

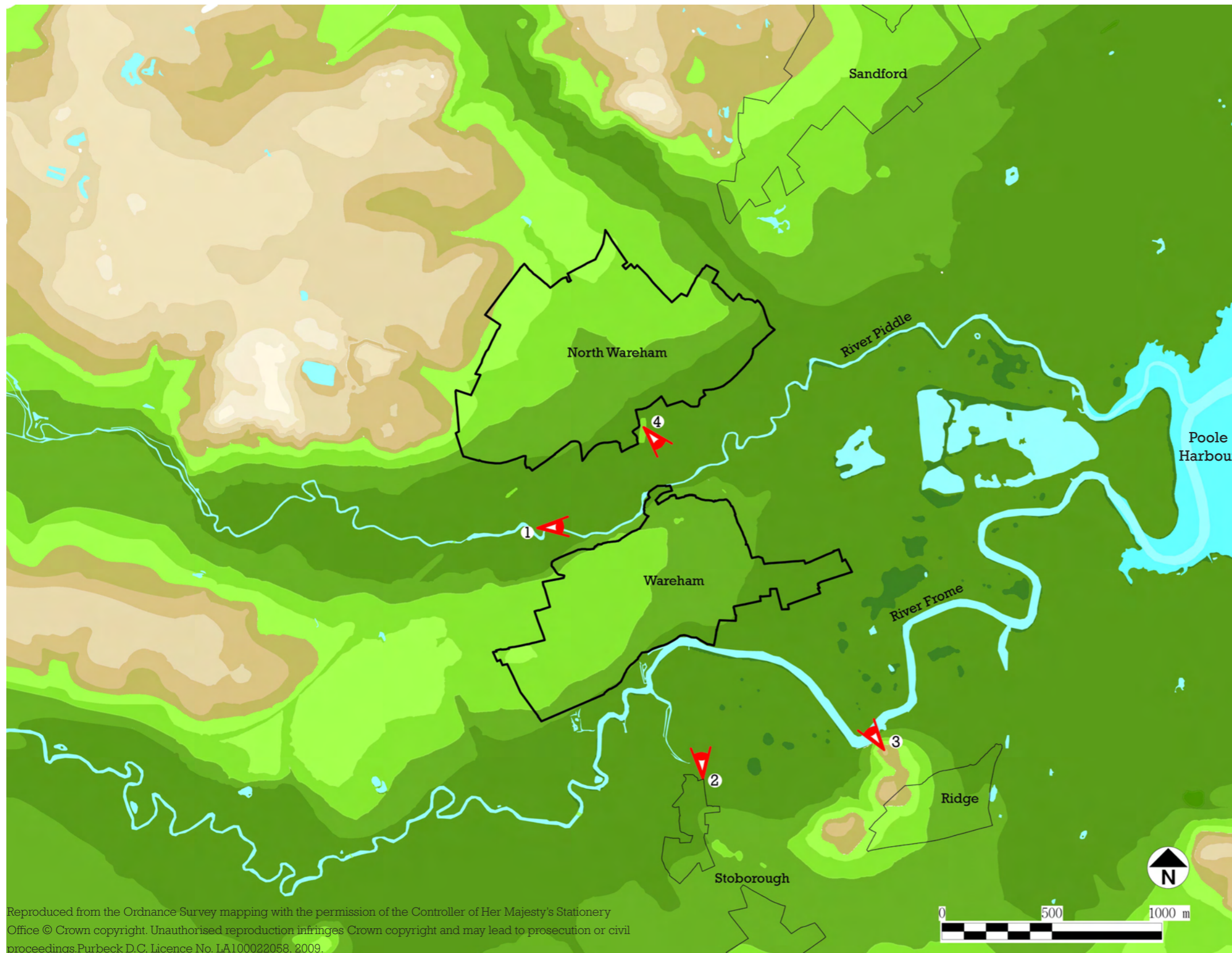


Wareham and North Wareham

Town context

02.1

Geographical context



2.1.1 The geographical context map shows the topography of landscape around Wareham and the surrounding villages. The majority of the land is low-lying with the settlements located above the floodplains of the Rivers Piddle and Frome.



1. The River Piddle and its floodplain separates North Wareham from the old town to the south.



2. The low-lying land to the south affords long, relatively unobstructed views towards the town.



3. Viewed from Ridge, to the south, Wareham appears largely unobtrusive within the wider landscape, despite being located on rising land above the floodplain.



4. Seen from the bypass, to the north, the vegetated town 'walls' have a softening effect on the skyline of Wareham, with trees appearing more dominant than the built form.

2.1.2 The history, form and setting of Wareham have been strongly influenced by the town's geographical context and it will continue to be a key factor in defining any future development.

2.1.3 Wareham lies at the western head of Poole Harbour at a locally strategic crossing of the Piddle and Frome rivers. These rivers flow in a generally easterly direction towards the harbour, with many twists and meanders, and the town itself is situated on raised ground between them on what is in effect a peninsular of higher, drier land above the adjacent river floodplains and the saltflats around the harbour. Situated at the lowest crossing point of the rivers at the western extremity of Poole Harbour, it is unsurprising that Wareham has in the past had a strategic defended role.

2.1.4 Today, the features that originally gave the town its defensible strategic importance now do much to constrain its further growth. As an almost inevitable consequence of the town's inability to accommodate the demand for additional residential and industrial development in its own curtilage and its immediate vicinity led, almost inevitably, to the creation of what is in effect a quite separate new settlement, North Wareham. This settlement emerged on the opposite northern edge of the River Piddle floodplain opposite the old town. Whilst the railway station instigated the first clearly identifiable beginnings of North Wareham during the latter part of the 19th century, it has become substantially a 20th century creation.

2.1.5 Immediately south of Wareham and the floodplain of the River Frome, there are two other settlements, Stoborough and Ridge, and although they have much suburban expansion and infill, they remain in effect villages independent from the town.

2.1.6 Principal connections around Wareham and North Wareham are north-east towards Poole and Bournemouth (A351), westwards to Dorchester (A352) and south-east towards Corfe Castle and Swanage (A351).

2.1.7 In many ways, Wareham acts as a gateway to the Isle of Purbeck, although Corfe Castle defines a more memorable and defensible entrance. However there is a perceptible change in character on arrival at Wareham from the north, and much of this can be attributed to a greater sense of remoteness, calm and a close association with nature, if not a certain wildness of the landscape.

2.1.8 The old town contributes to this wider sense of character through its historic buildings, its ancient street layout and grassy 'walls', its close association with its surrounding landscape, its traditional and bustling but largely unchanged town centre and its quiet backstreets.

KEY POINTS

- Historically a geographically strategic location;
- Topography and sensitive landscape are constraints to further expansion;
- North Wareham is a substantially modern town extension to old Wareham;
- Other nearby settlements are located above the floodplains;
- Wareham sits at the junction of several main roads and acts a gateway to the 'Isle of Purbeck'.



Wareham and North Wareham

Town context

02.2

Landscape setting aerial photograph



Aerial photograph courtesy of Purbeck District Council_ Getmapping.com

2.2.1 Closely related to the geographical context of the town, is its landscape setting. This has a direct and marked influence on its urban form and character.

2.2.2 In geological terms, the land beyond the river floodplains and salt flats around Poole Harbour, including Wareham itself, consists of sand and gravel deposits. These deposits substantially define the topography and landscape character of the area. Historically, there has been extensive heathland around Wareham and North Wareham, that followed the clearance of original woodland. (Part of the Egdon Heath of Thomas Hardy's novels)

2.2.3 During the 20th century the heathland to the north of Wareham changed radically, substantially through the introduction of extensive conifer plantations, the general recolonisation of heathland by shrubs and trees as a result of reduced management, large-scale quarrying and some suburban sprawl (North Wareham and Sandford). Today, the northern aspect from Wareham is defined by a dark ragged skyline of conifers, now known as Wareham Forest.

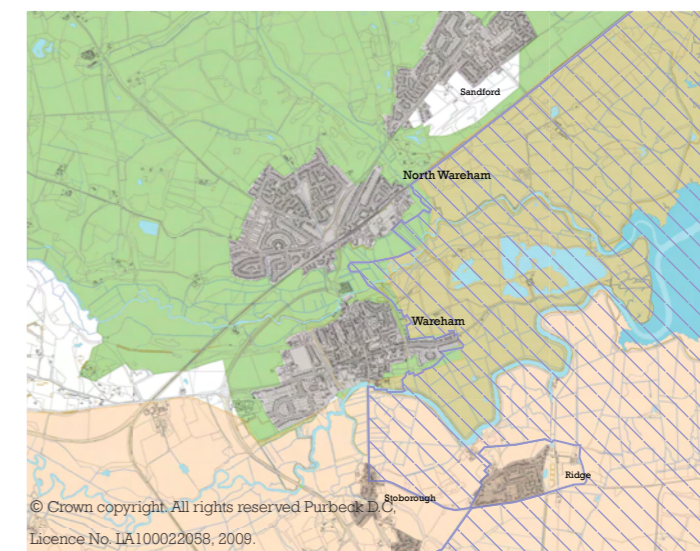
2.2.4 To the south, the land is much less altered and the Stoborough, Creech and Middlebere Heaths remain much as they were in the past. To the west the land rises gradually towards Worgret Heath with its extensive sand and gravel pits and to the east it falls gently towards Swineham Point, also including gravel pits. However it is the floodplains of the Rivers Piddle and Frome, gradually merging into the salt marshes around Poole Harbour, that substantially define the landscape setting of Wareham.

2.2.5 With their essentially open, lightly treed, character, the floodplains provide wide views across the water meadows towards the town from north and south although dense hedges and some woodland to the east limit views to and from that direction.

2.2.6 In external views Wareham and/or its green 'walls' can be very apparent, despite the fact that buildings are relatively low (mostly 2 storey). However, much of North Wareham sits below the skyline, minimising its impact.

2.2.7 It is apparent from the photographs (over page) that the setting of Wareham is an integral feature that does much to define its character and its relationship to the surrounding landscape.

2.2.8 In recognition of the landscape quality of the area both towns are enveloped by Green Belt, and the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) abuts the southern edges of Wareham and extends to Poole Harbour in the east.

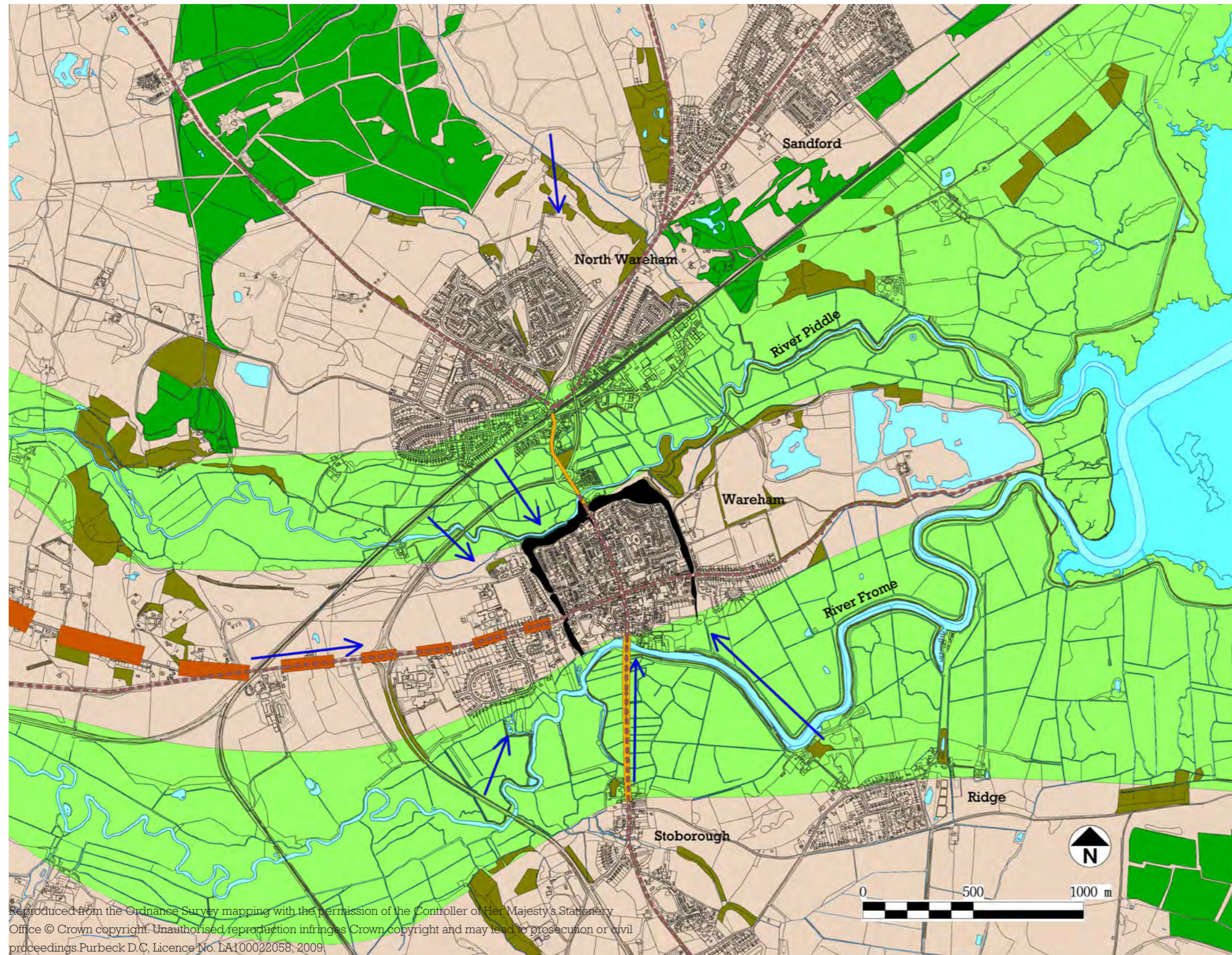


Landscape designations map



KEY POINTS

- Both parts of the town sit on slightly raised land and are separated by visually important open water meadows;
- Old Wareham is located on a peninsular of land which rises to the west as an exposed ridge;
- The town 'walls' are an important edge to the old town;
- North Wareham sits below the skyline of the higher ground to the north and west and is surprisingly discrete within the wider landscape.



2.2.9 This drawing shows the main landscape features that define the landscape setting of Wareham and North Wareham. The parallel floodplain of the Rivers Piddle and Frome can be seen running east towards Poole Harbour (Wareham Channel), defining the intervening peninsular of higher ground on which Wareham is situated. It will be noted how the original town 'walls' sit astride the peninsular controlling the causeways to north and south, whilst North Wareham lies distinct and separated from the old town north of the River Piddle floodplain. Beyond the floodplains, the land rises northwards towards the conifer plantations of Wareham Forest, whilst to the south the land rises towards surviving heathland (off plan) at Stoborough Heath.

-  River/water feature
-  Poole Harbour (Wareham Channel)
-  Floodplain
-  Raised land above floodplains (sand & gravel deposits)
-  Coniferous plantation
-  Mixed & deciduous woodland
-  Visually exposed ridge
-  Ancient town wall
-  Ancient causeway across valley
-  Historic route
-  Principal view towards town from surrounding area



Wareham Town context 02.3 Landscape Images

Wareham and the town 'walls' seen from the A351 bypass to the north.



1. This view looks across the floodplain of the River Piddle towards the town. On the extreme left of the view, the B3075, North Causeway, enters the town over North Bridge. Across the centre of the photograph the partly treed town 'walls' exploit and enhance the natural change in level above the floodplain whilst houses in the north-west part of the town are clearly visible beyond. This view emphasises well the important and highly sensitive relationship between the town and country.

Wareham seen from the B3075 South Causeway.



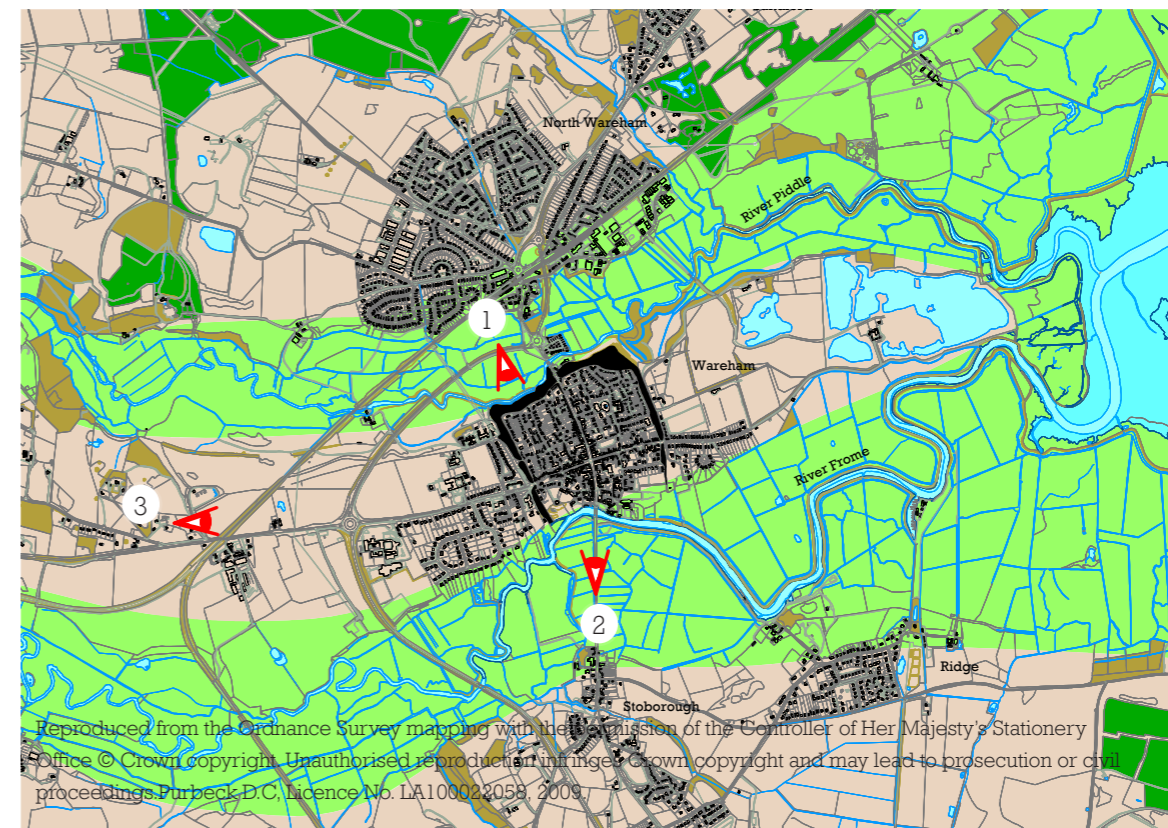
2. This view also reinforces the important relationship between Wareham and the surrounding countryside, and demonstrates the extensive views that exist towards the town. The generally consistent roofline of the town is an important feature, punctuated by trees and dominated by St Mary's Church (centre right). It should be noted that buildings at South Bridge at the southern entrance to the town are clearly visible but that elsewhere houses are only partly visible amongst and behind trees and other vegetation.



Wareham seen from the high ground to the west of the town.



3. This view looks east towards Wareham from the higher ground of the peninsular on which the old town is situated. This shoulder of land rises from the river valleys of the Piddle and Frome situated to the north and south respectively, ascending to a visually exposed ridge from which long distance views are available. The ridge is generally open in character and consequently forms a visually sensitive skyline.



Landscape map indicating the positions where the photographs were taken.