peveril Point.

3.7.3 Constant

The Constant townscape quality area generally covers the Edwardian and inter-war areas of residential development situated north and south of the town centre adjacent to the sea. Much of these areas was developed as aspirational, quality resort development with some fine well-proportioned villas often set in generous and well-planted grounds although some more modest development west of the station still has some valuable intrinsic townscape and architectural qualities. Positive qualities also include consistent set-backs, scale and character, mature trees that are often of wider skyline significance and sensitive rural

edges. However, the quality of these areas is often reduced by later infill that fails to respect the existing quality and characteristics of the locality.

3.7.4 Tradeable

These are generally areas of post-war estate developments, as well as caravan parks, lacking in building and townscape quality, distinctiveness and variation. Tree cover is often very limited and rural edges can be raw and insensitive.

3.7.5 In terms of future change, the Critical areas are generally well protected by Conservation Area and other controls (although the incremental loss of detail is a serious threat), and the Tradeable areas, which are often estate developments, are very difficult to redevelop for a number of reasons. It is the Edwardian and inter-war areas with their larger plots, relatively high maintenance and often rather inefficient and time-worn buildings that are most at risk from insensitive change. Whilst change in these areas need by no means be detrimental, insensitive, mundane or poorly judged architectural designs can, and do, threaten these often rather elegant areas that contribute much to the character and quality of Swanage. It is therefore important that particular attention should be given to monitoring, guiding and controlling changes in these areas.

KEY POINTS

- The historic town centre, Herston 'village' centre and Peveril Point open space and sea front are critical to the character of Swanage and should not be changed.
- The Edwardian and inter-war estate development north and south of the town centre are Constant areas where limited change is acceptable provided its overall character is maintained.
- Post-war estate development is ubiquitous in character and contributes little to the unique character, distinctiveness and setting of Swanage. These are areas where new building and redevelopment could be acceptable.
- The Constant areas are subject to pressures for change which can undermine much that contributes positively to the character and quality of the town, and any change should therefore be carefully guided and controlled.