

NEIGHBOURHOODS: 'FROM HOME TO EVERYTHING YOU NEED'

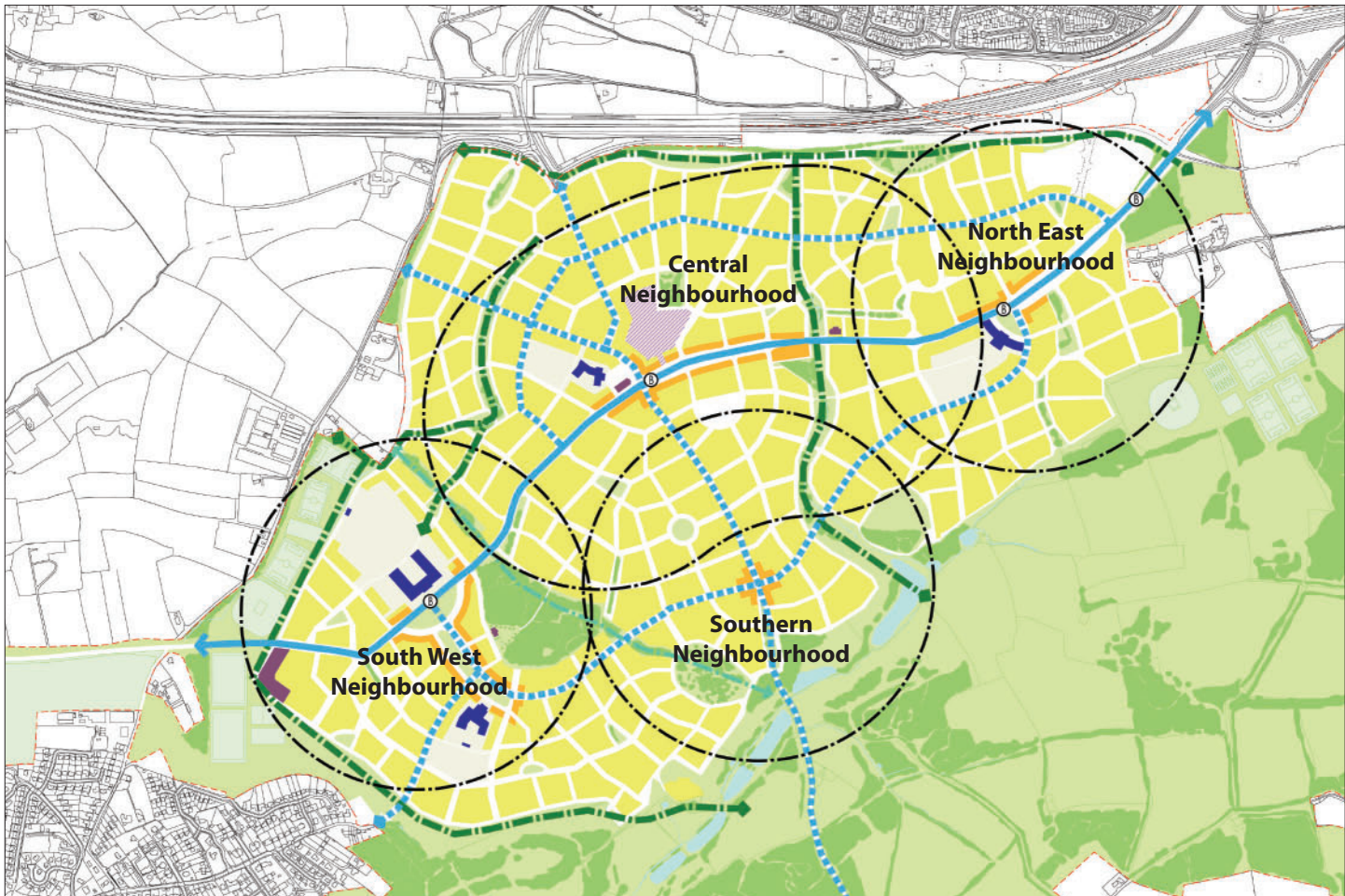
Sherford is made up of four neighbourhoods. Their location is crucial and strongly influenced by the layout of the streets. Equally, the streets are influenced by the concept of neighbourhoods. It is essential that the two work hand in hand (see Figure 82). The landscape setting will influence both. So the concept of a neighbourhood is in itself simple but making a series of them work successfully is complex.

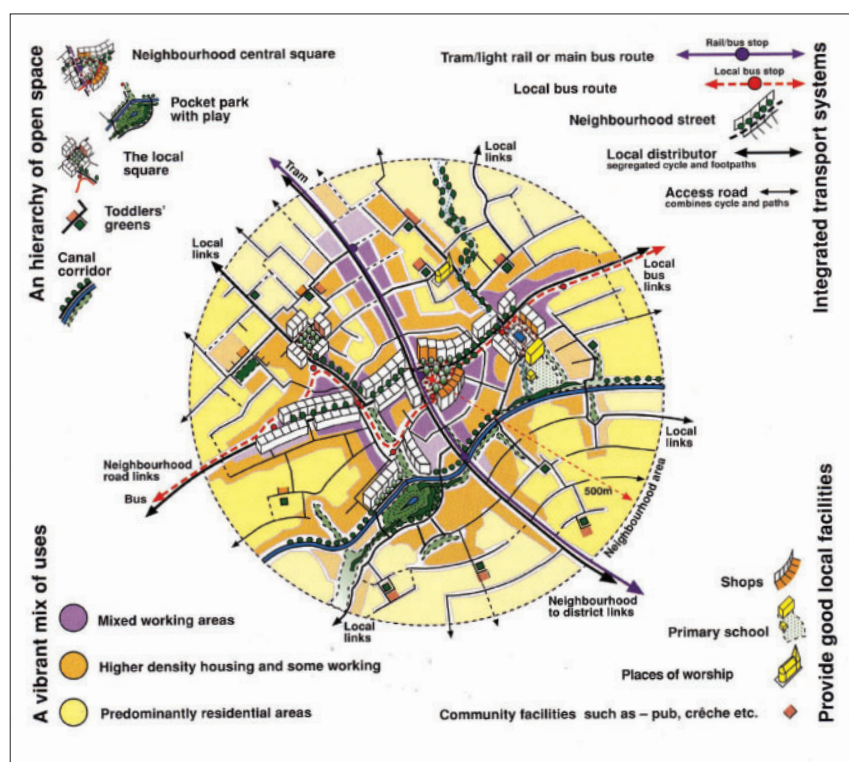
The word neighbourhood certainly isn't new. It is usually a generic term for the area people live, defined in the dictionary as *"a district or community within a town or city"* and *"the area surrounding a particular place, person, or object"*. They are, therefore, not only defined by the area

surrounding a place, but the proximity to the centre point of that place. This is itself central to the specific meaning we give neighbourhoods in the design of sustainable settlements today. See Figure 83.

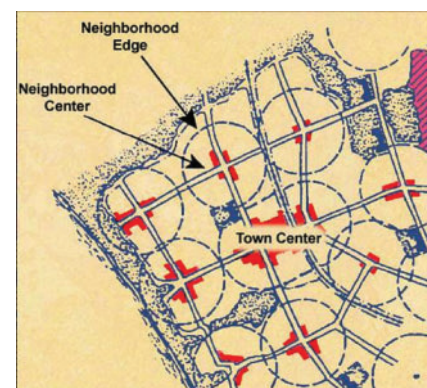
Neighbourhoods are also not new by the very fact that they allude to traditional towns in almost every particular in that their dimensions and rules are based on reasonable walking distances; a structure of walkable neighbourhoods where as many residents and visitors as possible are no more than 5 minutes walk from shops, offices and other forms of employment, schools, health care, entertainment, recreation and a range of green spaces (see Figure 84). Nothing will stop residents travelling beyond Sherford but they will not need to do so for their daily needs.

Figure 82
Sherford's
Neighbourhood
Structure.



**Figure 83**

The sustainable neighbourhood, from a government publication entitled 'Urban Renaissance'.

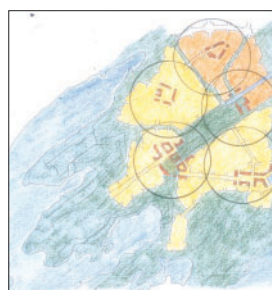
**Figure 84**

Neighbourhoods form to make the town. They focus on the most integrated streets.

Towns before the automobile had to be pedestrian based. They followed simple rules of accessibility. It is generally accepted that unless on some very special outing, people will walk roughly 400-450 metres to access their daily needs. Anything much more than that and they tend to choose an alternative. That is not a problem if it's a bicycle, but not everyone rides one. The alternative could be a bus, but even a bus stop can be 400 metres away from some homes.

This is of great importance socially too. Increasingly the elderly and the young and those on low incomes are the 'transport poor'. It is essential to cater for those members of a community, who, if unable to walk, are either disempowered by that fact or have to be driven as passengers by family and friends.

Clearly this 400-metre/5 minute walk rule of thumb is affected by topography, weather, health and age and so it is not an exact science but it does help to structure mixed-use in accessible and well-spaced intervals. So much so that Government strongly recommends that neighbourhoods and their associated mixed-use are thought of in these increments.

**Figure 85**

The logic of connections, centres and walkable neighbourhoods...

**Figure 86**

...becomes the Town Plan. Fornebu, Scandinavia.

**Figure 87**

Sherford: Early explorations of the neighbourhood structure.

The Ped-Shed

As well as the 400-metre rule of thumb, it is also important to carry out what is known as a ped-shed. This helps establish just how many dwellings are literally within 400 metres of a central destination. It is significant because the directness and frequency of the streets within the 400-metre radius has a major impact on the resultant ped-shed. By beginning at the centre and tracing back along the streets until 400 metres is reached will give a clearer percentage of people who are within that walking distance. Modification of the number and directness of the streets can improve this significantly. See Figure 88.

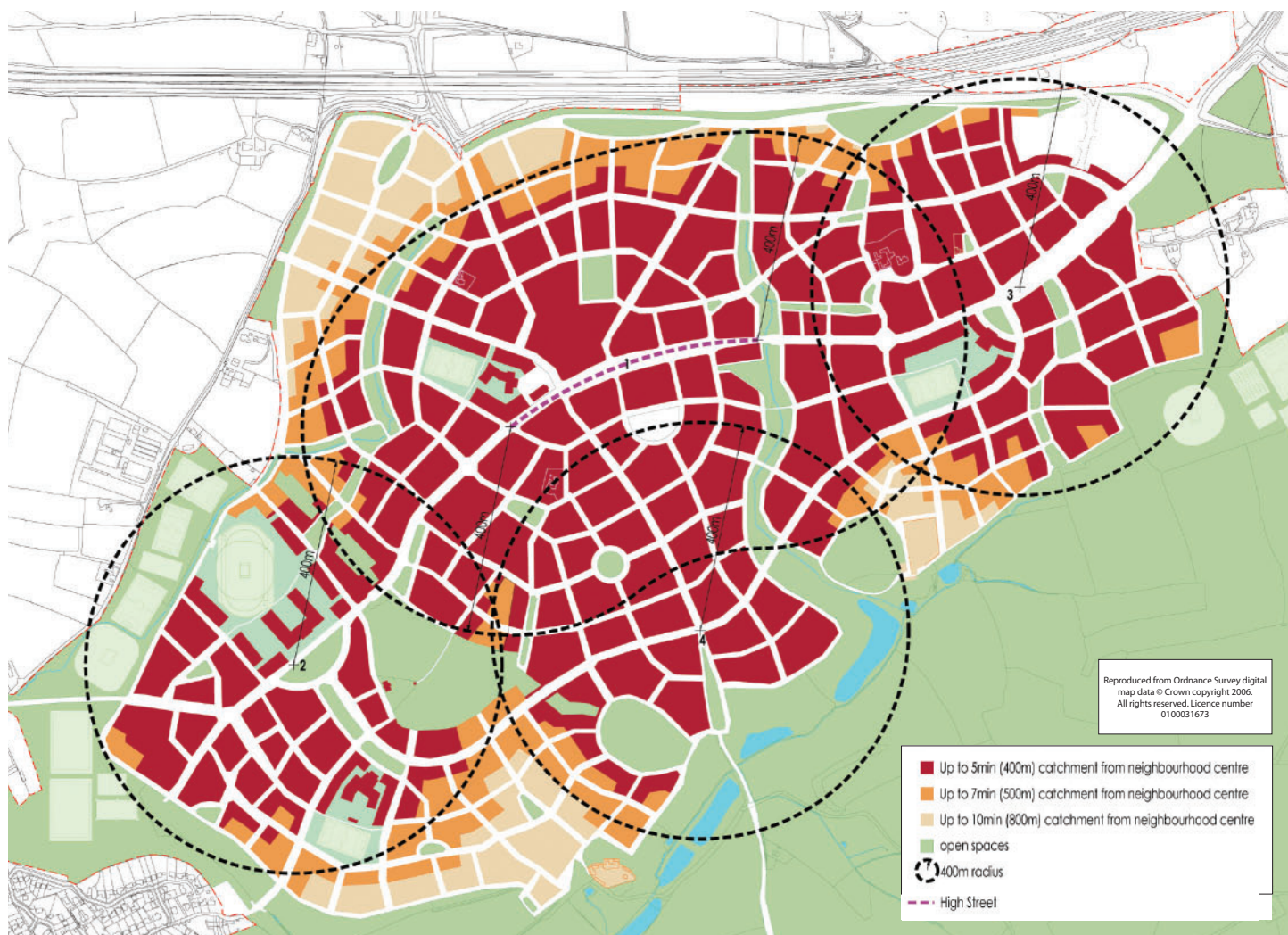
Percentages of the overall neighbourhood areas within a 5 min (400m) ped-shed zone are as follows:

Central Neighbourhood	90%
South West Neighbourhood	70%
North East Neighbourhood	78%
Southern Neighbourhood	80%

At a Town wide level this gives us a total of 80% within up to 5 min ped-shed zone. This is extremely high by any recent standards

Figure 88

The Ped-Sheds for Sherford.



A Neighbourhood's basic rules are:

- An interconnected street system with as many direct connections to a central high street spine that is the focus for mixed-use, through traffic and public transport
- A place that is central to the neighbourhood
- A radius of approximately 400 metres from that centre
- Each neighbourhood is seamlessly attached to the next neighbourhood unless such landscape elements as flood plains, water meadows existing woodlands, proposed landscape structuring element intervene. If they do so they should always be on the outer boundary of the neighbourhood, not through the middle
- Larger space uses are located on the edge of the 400-metre radius so as not to disrupt the fine grain of streets.
- Broadly speaking a density increase from edge to centre, though the density will be varied throughout
- They should contain a range of housing forms and tenures as well as a balanced mix of uses
- A tendency for retail and employment within the neighbourhood to focus on the central place

Daily needs

What qualifies as daily needs is itself a complex matter and whilst the private motor vehicle remains in common use, it will continue to be hard to place all such needs in every neighbourhood. Hence the importance of this quotation emphasising the responsibility of the Town Plan to set up the conditions for accessibility to evolve over time.

"The neighbourhoods are mixed-use communities balanced to a degree which permits the overall town plan to become self-sufficient to the extent of extremely high trip capture rates... over a period of a generation, this will provide to all its residents the theoretical possibilities of housing, jobs, shopping, entertainment, education and civic institutions within extremely short distances."

— Andres Duany, one of North America's principle New Urbanists.

Ideally, daily needs should at least cover shopping for food, news and general household goods, schools, healthcare and community meeting space, open space, potential workspace, a post office, public transport and a pub or other forms of daytime and evening entertainment. They must all be intermingled with housing because the residents are the custodians of these uses every day of the week. See Figures 89 and 90.

Figure 89
 'From home to everything you need', a generic diagram.

- 80% of homes should achieve this standard
- All new dwellings in urban areas should achieve this standard

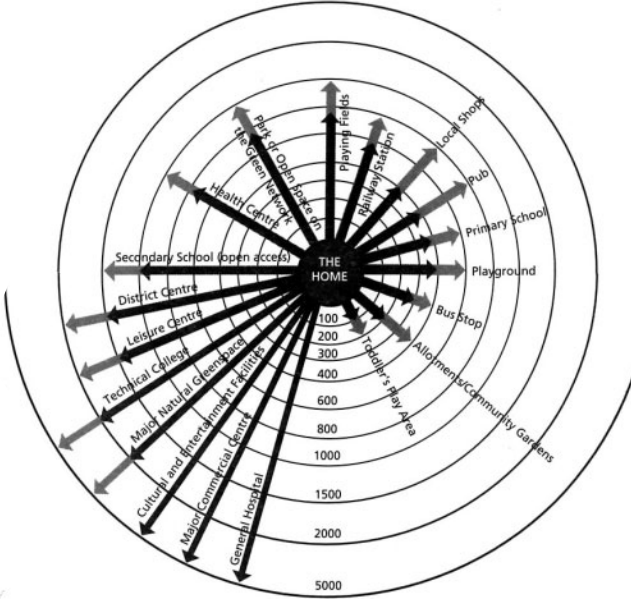
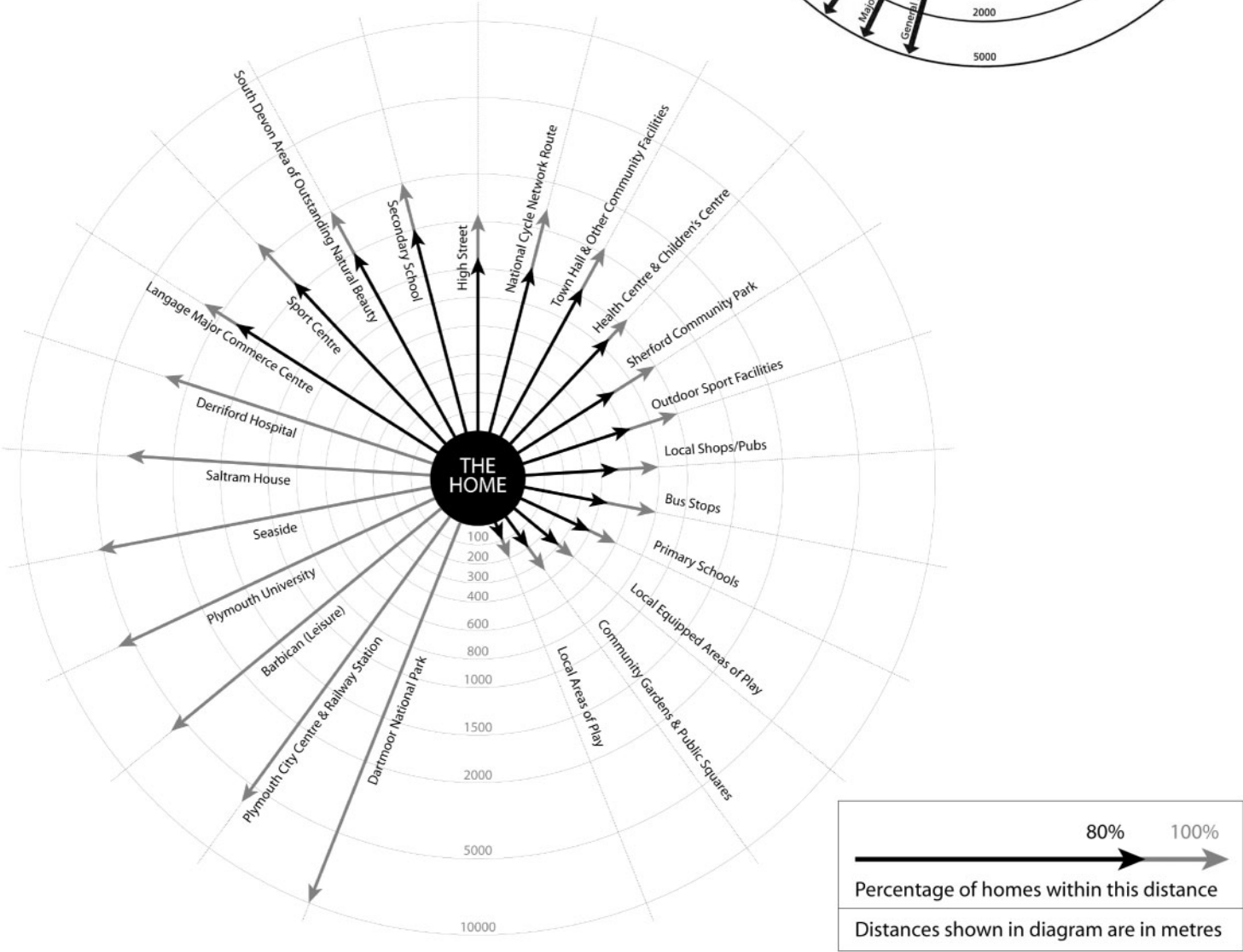


Figure 90
 'From home to everything you need', in Sherford.



If successful they become High Streets and may themselves be 300 metres long.

If smaller in nature they may be a cluster of buildings at a junction of streets, a square or green. In this instance if they form the centre of something roughly 400 metres in radius the centres will be approximately 800 metres apart. It is marrying this rule of thumb with all the other site based constraints that is the complex design task.

Locating the Neighbourhoods in Sherford

It is usually easier to say where the centre of a neighbourhood is than the edge. The centre matters far more. These local places gain and retain their richness, activity and diversity because they are the moments in the large-scale things.

The new Main Street from Deep Lane to the A379 is crucial to achieving this richness at the local level. This street carries most of the visiting traffic as well as being a key public transport route. Therefore three of the four neighbourhoods have their focus along this alignment.

The **Central Neighbourhood** has the High Street and is the key location for the town as a whole. It will contain more than the daily needs of its immediate population as all good High Streets do. This is Sherford's Town Centre. See Figure 91.

In the Central neighbourhood it is customary to take the 400-metre radius from each end of the High Street, because these are the points of arrival. Having got to the High Street then the whole rationale for walking changes as people become engaged in the act of shopping, eating, greeting or business.

The **South West Neighbourhood** has the secondary school as it's main focus bringing many people there, not only of school age, but from all walks of life, as a major educational facility. It is at an important junction of the Main Street and Southern Avenue immediately south of the Quarry next to which the Youth Centre sits. It is also a neighbour to the existing development at Elburton and provides, in the gap between communities, the swimming pool, sports hub, and playing fields making up the managed open space defining their proximity and separation. See Figures 92, 93 and 94.

Figure 91
Sherford's central
neighbourhood walkable
catchment.

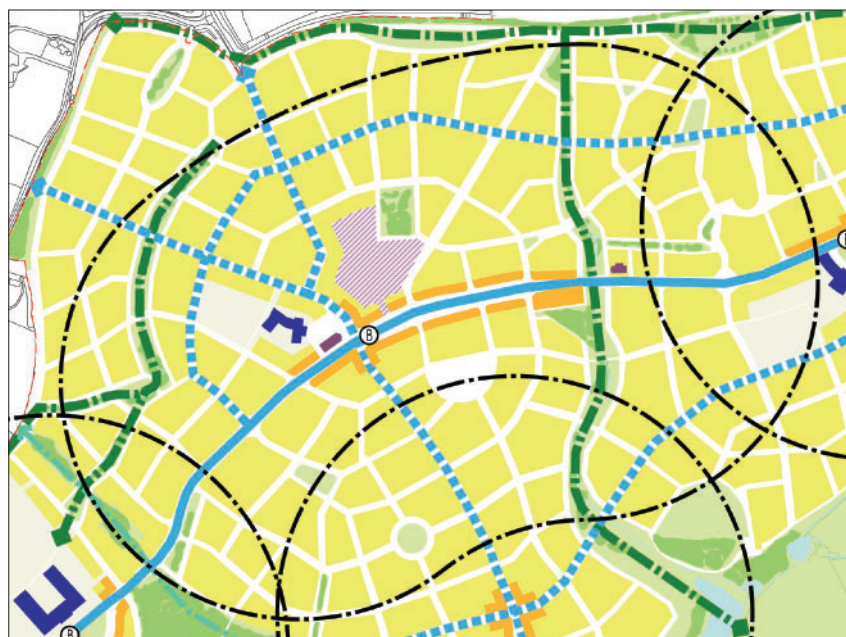
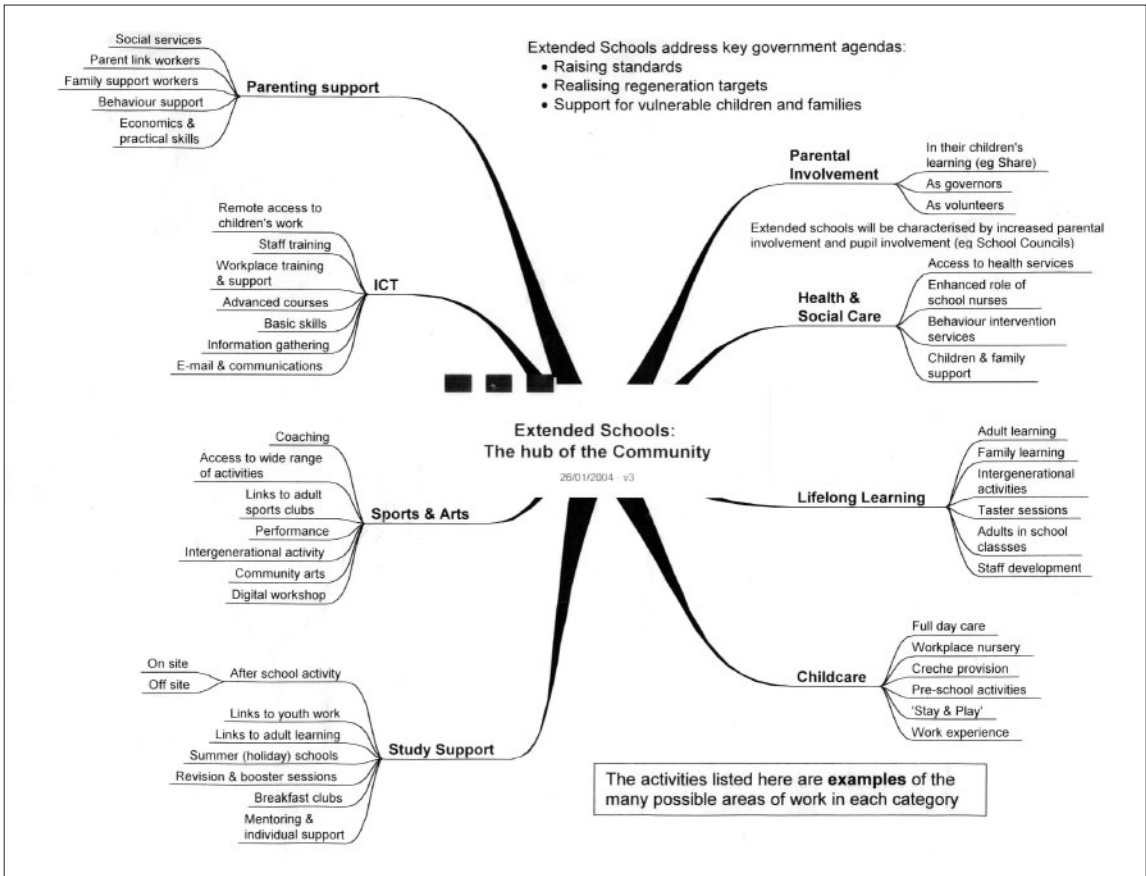


Figure 92
The south west
neighbourhood.



Figure 94
The heart of the south
west neighbourhood.

Figure 93
The future of schools.
*Why they need to be in the
heart of neighbourhoods.*
(Source: Devon County
Council)



The **North East Neighbourhood** is the first neighbourhood that is encountered upon entering Sherford from the A38. As the Park and Ride and then Northern Avenue pass on the right, a formal setback of residential development announces your arrival (see Figure 95). The land falls away to the left toward the Community Park and more immediately playing fields including the cricket pitch and pavilion. The neighbourhood centre is reached at the junction of the Main Street and Southern Avenue where the primary school is located.

The **Southern Neighbourhood** is relatively quiet in that it is centred at the junction of Brixton Road and Southern Avenue (Figures 96 and 97). A good proportion of this neighbourhood area spills into the Community Park, so its walkable catchment is almost halved. Nevertheless, it is at an important crossroads in a beautiful location and merits the neighbourhood category.

Sherford's neighbourhoods are the large-scale jigsaw pieces. All are different yet they fit together to make the Town Plan as efficient as possible for the pedestrian.



Figure 95
The north east neighbourhood.

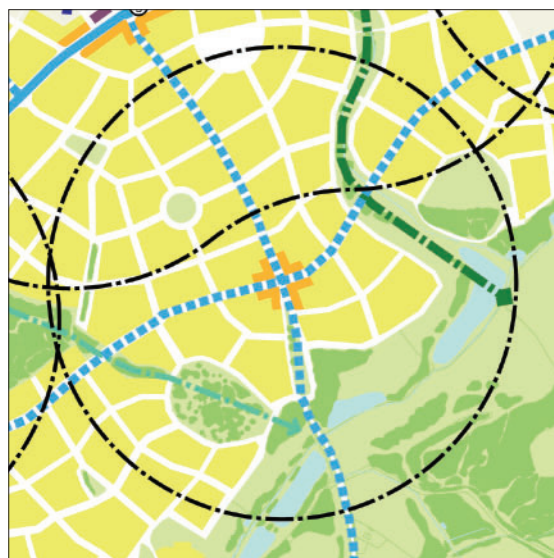


Figure 96
The southern neighbourhood.



Figure 97
The Brixton Road.
Illustrator: Robert Stokes