

05 Character Areas



Character Areas

05.01 Character Unit studies

An integral part of the Town Design Statement was the definition of character areas around the town. Initially a study was undertaken at quite a fine level, and this resulted in the identification of the numerous Character Units that are shown on the adjacent map and described below. This detailed analysis supports the North Dorset District Council character study that defines 8 more general Character Areas. These Character Areas have been used as the basis for the Synopsis of Character Areas study that follows Part 05.03 in this report, and as the basis for the application of Design Guidelines.

Turning to the study of Character Units itself, it is interesting to note the close relationship between the period of development and the character of each Unit in Sturminster Newton.

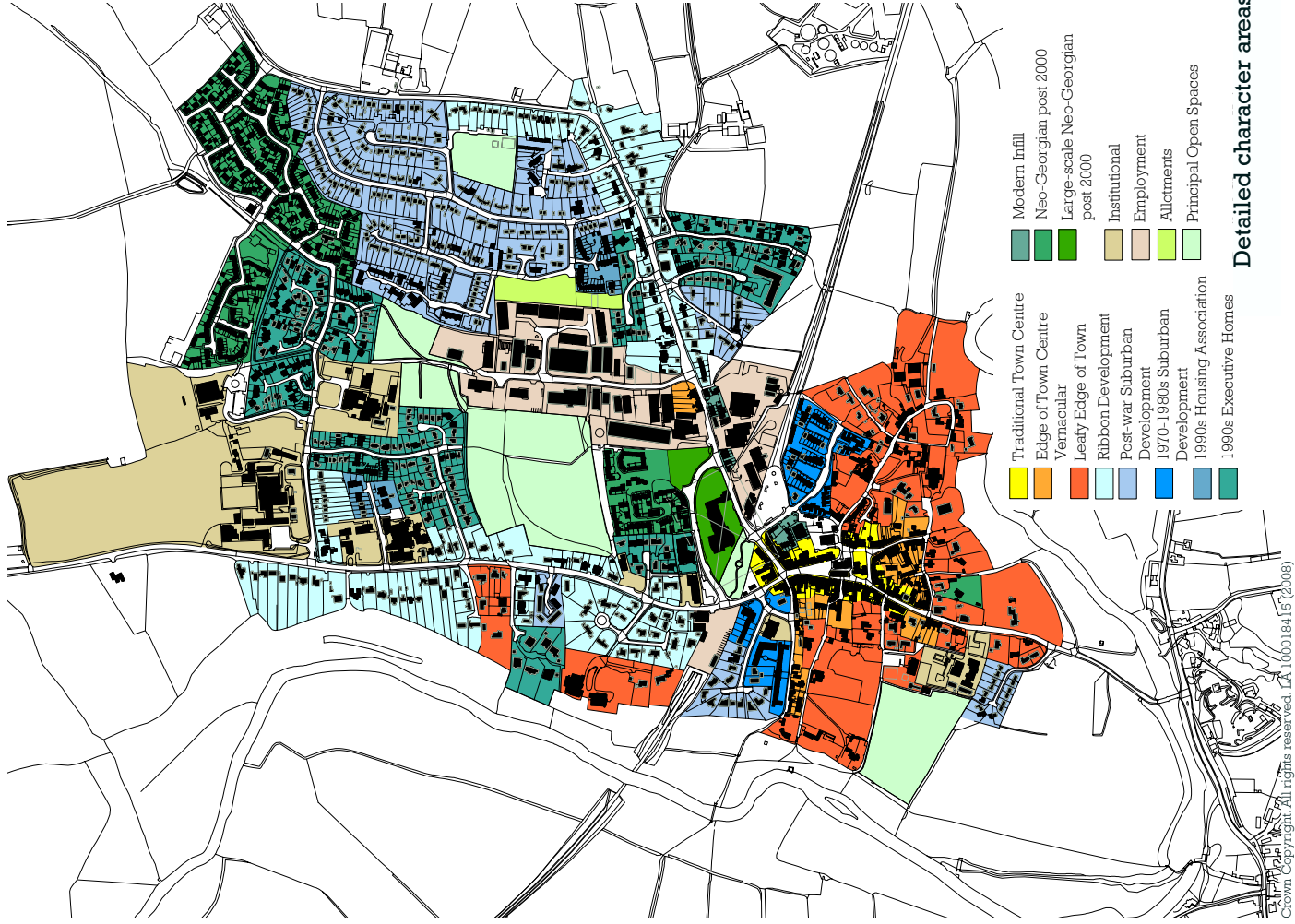
As already identified, Sturminster Newton is divided into two quite distinct parts, separated approximately by the route of the former railway. This division is apparent in the character of the town, and it divides generally into an old town and a new town. The old town is vernacular and organic in character, not elaborate or very remarkable, but rich in simple detail with a clear distinction between a hard, traditional market square and a leafy hinterland and the new town that, in general terms, is lacking in local references and materials, planned in form, weak in detail and with limited contrast from one area to another, particularly along urban/rural boundaries.

Traditional Town Centre

Turning to a finer scale of study, there is an attractive town centre, attractive though unremarkable, part old vernacular, part Georgian (post 1729 fire) with tight shoulder to shoulder 2-3 storey development facing onto the square or adjacent roads.

Edge of Town Centre Vernacular

Immediately beyond the town centre is a mostly vernacular margin, quite different from the town centre being a quieter, mostly residential area. Streets are narrow and spaces are tight and often quite hard in character, but they are invariably relieved by some vegetation including garden trees leaning over a wall, perhaps a hedge or narrow front garden with shrubs and colourful herbaceous planting.



Leafy Edge of Town
Beyond the edge of town centre vernacular area is a lower density zone that surrounds the town centre. Although many of the buildings are ancient, there are some large Victorian houses set in extensive mature and well-treed grounds as well as a number of later bungalows. Although building ages and styles may vary considerably, there is a broadly consistent character, leafy and quiet, more spacious than the previous area, yet full of pleasing detail and incident. There are also similar Character Units of a smaller scale to the north off the Bath Road.

It should be noted that a feature of both the Edge of Town Centre Vernacular and Leafy Edge of Town Character Units is a radiating network of quiet, often winding or dog-legged lanes that seem to invite exploration. As such, they are a most characteristic and delightful feature of the town. These lanes, that are essentially spaces shared by both vehicles and pedestrians, without pavements, have value insofar that they do much to prevent these edge of town areas from becoming suburban in character. In addition to the desirability of development in these areas being in keeping with its surroundings, it is also important that the lanes themselves should not be 'improved' in a manner that adversely affects their character. It should also be noted that the quality of detail generally adds value to the quality of these areas, and this aspect should also be considered carefully when changes are made.

Ribbon Development

Moving to the northern part of town, ribbons of mostly inter- and post-war development line much of the frontage of Bath and Butts Pond/Manston Road. The houses face onto the road with direct access and set back behind a small front garden, but with longer plots behind at right angles to the road. Tree cover is limited.

Post-war Suburban Development

Typical mostly standard post-war red brick housing, 1 or 2 storeys, often semi-detached and laid out in a regular pattern along planned roads built to regular standards. This gives the roads a very consistent, if unexciting, character not least because they are very lacking in tree cover. However the relatively low density creates a sense of spaciousness between buildings. Plots are aligned at right angles to roads with reasonably generous but rather plain front gardens. Some have been paved to provide additional off-road parking. This type of development is located mostly in the Ribon area.

Character Areas

05.01

Character Unit studies

1970s-1980s Suburban Development

Planned estate development generally built on a cul-de-sac layout. Similar to Post-war Suburban Development but generally tighter and at a higher density with buildings developed in terraces. Roofs built to a relatively low pitch, without chimneys, but flue pipes prominent. Bricks often mid-brown with occasional white painted or dark stained tongue-and-groove panels. This type of development mainly occurs close to the town centre, south of the former railway line.

1990s Housing Association

This includes two small developments in the northern part of town. The buildings are generally traditional in overall form and materials, typical of their period, but the development in Rixon differs by reason of its rather vivid blue panels on the terrace of houses.

1990s Executive Homes

A detached house type of a generally higher specification and with slightly larger gardens than 1970s and 80s development, although still mostly on a cul-de-sac layout. Houses are built in a basically traditional manner to a loose Arts and Crafts style with some mock Tudor references. Although these houses invariably conform to a defined pattern within estates, there is nonetheless greater variety in individual form and detailing than seen in earlier estates. However there are no local references in their style, materials or detailing and they could be situated anywhere in the British Isles.

Neo-Georgian post 2000

Post 2000 residential development in Sturminster Newton has a very different character from previous estates in the town essentially because of a marked design effort to create individuality and a variety of forms and spaces as well as the requirement to build to higher densities.

New development in the Honeymead Lane and on the former Cattle Market site has been built to a generally traditional neo-Georgian style. The Georgian style is of course a feature of Sturminster Newton and therefore its use in recent development does make a local reference.

Recent post 2000 development breaks substantially with the excessive repetition of standard house forms of earlier estate development and a wide variety of designs in 2-3 storeys has been built. Red brick has been substantially used, although some yellow brick is also found, and roofs are under red double Roman tiles.

Chimneys occur, although sometimes disproportionately small. Window sizes and proportions vary in the Georgian manner, but the use of uPvc with internal glazing bars in the Honeymead Lane area appears somewhat incongruous in a neo-Georgian elevation.

Development is at a relatively high density, particularly when seen in comparison to earlier estate development, with roads generally connected at both ends and with few cul-de-sacs. The roads themselves are often laid out in an informal and rather organic alignment which results in a progression of changing spaces and views. However standard contemporary road widths are used, with pavements, and therefore the tightness found in the old town is not emulated to the same extent.

Large-scale Neo-Georgian post 2000

This Character Unit refers exclusively to the Exchange building and associated 3 storey Co-op development with flats and offices.

This building is very similar in character to the previous Character Units being essentially neo-Georgian in manner and some detailing, but it differs notably in its mass and scale. Although it is clear that the architect has taken considerable pains to reduce the apparent mass of the building by changing styles, materials, roof lines etc. it is nonetheless a substantial building. Although the Exchange building was popularly approved, the large mass of the combined building was a repeated comment during the public consultation exercise, and it is clear that the scale of this development lends itself more towards that of the Butts Pond Industrial Estate and the large schools and sports centre than any traditional development within Sturminster Newton. Additionally the presence and scale of the building is enhanced by its wide set-back from the adjoining roads to both front and back which allows full sight of the whole facade in one view.

Modern infill

This category covers a few recent small infill developments that do not lend themselves readily to other categories. This includes, for example, the row of terraced cottages of generally traditional manner along the south side of Station Road as illustrated in the Station Road (South) Elevation and section studies, Part 04.06.

Institutional

This designation covers a variety of different types of institutional development, but substantially the two large schools in the north-western part of the town, including Sturminster Newton High School. The schools are of post-war construction with flat or low-pitch roofs over large-footprint buildings typical of their kind.

In terms of their effect on townscape character, the buildings mostly present poor frontage to adjacent roads since they are set back within their own grounds. However road boundaries are generally pleasant enough with wide mown verges, hedges and informal tree planting. Playing fields and car parks are also typical features.

Employment

The are two principal employment areas within the town of Sturminster Newton, namely the Butts Pond Industrial Estate and the former creamery and station yard sites.

The Butts Pond Industrial Estate is wholly typical of its kind, consisting of a variety of large utilitarian sheds and other buildings and a mass of associated activity and clutter. As such, it is devoid of any townscape quality although the public face of the estate that fronts onto Station Road is fortunately quite discrete. However, the principal pedestrian route between the northern part of the town and the town centre, apart from pavements along the sides of Bath Road and Manston Road runs down the length of the industrial estate. The location of an important and well-used pedestrian route through the heart of this untidy working environment is particularly inappropriate and potentially dangerous with large vehicles regularly turning and backing across it.

Opposite the industrial estate on the south side of Station Road is the former Milk Factory site, now derelict. The buildings consist of mostly utilitarian sheds with asbestos roofs, but the original brick buildings, currently incarcerated with a mass of later developments, are distinctive with their traditional louvred gables.

The former station yard site contains three large low buildings or sheds, as well as the popular town centre car park. They are of no architectural interest or value except for the Streeters carpets and beds building opposite the new Exchange building that is the last surviving structure associated with the railway. However it presents a weak frontage to Station Road. The whole area has an untidy and unresolved air about it, substantially because of the low quality of the buildings, their irregular alignment and the low quality of surrounding spaces.

Allotments

The allotments are contained within a strip of land situated between the back of the industrial estate and Filbridge Road, and are wholly typical of their kind with their usual rich if rather chaotic texture of different plants, sheds and the like.

Principal open spaces

There are five principal open spaces within the town.

To the south-west there is the principal recreation ground, Durrant Field, at the end of Ricketts Lane. Although there is little built frontage facing onto the space, it is notable because of its fine aspect that looks south towards the river and Sturminster Newton Mill and a backdrop of tall, mature trees to the north and west.

Closest to the town centre is the relatively recent Railway Gardens open space constructed on the filled-in railway cutting that bisected the town. Whilst the gardens are pleasant if rather uninspiring in their design, they have poor built frontage but most notably they do enjoy a fine view to the south-east towards open country and Hambledon Hill in the distance.

In the northern, central part of the town, there is a large open space of two fields still in agricultural use (horse grazing), but they are contained behind existing development and have little effect on the character of the town. This area is allocated for housing development in the North Dorset District-wide Local Plan (Site C, north of the Livestock Market)

In the same area, north of the Butts Pond Industrial Estate, there are two fields recently laid out as a nature conservation area. The area represents a quiet and attractive area for informal recreation by local residents, although unfortunately all neighbouring properties back onto it and consequently it has rather poor overlooking.

A fifth area of open space is located within residential development at Rixon. This is a rather low quality space having no overlooking built frontages, almost no tree planting or any other features except for a children's play area and it consequently fails to enjoy the essential qualities of a traditional village green.

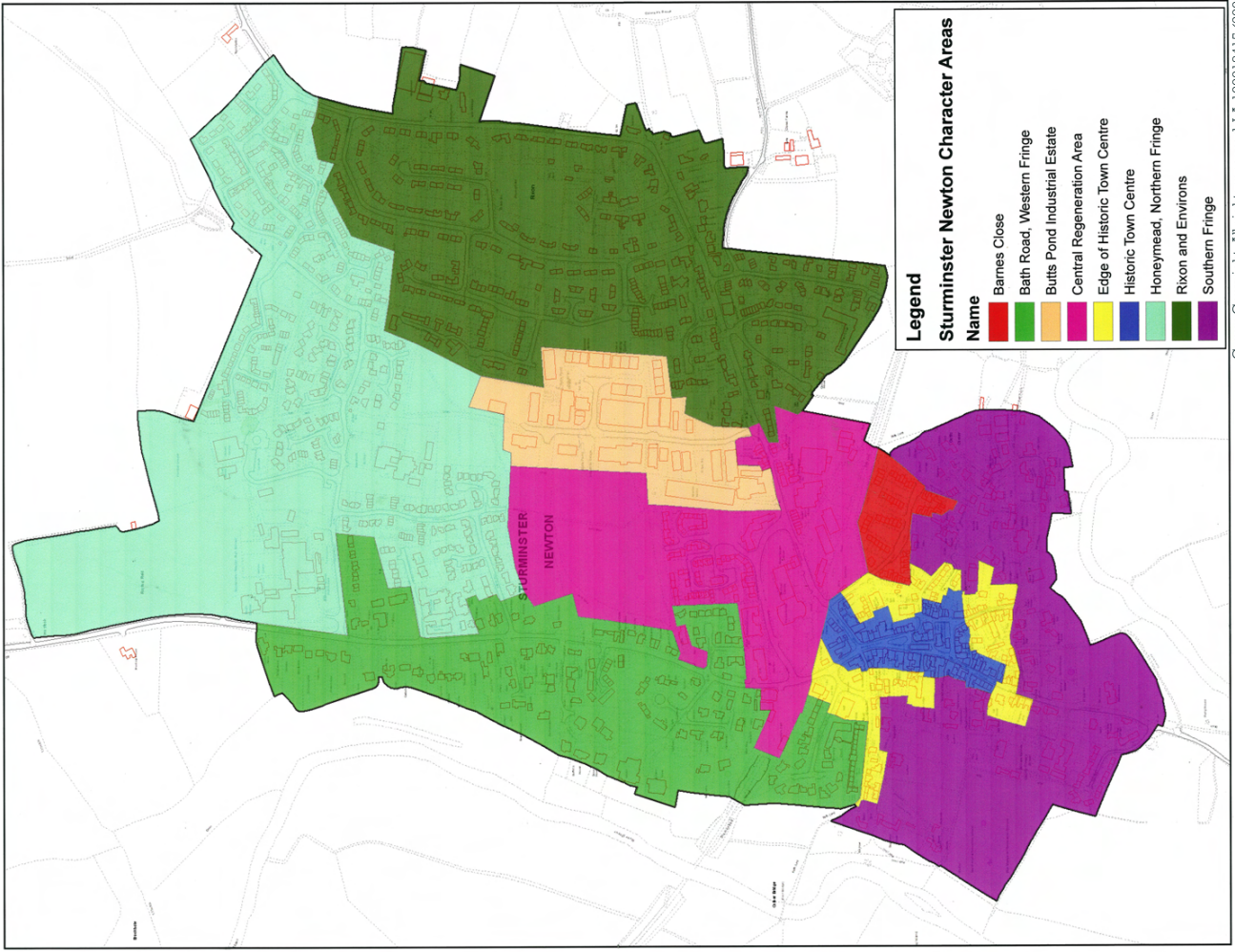
Character Areas

05.02

Character Area study

The detailed study of Character Units in the previous section provided the essential building blocks that support a series of 8 more general Character Areas illustrated here.

The following area by area Character Area synopsis is more simple than the detailed analysis of Character Units in the previous section and is therefore less complicated to use in relation to the application of the Design Guidelines. Nonetheless it may be helpful to refer to the more detailed Character Unit study when considering development proposals for specific sites.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. LA 100018415 (2008)

Character Areas

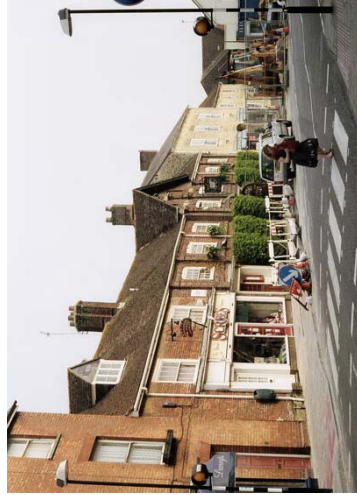
05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Southern entrance to town
Progressive anticipation of Market Place.
Gradual increase in building density.
2 storey, gable-ended buildings face road.

Northern entrance to town
Weakly defined northern entrance, but contained view gives a sense of anticipation.
Dense town centre buildings on the back of the pavement contrast sharply with the set back development just to the north.
2 and 2.5 storey gable-ended buildings on right hand side. Georgian 2 and 3 storey buildings on the left.



Market Place, the Swan Inn
Well-contained space despite 2 storey buildings.
Northern area buildings substantially Georgian in style. Attractive and interesting buildings, if unremarkable.
Recent public realm improvement works, but the main thoroughfare still dominates the space.
No trees, but visually important shrubs against the Swan Inn.



Market Cross, White Hart Inn
Southern part of area, characterised by vernacular buildings.
Strong frontage along back of pavement.
Generally consistent roof lines and eaves with minor variations.
Crude dormer window in roof at top right.
Several bow windows projecting into pavement.



Market Cross, looking towards Penny Street
Dense development against back of pavement.
Narrow winding streets invite exploration.
Sympathetic shop fronts.
Vernacular details such as stone lower courses on roofs.



Market Cross leading to Church Street
Minimal and simple street furniture avoids clutter.
Thatch roofs, but in southern part of area only.
In this instance car parking is integrated into the streetscene without being over intrusive.
Tree in quieter, residential corner anticipates leafy edge of town areas beyond.

Historic Town Centre

Historic high density development around central spaces

Layout

- 1 principal central space (Market Place).
- 2 irregular secondary spaces (incl. Market Cross).
- Enticing entrances to side streets.
- Entrance to town centre:
From south: Progressive, well integrated arrival.
From north: Weakly defined.

Fronts: Near continuous and well defined.
Buildings face directly onto street at back of pavement.
Backs: Irregular and varied with linear extensions, service yards and gardens.

Building character and form
Northern part, substantially Georgian or Neo-Georgian.
Southern part, strong vernacular influence.
All buildings face directly onto street.
Simple pitched roof form.
Generally 2-2.5 storeys with occasionally 3 storeys.
Dormers common, but often crude recent additions.

Materials
Walls: Predominantly render, generally painted white.
Red brick.
Local limestone.
Roofs: Slate.
Red-brown tiles with thatch in southern part only

Hard space
Recent hard landscape improvements raise quality of central space but principal road surface still predominates.
Generally free from clutter of street furniture, signage etc..
Lighting columns and lumieres of rather utilitarian design.

Landscape
Town centre spaces:
Principal space (Market Place) without trees.
Climbers on Swan Inn introduce some vegetation.
Tree cover and other vegetation otherwise very limited in town centre.
Small trees, shrubs and hedges in back gardens.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Church Street
Tight, edge-of-town-centre street full of historic character.
Buildings face onto street with secluded gardens behind.
Street scene enhanced by trees in private gardens despite limited space.



Old and new doorways, Church Street and Penny Street
Traditional windows in Sturminster Newton have a wide variety of forms (i.e. centre left), and although some careful infill developments have been undertaken, inappropriate window details (uPVC with single sheet glass and internal glazing bars) undermine the quality and sensitivity of some developments (far left and right).



Church Lane
Quiet back lane with an informal, organic quality.
Traditional red brick cottages under slate roofs mixed successfully with garages, back yards and gardens.
Some parking in road.
Lack of pavements makes the lane a shared surface, but the treatment is expressed as a road rather than a shared surface. (Tarmac and lining)



Old and new doorways, Church Street and Penny Street
Although an attempt has been made to follow a traditional design (right picture), it lacks the quality of detailing of the original (left picture), appearing rather light and skimpy in comparison. The canopy, door and furniture and the railings have an 'off-the-shelf' look about them.
Also stained dark timber is not an original feature.



Penny Street
Considerable care has been taken here to undertake a characterful new development that fits into the traditional appearance of the road.
Generous vehicular rear access, a lack of chimney pots and the character of planting between buildings and pavement suggest a more recent development.



Community Hall, Brinsley Close
In this instance, a weak building frontage, a deep set-back from the road and a prominent parking area undermine the otherwise relatively tight building pattern of the Edge of Historic Town Centre Character Area.

Edge of Historic Town Centre

An attractive and quiet edge of town centre area full of interesting detail and incident and of generally traditional appearance.

Layout
Mostly narrow, winding streets radiating from town centre. Lower density than town centre, often with gaps between buildings.
Entrances from Market Place and Market Cross invite exploration.
Some larger modern buildings and associated parking, such as the telephone exchange and the hall in Brinsley Place can compromise the intimate character of the area.

Fronts: Facing street and generally tight to back of pavement, defining an intimate, enclosed street. Short terraces characteristic, but with intervening entrances and gardens defined by walls or hedges.
Backs: Gardens or yards generally screened from the street.

Building character and form
Varied, but generally residential town vernacular and Victorian.
Simple building forms, but individually different. Invariably 2 storeys.

Materials
Walls: Predominantly red brick and limestone.
Roofs: Mostly red-brown tiles but with some slate and thatch.

Hard space
Limited by narrow streets.
Tarmacadam predominates but kerbs often stone. Minimal street furniture. Occasional street lighting, but columns and lumieres of rather utilitarian design.

Landscape
Generally hard spaces, but vegetation in private gardens makes an important contribution to the street scene. Tubs, window boxes etc., add much to the intimate and personal quality of these streets.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Rickett's Lane, looking east

This and the picture to the right emphasise the transitional change of character from the high-density town centre towards open countryside.

The lower density of development allows the establishment of leafy gardens often with houses set well back from the road. Two bungalows are situated out of sight behind the hedge on the left.

Rickett's Lane, looking west
Although houses may not be visible, the road is well defined by walls and hedges. Note the lack of pavement, that results in the road becoming effectively a shared surface. Forward glimpses, in this case of the playing fields, entice the visitor to explore further.



Cough's Close, looking west

A typical narrow lane radiating out from the town centre. Houses are often only partially visible beyond intervening vegetation.

Note the interesting combination of trees and hedges defining the edge of the road.

View south towards the river from Cough's Close

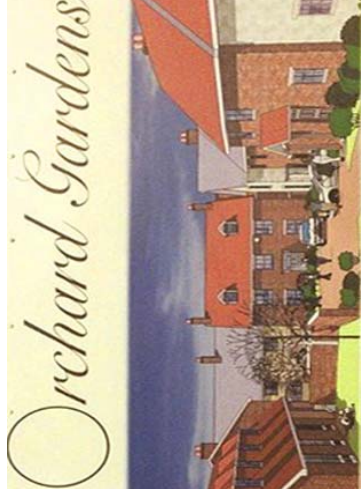
A sudden and unexpected view contrasts with the enclosure of the lane elsewhere adding to the delight of this walk.



Thomas Hardy's villa from footbridge over the river

A feature of the Southern Fringe Character Area is the very attractive manner in which it adjoins surrounding countryside. Buildings are generally seen partly visible beyond and within mature trees and other vegetation.

New development, Church Lane
An agent's board advertises new infill development. Inward-looking estate-mannered cul-de-sac development of this kind is not a type traditionally associated with Sturminster Newton old town. The lack of mature trees in the illustration could appear to hint of the dangers that intensification could pose to the defining landscape structure of this area.



Southern Fringe

A leafy low-density residential area between the town centre and open countryside.

Layout

Generally rather irregular and dispersed except where some post-war development occurs (i.e. Durrant). Low density plots with houses often set in large well-planted gardens.

Fronts:

Frontages vary considerably from edge of pavement development to houses set well back within plots, orientated irrespective of roads and plot orientation. Nonetheless streets and lanes have some well-defined frontages, often substantially defined by walls, hedges and outbuildings.

Backs:

Secluded gardens behind or surrounding houses.

Building character and form

A wide variety of building ages, character and mass and form, ranging from medieval vernacular buildings to large Victorian villages and 20th Century bungalows. Building height ranges from 1 - 2.5 storeys.

Pitched roofs and chimney stacks a common feature.

Materials

Walls: Red brick, limestone and painted plaster.

Roofs: Generally red-brown tiles, slate and some thatch.

Hard space

Narrow leafy lanes predominate, often without pavements.

Minimal street furniture and limited lighting.

Landscape

The mature, leafy landscape setting is the principal unifying feature of this Character Area.

Many boundaries are defined by well-established hedges.

Large gardens accommodate many large and mature trees that have a significance in wider views of the town.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Barnes Close internal courtyard
The two principal internal courtyards are well planned and maintained and do much to raise the quality of this development.



Barnes Close from adjacent to the town centre car park
The Barnes Close development presents a particularly unfortunate back elevation to the wider town. Apart from the single detached house built in reconstituted stone, all houses are built in a locally uncharacteristic brown brick.



Barnes Close from the end of the North Dorset Trailway
The plain rear elevations of the houses and the flat-roofed garages are unfortunately visible from this entrance to the town from the Trailway.

Barnes Close

An inward-looking 1970s - 80s estate development on the edge of the old town.

Layout
Cul-de-sac development with two principal courtyards including communal gardens.
Rear parking and garage yards.
Layout radically different from the intricate and organic layout of the adjacent old town.
Rear aspect elevations do not contribute positively to the wider townscape.

Fronts: Standard terraced house type fronting onto attractive and well planted courtyards.

Backs: Small rear gardens and plain utilitarian access and parking areas.

Building character and form
Principal blocks to a plain standard design, slightly staggered and stepped down the slope.
1 and 2 storey terraced blocks with low-pitched roofs, without chimneys.
Blank end walls.
Rear garages in standard flat-roofed blocks.

Materials
Walls: Mottled mid-brown bricks. Attractive, but not locally characteristic.
Roofs: Brown-grey concrete double-Roman tiles.

Hard space
Barnes Close is designed and laid out and built to contemporary standards/materials. Rear garage courtyards strictly utilitarian.

Landscape
Green, well-planted courtyards significantly mitigate this otherwise rather characterless development.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Entrance to Sturminster Newton along Bath Road

Buildings in the northern part of this Character Area are generally well set back from the road behind garden vegetation.

However, the substantial stone building on the left and museum beyond make something of a local landmark.

Exit from the town along Bath Road

Sturminster Newton High School beyond the turning at centre right has very little presence on the road despite its size and significance.

However, Yewstock plantation beyond makes a prominent landmark that visually defines the edge of the town.



Edwardian houses on Bath Road

Towards the southern end of Bath Road development becomes more prominent as in the case of these substantial Edwardian houses.

The area is situated on relatively high ground, and there are consequently some occasional glimpses towards the chalk scarp in the distance, as seen on the right of this view.

Leafy cul-de-sac development on White Lane Close

Some large plots give rise to an attractive leafy setting. Vegetation predominates, and the large trees are important in wider views. Hedges are also an important feature.

Note also the lack of a pavement that creates a quieter, more intimate character.



Infill at Hanover Close

Relatively high density infilling in the grounds of an Edwardian house (centre). The estate character, layout and architectural manner look rather insensitive and out of place in this location.

Recent infilling in Buffets Road

In this development of large and rather exclusive detached houses, the proper ties face westwards towards the view.

Note the apparent lack of substantial tree planting within the development. Such developments could potentially threaten sensitive views towards the town from the west.



Bath Road, Western Fringe

An extended leafy residential suburb with some extensive views to the west.

Layout

Originally ribbon development along Bath Road with additional cul-de-sac development to the west. Incremental pattern of development with progressive infilling of fields and large gardens.

Fronts: Houses adjacent to Bath Road face the road, often with deep set-backs, particularly towards the north.

Cul-de-sac development also faces the road, but plots are smaller, as are set-backs.

Some houses adjacent to the western boundary face westwards overlooking open country (See panorama in section 02.02, Landscape setting).

Backs: Secluded back gardens.

Building character and form

Some older traditional houses but mostly Edwardian and inter-war along Bath Road. Cul-de-sac development generally more recent.

Building character substantially individual, often Arts and Crafts influences. Buildings generally traditional in manner.

Materials

Walls: Various including painted render, local stone exposed timber frame, but generally red brick.

Roofs: Mostly red-brown tiles.

Hard space

Bath Road has a pavement on one side with street lighting and can appear cluttered especially with telegraph poles. Cul-de-sacs often have no pavements. Scale of more recent roads can appear rather excessive.

Landscape

The mature leafy setting is an important and cohesive character element except in the extreme southern area. Many trees are prominent on the skyline within and beyond the town.

Higher density infill development could threaten the tree cover.

Character Areas

05.03 Synopsis of Character Areas



Green Close

A typical view of former council estate development on Rixon Hill.
Note how houses set down the slope below the road present a weak frontage to the road, especially bungalows. The repetitious skyline is often unrelieved by tree cover, and the wirescape tends to dominate.

Green Close looking south

Although trees are limited, hedges are a strong feature of this area. Note the unsympathetic treatment of the garden boundary on the left that intrudes on the overall character of the road. Since drives are limited, informal parking along roads is a feature of the area.



Looking west down Rixon Hill

This forward view down the road towards Butts Pond provides a clear sense of arrival in Sturminster Newton unlike previously along Manston Road to the north. Trees form an important part of this view on the skyline west of Bath Road, as does the tree in the foreground that does much to relieve the skyline and frame the view.

Looking north along Manston Road

The north-east edge of the town is generally rather crudely defined. Here Manston Road defines an abrupt demarcation between town and country. Situated on a local ridge, houses on the left intrude on local views to the east.



Dormer Windows in Green Close

It is particularly important to ensure that new dormer windows are in scale and proportion with the host property, unlike these in Green Close. They should generally be smaller in scale than the windows on the lower floors of the host building.

Rixon from Rabin Hill

This view shows how the topography of the town provides views towards Rixon and the chalk scarp beyond. The composition of development, including building form, scale and materials, as well as vegetation, are all important aspects of this and other views. Note that the large dormer windows illustrated opposite can be clearly identified in the centre of the photograph.



Rixon and Environs

Substantially ubiquitous post-war estate development.

Layout

Originally relatively low density ribbon development up Rixon Hill with a later council estate generally laid out along contours. Also some more compact recent estate development in the south of the area. The area includes several cul-de-sac layouts.

Fronts: Houses face roads beyond front gardens. No rear access.

Backs: Relatively long gardens behind, backing onto other gardens, but often not very secluded.

Building character and form

On Rixon Hill building character and form is quite varied, but elsewhere simple standard repeated house types typical of estate development. Generally 1 or 2 storey. Pitched roofs, often with blank end gables. Most houses have chimneys. Originally without dormers, but increasingly common with loft conversions.

Materials

Walls: Invariably red brick, but also painted render. Some old buildings on Rixon Hill built of limestone.

Roofs: Invariably red-brown tile.

Hard space

Standard, relatively wide tarmacadam roads with concrete kerbs and pavements. Few drives, so much parking along roads. Utilitarian street lighting.

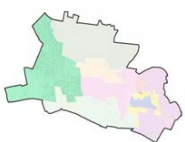
Landscape

Vegetation generally very limited except for garden hedges. Relatively few trees, especially large mature specimens. Where these do occur, they are notable and do much to improve the local environment. Low quality public space at Alder Road.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Rabin Hill

Estate development dating from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although there is some articulation of building forms, garages and parked cars predominate, detailing is weak, and rooflines are monotonous.

There is consequently little sense of place or local distinctiveness, not least to Sturminster Newton, and there is little mitigating tree planting to relieve the effect.

Thomas Hardy Close from Honeymead Lane

A typical view of mostly late 20th Century development in the Honeymead Lane area. Note the houses backing onto the road and the generally gauche effect of the two new cottages, despite the introduction of some detailing.



Honeymead Lane/Mansion Road turning

Recent higher density development shows some concerted efforts to create a positive streetscene through the articulation of building heights, facades etc..

Northfields

Recently completed housing at Northfields. Whilst an attempt has been made to create a place with character and variety, a range of features has been poorly handled in this instance. The choice of bricks is particularly perverse, whilst the large yellow block in the centre of the view is unfortunate in its bland and crude treatment including the strange relationship between ground floor windows, the front door and external levels. Note also the parking issues.



Honeymead Lane

The relatively high densities of recent development around Honeymead Lane are now a feature of the area. Whilst there is variation in building orientation and materials, the rather crude forms of some of the buildings, repeated in a variety of different orientations can create a somewhat unconvincing effect. Some appropriately scaled tree planting could do much to mitigate the effect.

Nature conservation area north of the Butts Pond Industrial Estate

A recently created nature conservation and informal recreation area provides a valuable new amenity for the northern part of the town, although it does not relate very well to surrounding development.



Honeymead, Northern Fringe

An area of large higher density post 1980s residential estates on the northern extremities of the town.

Layout

More irregular layout than other post-war development. Circuitous through routes and cul-de-sac layouts.

Fronts: Earlier development of mostly detached houses facing or slightly oblique to the road.

Later development denser with irregular terraces of varied buildings.

Backs: Earlier development with secluded rear gardens. Later development has mostly small walled gardens contained within perimeter blocks.

Building character and form

Earlier development more varied than previous estate types but general forms, massing, materials and details regularly repeated. 1-2 storey development. Architectural style has general Arts and Crafts features but of a kind ubiquitous throughout the UK.

Later development has larger and more compact buildings of generally greater mass. Architectural style generally Neo-Georgian in style with considerable variation in scale, orientation, height (2-3 storeys), and materials.

Materials

Walls: Mostly red brick.

Later development has a greater variety of materials, including different colours of brick.

Roofs: Red and brown tile. Slate.

Hard space

Wide standard design roads, often at odds with the traditional and dense character of the built development. Most roads and pavements tarmacadam, but some variation, especially in cul-de-sacs.

Landscape

Often narrow shrub and flower beds between back of pavement and building face.

The area appears to be generally weak in tree planting, especially forest-scale trees.

Very weak edges to open countryside.



Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Entrance to the Butts Pond Industrial Estate
The entrance to the estate of the main road is relatively discrete, and clutter within the site is screened from view.

The spine road from near the site entrance, looking north
A typical view of the estate, with parked vehicles a prominent part of the scene.



The spine road from the entrance to the nature conservation area looking south
The footpaths on either side of the road are part of a principal pedestrian route in the town. Parked and moving vehicles pose a hindrance and threat to pedestrians.

Entrance to the nature conservation area from the industrial estate
For the pedestrian there is a marked change of character at this point.



Looking towards the industrial estate from the allotments adjacent to Filbridge Rise
This view demonstrates how the low position of the industrial estate does much to screen it from external views. Yewstock Plantation beyond the north-west edge of the town is visible in the background.

Butts Pond Industrial Estate

A ubiquitous but contained industrial estate

Layout

The Butts Pond Industrial Estate is situated in the bottom of a shallow valley between Market Hill and Rixon Hill. The estate is laid out along a single spine road with the various premises facing onto it beyond a forecourt space.

A principal pedestrian route between the northern part of the town and the town centre runs the length of the site.

Fronts: The industrial estate has a range of utilitarian buildings that face onto the main access road behind a mass of foreground clutter including parked vehicles.

Building character and form

A range of utilitarian sheds with low pitched roofs.

Materials

Walls: Painted profiled steel and some brick.
Roofs: Profiled steel.

Hard space

Large areas of hardstanding surround the buildings.

Landscape

The entrance to the estate off Butts Pond/Rixon Hill is relatively discrete being screened by trees and shrubs.

There is minimal landscape treatment within the estate but there is some partial screening around its edges.

Character Areas

05.03

Synopsis of Character Areas



Above: Former station yard
The car park and various retail activities on the former railway site with the Milk Factory beyond. A development brief has been prepared for the redevelopment of this whole area.

Old Market Hill

Recent mixed use development on the former Cattle Market site including the Exchange Building and associated development. Development of this mass and scale has not previously been characteristic of Sturminster Newton.

The Gavel
New high density and carefully considered residential development in the area of the former Cattle Market site.

Fields on Market Hill

These fields, which are allocated for housing development, are surprisingly screened from public viewpoints, but they are seen here from Filbridge Rise on Rixon Hill above the roofs of buildings in the Butts Pond Industrial Estate.



Railway Gardens

This small park is a relatively recent addition to the town, and although it has poor building frontage, it has a fine view towards Hambledon Hill to the east. It will be important that any future development (or tree planting) does not interrupt the view. The Exchange building is seen on the left.

Central Regeneration Area

An area of diverse uses, but all either recently developed or potentially available for development or redevelopment.

This area covers a very diverse range of land uses and individual types and characters of site that cannot readily be classified.

Sites include the following uses:
Community, residential, retail and office development on the former Cattle Market site.
The derelict former Milk Factory.
Flats.
A builder's yard.
Railway Gardens park.
Undeveloped fields.

This Character Area lies between the old town to the south and the more recent major extension to the north. There is an opportunity with future development to restore the division between these two parts of the town: a process which has already begun in recent schemes. Future regeneration schemes should take their references from those aspects that give the old town its character, whilst also respecting and enhancing neighbouring Character Areas.

It might be noted that all the potential redevelopment sites have weak public frontages, and that there is therefore a real opportunity to significantly enhance this part of the town through the redevelopment process.

