Part 5: Historical Analysis

5.1 Saxon Bridport (AD900-1065)

5.1.1 Historical Summary

The precise origins of Bridport are uncertain and there is little evidence for activity within the area of the present town before the Saxon period. Bridport has been identified with the *burh* of *Brydian*, listed in the Burghal Hidage, but the precise location of *Brydian* is unknown and has been identified both with Bridport and with Little or Long Bredy and specifically with the earthwork enclosure of Old Warren (Hill 1996, 19; Penn 1980, 23). The location of *Brydian* has been argued largely on the basis of the place-name evidence (Fägersten 1933; Mills 1986; Dodgson 1996, 108) or numismatic grounds (Symonds 1922, 39). The discussion has not been finally resolved, but in general Bridport has been accepted as the site of *Brydian* (Keen 1984, 234; Hill 1996, 192).

The course of the possible defences of the *burh* (assuming it was at Bridport) has been extrapolated from documentary, cartographic and topographic evidence by Short (1975) and Penn (1980, 25). A slightly different course has been suggested by Hewitt (1996). Unfortunately archaeological investigation along any of the proposed lines of the Saxon defences has yet to reveal any sign of a ditch or bank (Brading 1998; Goodwin 2007; Valentin 1998 & 2003), whether defensive or otherwise. The lack of any positive identification of defences along the proposed burh boundaries suggests that either the defences run along a different course to that postulated, or are of a different form (perhaps a palisade or similar) that has not been picked up by the archaeological fieldwork, or there were no permanent Saxon defences in Bridport. Although recent work has tended to favour Bridport as the site of the burh of Brydian, it is perhaps time to re-evaluate the hypothesis that the original *burh* of *Brydian* mentioned in the Burghal Hidage was on a more defensive location on the River Bride, perhaps at (Little or Long) Bredy, and the move

down to the present site of Bridport occurred later due to changing strategic and commercial pressures.

Despite the uncertainty over the character and date of its earliest form, there is clear historical evidence for the existence of a town at Bridport by the late Saxon period and it does not seem to have been founded on a pre-existing earlier settlement. The Saxon church at Bridport (presumably on the same site as St Mary's Church) does not appear to have been a pre-conquest minster church and most likely did not exist prior to the establishment of the town, as its *parochia* was small and appears to have been formed from the adjacent Royal estate of Burton Bradstock (Hall 2000, 90), or perhaps Bradpole (Keen 1984). The Domesday survey records that in 1066 the borough of Bridport had 120 houses and there was one moneyer (Thorn 1983). The number of houses in Bridport is rather less than recorded for the other Dorset boroughs at Dorchester (172 houses), Wareham (285) and Shaftesbury (257). Nevertheless, the historical and numismatic evidence suggests a prospering town of some importance in the late 10th and 11th centuries. The mint, with the mint-signature *BRIDIAN* was active in Athelstan's reign (925-939) (Blunt 1974), and also during the reigns of Aethelred II (978-1016), Cnut (1016-1035), Harthacnut (1040-1042), and Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) (Keen 1984, 239-241; Symonds 1922). Unfortunately no archaeological evidence for the Saxon town has been recovered from Bridport to indicate the range and nature of its economic activity.

The Saxon town probably had good communications to the east and west along the possible former Roman road between Dorchester and Exeter. Other roads probably ran northwards to Bradpole and Allington and beyond to Beaminster. Road access to the coast was probably by way of the road to Burton Bradstock via Wych and down towards West Bay. Seaborne com-

Figure 6: St Mary's Church and South Street.

Figure 7: Priory Lane, along the postulated line of the burh defences.

munications would be possible from the mouth of the River Brit and the river would provide more direct communication with the town.

Within the study area there are three other historic settlements at Allington, Bradpole and Bothenhampton, which may have originated in the Saxon period. Allington, a 'farm belonging to the princes' (Mills 1986, 27), was held by Brictwy before 1066 (Thorn and Thorn 1983). Saxon Allington was undoubtedly close to the old church of St Swithun, but its settlement form is unknown and may have comprised a series of dispersed farms. Bradpole was a Royal manor held by Edward the Confessor (Thorn and Thorn 1983). The location of Saxon Bradpole is likely to have been in the area southeast of the present church, perhaps centred on Middle Street and running down towards the river, but the form of the Saxon settlement is unknown. Bothenhampton was probably just a small part of Burton (Bradstock), which was held by King Edward in lordship in 1066 (Thorn and Thorn 1983).

5.1.2 Town Layout

The precise extent of the Saxon town is not known and no contemporary property boundaries have been positively identified, but the layout of the later town could indicate its possible limits. The position of St Mary's Church (or rather its Saxon predecessor) is likely to have been relatively central to the town, suggesting it was situated on the central part of the promontory formed by the confluence of the rivers Woth (Brit) and Asker (Figure 8). The topography of the promontory suggests a linear development along South Street. The settlement does not appear to have extended west of the church (Bailey 1975) and the eastern limits were probably along the line of South Mill Lane. The southern limits of the town were possibly close to the junction of South Mill Lane and South Street, as the area to the south is low-lying and was not developed until the early 19th century. The northern limit is less certain. The line proposed by Short (1975) seems unlikely on topographic grounds. A more likely limit is perhaps defined by the line of Gundry Lane and Folly Mill Lane, which form an arc running across almost the whole of the peninsula. These proposed limits would place St Mary's Church almost exactly in the centre of the town and the space is certainly appropriate for the size of town described in Domesday. The market place is likely to have been on the main street close to the church. It has been suggested that the widening of South Street just to the north of the church is a remnant of the Saxon market place (Short and Sales 1980, 14), but it is uncertain how wide the street was at this date but it was likely to have been much narrower.

The size and shape of the promontory during this period is uncertain. The course of the rivers is assumed to be roughly that shown on the 18th century map, but significant deposits of alluvial silts have been discovered in boreholes and test pits along the western side of the town in the Brit floodplain (Short 1975; Cox *et al.* 1997), which led Short to suggest that there was a tidal estuary to the west (and probably east) of the town, making the promontory significantly narrower than at present (Short 1975). Unfortunately, the alluvial deposits are undated and no archaeological material has been recovered from them, making it difficult to assess the probable limits of the dry land during this period. It is likely, however, that the floodplains were poorly drained and prone to flooding. Popular belief places a harbour inland close to the southern end of Bridport, where a rather irregular enclosure shown on historic maps has been suggested as the remnants of a former loop in the river and the position of a landing place (Short 1975; Penn 1980). There is no evidence to indicate this was the case and the precise form of any harbour and the location of any moorings close to the town are a matter of conjecture.

5.1.3 Saxon Urban plan components

The main plan components of the Saxon town are shown on Figure 8 and are listed below.

1. *St Mary's Church.* A late minster church is postulated to lie on the site of the present St Mary's Church. There may be some early remains beneath the present church, but observations during reflooring revealed that any archaeological deposits over most of the area of the nave have been destroyed (Graham 1999). The area shown on Figure 8 is the present churchyard: the extent of the Saxon churchyard is unknown.

2. *Historic Plots along South Street.* The extent and layout of the properties of the Saxon town is not known, but is likely to have been set out along both sides of South Street. The area shown places the church at roughly the centre of the settlement. The area shown on Figure 8 is certainly adequate for the 120 houses mentioned by the Domesday survey.
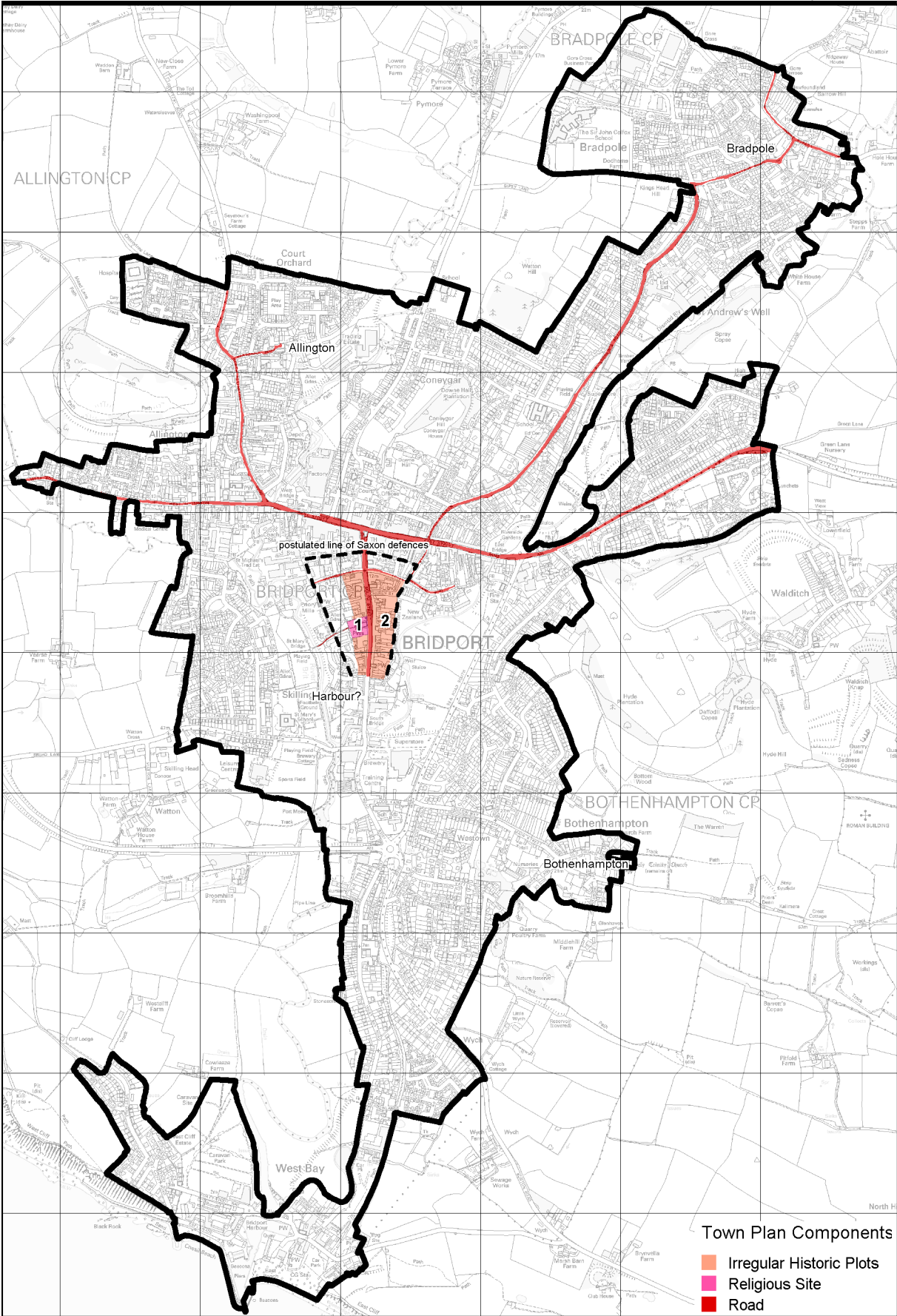
Figure 8: Bridport Saxon Town Plan Components.

5.2 Norman Bridport (1066-1150)

5.2.1 Historical Summary

Norman Bridport was a royal manor and borough (both being co-extensive), the lands being held directly by the crown and administered by a bailiff (Pugh 1968, 25). It was the smallest of the four Dorset boroughs mentioned in the Domesday survey, having many fewer houses listed. The Domesday account of Bridport is brief and the borough had apparently declined in the period between 1066 and 1086. There were 120 houses in 1066, but by 1086 there were only 100, of which "20 were so neglected that those who live in them are not able to pay tax" (Thorn and Thorn 1983). The owners of the houses are not specified. There is no explanation for the damage, but it was apparently connected with Hugh the Sheriff. Nothing is mentioned in Domesday of the general resources of the borough, but is probably a settlement of about 500 people or possibly more (Darby and Finn 1967, 119). Bridport appears to be similar to other boroughs in south west England in 1086, in that it was small and not fully developed, but clearly distinguished from its rural agricultural surroundings. It is unclear whether the mint was still operational in Bridport at this date.

The church in Bridport mentioned in Domesday, is assumed to be on the site of the present St Mary's church and to be the former Saxon minster church. The Bishop of Salisbury confirmed the church of Bridport and its chapel to the Abbey of St Wandrille in 1142 x 1154 (Cal. Doc. France I, No. 174), which may indicate the existence of an otherwise unknown chapel (Penn 1980, 26).

In 1150 during the civil war in the reign of King Stephen, Henry Plantagenet captured Bridport; "he boldly took by storm … the town (*civitatem*) called Bridport and the castellan of the place, who had made submission to the King" [Gesta Stephani] (quoted in Penn 1980, 26). The mention of a castellan suggests a castle (perhaps a temporary castle) in Bridport at this date. A great many castles were built during the civil war and most of these were razed to the ground when Henry came to the throne. The location and form of this 'castle' is not known.

The early medieval road network was probably very similar to that of the preceding Saxon period, with east and west communications along the former Roman road between Dorchester and Exeter. Good (1966) defines three medieval routes running north from Bridport. The westernmost route ran past Allington towards Broadwindsor; the middle route towards Netherbury and Beaminster and the eastern route

to Bradpole and beyond to Mangerton, Mapperton and on to Corscombe and Yeovil. Road access to the coast was probably by way of the road to Burton Bradstock to Wych and down towards West Bay. Seaborne communications would be possible from the mouth of the River Brit at West Bay and the river would provide more direct communication with the town. There is no clear evidence for a harbour at Bridport at this date, though popular belief places one inland close to the southern end of Bridport (Short 1975; Penn 1980). There is no evidence to indicate this was the case and the precise form of any harbour and the location of any moorings close to the town are a matter of conjecture (Hannah 1986).

Of the other former historic settlements within the modern urban conurbation, Bradpole was the most important. It was held by the King and is listed in the Domesday survey as one of a group of Royal manors (together with Burton Bradstock, Bere Regis, Colber, Shipton Gorge and Chideock), which paid one night's revenues to the King. Allington was part of the lands of Thurstan, son of Rolf, who held Allington for himself. There was land for three ploughs. Two ploughs were in lordship and twelve smallholders had ½ a plough (Thorn and Thorn 1983). There was also a mill, which is likely to have been at North Mills. Bothenhampton is not mentioned in Domesday and was probably just a small part of the Royal manor of Burton Bradstock at this time.

5.2.2 Town Layout

The Norman town is likely to have been similar in size and layout to the late Saxon town, with South Street the principal street and with St Mary's Church at its centre (Figure 9). Certainly the town is unlikely to have expanded much beyond its late Saxon extent. There is little documentary and archaeological evidence to help elucidate the form of the Norman town. There are a number of 13th century deeds which refer to properties at the north end of South Street as being *extra barros* (outside the bars) (HMC 1877, 482, 484: DHC B3/CD52 & 53) which implies there was a Bar or Gate near the north end of South Street. This was located by Short as being just north of the site of the Museum (Short 1975). It is possible that the location of the 13th century town gate also marks the northern limit of the Norman town. The castle was most likely situated at the north end of the town, perhaps close to the gate in the area known as Castlehay (Short and Sales 1980, 17).
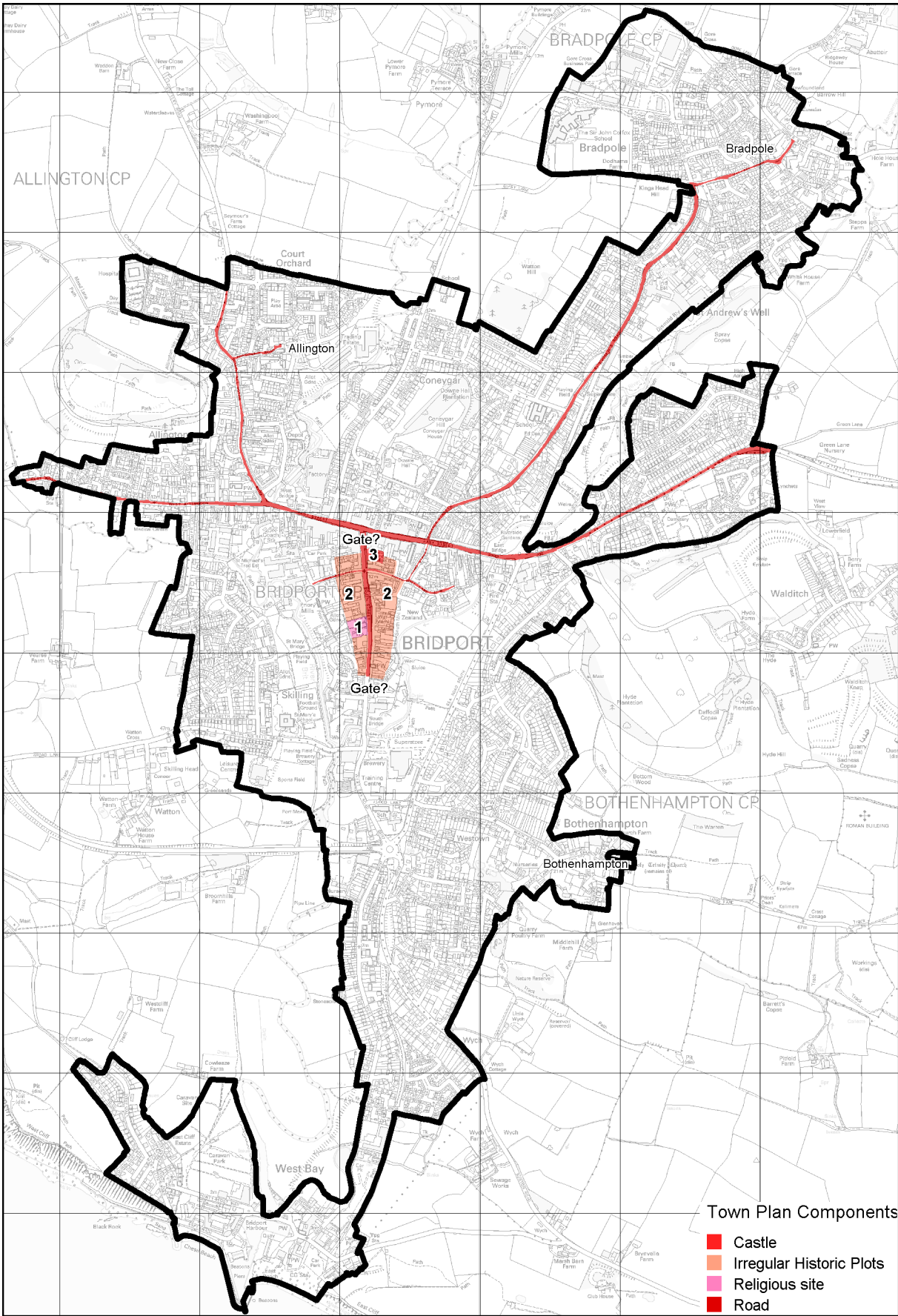
Figure 9: Bridport Norman Town Plan Components.

5.2.3 Norman Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the Norman town are shown on Figure 9 and are listed below.

1. *St Mary's Church.* The area of the church depicted is the modern extent of the churchyard of St Mary's Church. The Saxon and Norman church is assumed to be on the same site as the present church.

2*. Historic Plots along South Street.* There are no property or other boundaries which can confidently be ascribed to the Norman period. However, a number of possible boundary ditches were found during archaeological investigations at 51 South Street and to the rear of 53 South Street that were not on the alignment of the burgage plots (Valentin 2001). Although some contained late 12th/early 13th century material, these ditches may indicate an earlier property layout pre-dating the burgage plots, which may relate to the Norman or earlier town layout. Unfortunately, only a small area of these ditches was exposed and little can be deduced about the size, shape and orientation of these possible early properties. By the end of this period, the settlement may have expanded up to the area of the medieval town gate near the position of the castle.

3. *Castle.* Documentary evidence suggests there may have been a (temporary) castle at Bridport in 1150 during the civil war in the reign of King Stephen, which was captured by Henry Plantagenet. It was probably destroyed after Henry came to the throne. The location and form of this 'castle' is not known. The 16th century building in South Street, which currently houses Bridport Museum, is known as the "Castle". In addition, there are a number of documentary sources referring to 'castle' or 'castlehay' in this area. A 13th century document (undated but temp. Edward I) records a messuage "in the South Street of the same vill, without the Bars, on the North side of the land which was formerly Stephen Aylmund's, near the Castle" (HMC 1877, 485). In 1390 John Proteys bequeathed a house "Castleheigh" on the east side of South Street (Bartelot 1907, 99). 'Castlehay' is also mentioned in wills of 1374 and 1406 (Penn 1980, 26). The plot called Castlehay was quite small and almost square and was associated with a larger plot called 'Morterhay' on the east side of South Street in the area just north of the museum (Short and Sales 1980,17). a market place (Penn 1980).

5.3 Medieval Bridport (1151-1539)

5.3.1 Historical Summary

Bridport appears to have flourished in the 12th to early 15th century with the help of its developing rope industry and become a trading centre of some importance. There is evidence for a Jewish community and for people from all over the county residing in the town (Penn 1980, 27). The town expanded beyond the limits of the Saxon and Norman town in the 13th and early 14th century, with a planned new town to the north ranged along East and West Streets and defended by a large ditch. In 1244 it was represented as a borough at the eyre (Beresford and Finberg 1973, 101) and in 1253, Bridport received its borough charter from King Henry III, making it a free borough and granting a number of manorial rights and liberties to the corporation and burgesses of the town in return for an increase in rent to the crown. Bridport elected two members of parliament from 1293-4 (Hutchins 1863, 12).

A market was established by King Edward I on Wednesdays and Saturdays and was first recorded in 1278 when it was alleged it was being damaged by the markets at Charminster, Abbotsbury and Lyme Regis (Letters 2007). Documentary records relating to the market date from the late 14th century and provide a wealth of detail on the form and regulation of the markets. The market place was in the T-junction of East, West and South Streets. The administrative centre of Bridport was the Toll Hall on the north side of the market place.

The economic success of Bridport in this period is reflected in the building of the present St Mary's Church in the first half of the 13th century (RCHME 1952; Pitfield 1981). This church was then substantially rebuilt in the late 14th and early 15th century, reflecting once again the increasing wealth of the borough as a result of the continuing growth of the rope, flax and hemp industries during the 13th to early 15th centuries. There were a number of chap-els and other religious institutions in Bridport during the medieval period. The chapel of St Andrew was built in the market place, probably in the mid thirteenth century, to serve the 'new town' along East and West Streets. St Michael's Chapel was established, probably in the later 13th century, on the west side of the town, possibly to serve the area outside the west gate (Penn 1980, 26). The chapel was dissolved in the 16th century (Hutchins 1863, 24). At the east gate was the Hospital of St John the Baptist, a mixed Augustinian cell, with its own chapel and a warden/friar, brothers and sisters. A leper hospital dedicated to St Mary Magdalen was founded outside the west side of the town in West Allington, some time before 1232 (Calthrop 1908a). A Carmelite friary is said to have been founded at Bridport in 1261 (Short and Sales 1980, 35). It had probably ceased to exist some time before 1365 when an attempt to re-establish it proved unsuccessful.

Bridport was heavily affected by the Black Death and subsequent plague epidemics, reflected in the large number of wills known from the period between 1348-1361 (Penn 1980, 27). The town may have taken some time to recover its fortunes, for although Leland called it "a fair large town" after he visited c.1540, the Lay Subsidy of 1525 suggests that Bridport was much smaller than Sherborne or Shaftesbury and probably similar in size to Blandford (Stoate 1982). The tax records suggest there was only a small number of wealthy inhabitants in the town during the 14th century (Penn 1980, 27). However, there appears to have been a general increase in the wealth of the townspeople in the 15th century, according to the documentary evidence.

The rope industry formed an important part of Bridport's economy from at least the very early 13th century and was the basis of the town's prosperity. The soils and climate in West Dorset provided very good growing conditions for

Figure 10: St Mary's Church.

Figure 11: The Chantry, South Street.

hemp and flax and Bridport was well placed as a centre for manufacture using these raw materials (Pahl 1960). The first documentary reference is dated 1211, when an order for sails and rope is sent by King John. So, it seems that already in the early 13th century, Bridport was not only supplying the local market but also providing rope and tackle for the royal navy, marking the beginning of state encouragement of the Bridport industry, which continued throughout the medieval period. There appears to have been a steady growth of the industry from the thirteenth to the first quarter of the fifteenth century, with many documentary references to the frequency and importance of the hemp trade in Bridport at this time (HMC 1877; Crick 1908, Pahl 1960, Wainwright 1905). The 15th century proved to be a difficult time for the industry and the local trade slumped following the importation of large quantities of rope from Genoa and Normandy (Crick 1908; Pahl 1960). Nevertheless, Bridport managed to survive these difficult times and by the end of the century it was flourishing again despite strong competition, largely a result of the high quality of the local hemp and flax and its products. However, the industry appears to have been badly organised with oppressive guild regulations which tended to result in manufacturers moving out of Bridport, setting up in competition nearby and undercutting prices. In response, the people of Bridport petitioned King Henry VII, with the result that an act was passed in 1530 forbidding anyone within five miles of the town from selling hemp anywhere other than at Bridport market and from making ropes except for their own use (Crick 1908; Pahl 1960). This rather short-sighted solution stifled trade and drove many manufacturers further away. A great many moved to Yorkshire where the industry could develop more freely. Nevertheless, Bridport appeared to retain its dominant position in the rope industry and continued to supply the navy with large quantities of rope.

Comparatively little is known about other trades and industry in Bridport at this time. Per-

haps the best source of information is the Lay Subsidy tax returns for Dorset, which list the taxpayers within each tithing or borough and many of the surnames contained within are derived from the occupation or place of residence of the taxpayer. Thus, during the 14th century the names suggest the existence of a number of trades associated with textiles (tailor, hatter, weaver, stainer, roper), leather working (saddler, glover), metalworking (smith, goldsmith), as well as more general trades associated with a market town (barber, cook, innkeeper, butcher, ostler) (Rumble, 1980, 138-9; Stoate 1982, 72). Documentary records indicate that glovemaking was one of the trades in Bridport during the 15th-16th centuries (Warren 1937). Although there have been a number of archaeological investigations in the historic core, most have been too limited in scope to provide more than tantalising glimpses of everyday life in medieval Bridport and have provided almost no information on craft activities or trades within the town.

There is no formal record of a school in Bridport during this period, but there is some evidence to suggest that there were a number of scholars from Oxford University residing in the town in the years following 1238. An inventory of items in possession of St Mary's Church in 1476 includes several items which suggest a school attached to the church (Taplin 2005).

It has been conjectured that the earliest harbour lay inland close to Bridport (Short 1975), but there is no clear evidence to indicate a harbour. The first reference to a harbour at Bridport is in 1274, when the Hundred Rolls record the details of a dispute between the burgesses of Bridport and the Abbot of Cerne and the Prior of Frampton, who owned the west and east banks of the river mouth. The burgesses complained that the Prior had refused to allow them to take tolls in the harbour and that the Abbot and Prior were taking without warrant 'all the wreck coming from the sea between the two cliffs on each side of the weir belonging to the borough of Bridport' (Hannah 1986, 28; Symonds 1912, 164-5). Although

Figure 12: The Castle, 20 South Street, a 16th century house.

Figure 13: Daniel Taylor's Almshouses and Friends Meeting House, South Street, originally constructed in the 15th century.

there is evidence for a fair amount of activity in the 13th century, Bridport does not appear to have been an important port at this date. It did not possess any large vessels in the early 14th century and in 1327 there was no real harbour (Hannah 1986). An attempt to create a proper harbour was started during the reign of Richard II, when royal licences were granted in 1385 and 1388 to levy tolls on all saleable goods coming in and out of the port for 'the completion of a harbour … at Bridport … where there was previously none' (Hannah 1986, 27). It is unclear what work was done and a further licence was granted in 1393 to improve the harbour. Shipping activity and trade continued but by the mid-15th century the harbour had suffered severe damage from storms and the accumulation of sand and gravel. A new attempt at raising money for repairs with the help of the Church was undertaken by the burgesses of Bridport in the 1440s, but raising enough money proved difficult and it would appear that not much was done (Symonds 1912, 174-5). The facilities for vessels were still rudimentary and harbour maintenance was still a problem. Henry VII granted 100 marks towards repair of the harbour in 1487 (Symonds 1912, 176), but despite this royal patronage, no effective improvements were made and for the next few hundred years the history of the harbour is one of continual battle with storm damage and the barring of the mouth with sand and gravel. Nevertheless there is evidence that small-scale shipping continued despite the problems (Hannah 1986, 29). The Chantry at the south end of South Street may have been used as a sea mark for safe passage to Bridport Harbour (Le Pard 2008).

5.3.2 Town Layout

The combination of the documentary evidence and the modern urban morphology has enabled the general form and development of the medieval town to be determined in some detail (Figure 14). At the beginning of this period in the mid 12th century, the town was still ranged along the wide market street of South Street. By the mid 13th century a 'new town' appears to have been deliberately laid out along both sides of the wide market streets of East and West Streets, to form the distinctive T-shaped town plan, with perhaps a later extension at the east end of East Street. Documentary evidence indicates that shops, cellars, solars, and halls were concentrated in East and West Streets from the late 14th century, suggesting that this area became the focus of commercial life. The old town may have been given over to the poor and roperies at a fairly early date (Penn 1980, 26).

The Parish Church of St Mary remained in South Street, but a number of chapels were established and other religious institutions were established in the 'new town' of Bridport. The chapel of St Andrew was built at the junction of the principal streets (on the site of the present Town Hall), St Michael's Chapel was built on the corner of St Michael's Lane and West Street, close to the west gate. At the east gate was the Hospital of St John the Baptist.

The distinctive width of Bridport's main streets may have been established during this period, perhaps in conjunction the laying out of the burgage plots. The width of the streets was probably a response to commercial and industrial pressures, to encourage market development and also as a response to the needs of the rope industry. In the 18th century, the custom of drying yarn and ropes in front of the houses was long established and this may have begun in the medieval period. This custom is said to account for the surprising width of the main streets of Bridport (Pahl 1960, 148). Many of the present streets are first mentioned in this period; for example, East Street, West Street, and South Street are first recorded in the later 13th century, while Barrack Street (Stake Lane), Rax Lane (lane called Wide Ditch), Gundry Lane (Cake Lane) are first mentioned in the 14th century (Penn 1980, 28). The remains of the medieval East Bridge survive below the present bridge and suggest it was on a more NW-SE alignment (Keen 1981).

There were three mills in Bridport in the medieval period, West Mill, Killings Mill (later Folly Mill) and South Mill (Penn 1980). Killings Mill is first mentioned in 1224-5 (HMC 1877, 480) and West Mill in 1390-1 (HMC 1877, 476).

It is likely that much of the area immediately beyond the burgage plots of the town was used for hemp and flax growing. There are a numerous documentary references to 'hemplands' adjacent to the town during this period (HMC 1877).

The medieval road network, with east and west communications along the former Roman road between Dorchester and Exeter. Other roads probably ran northwards to Bradpole and Allington and beyond to Beaminster. Road access to the coast was probably by way of the Burton Bradstock road to Wych and down towards West Bay. Seaborne communications via Bridport Harbour were important, but transport of goods by river to the town would have required transhipment to smaller boats, as there were sluices on the river from at least the 13th century (Hannah 1986).

There is little information on Allington during the medieval period. It had a chapel, perhaps dedicated to St Mary Magdalen, dependent on Bridport that became an independent parish church rededicated to St Swithun at some time after 1442 (Hutchins 1863, 206; Pitfield 1981),
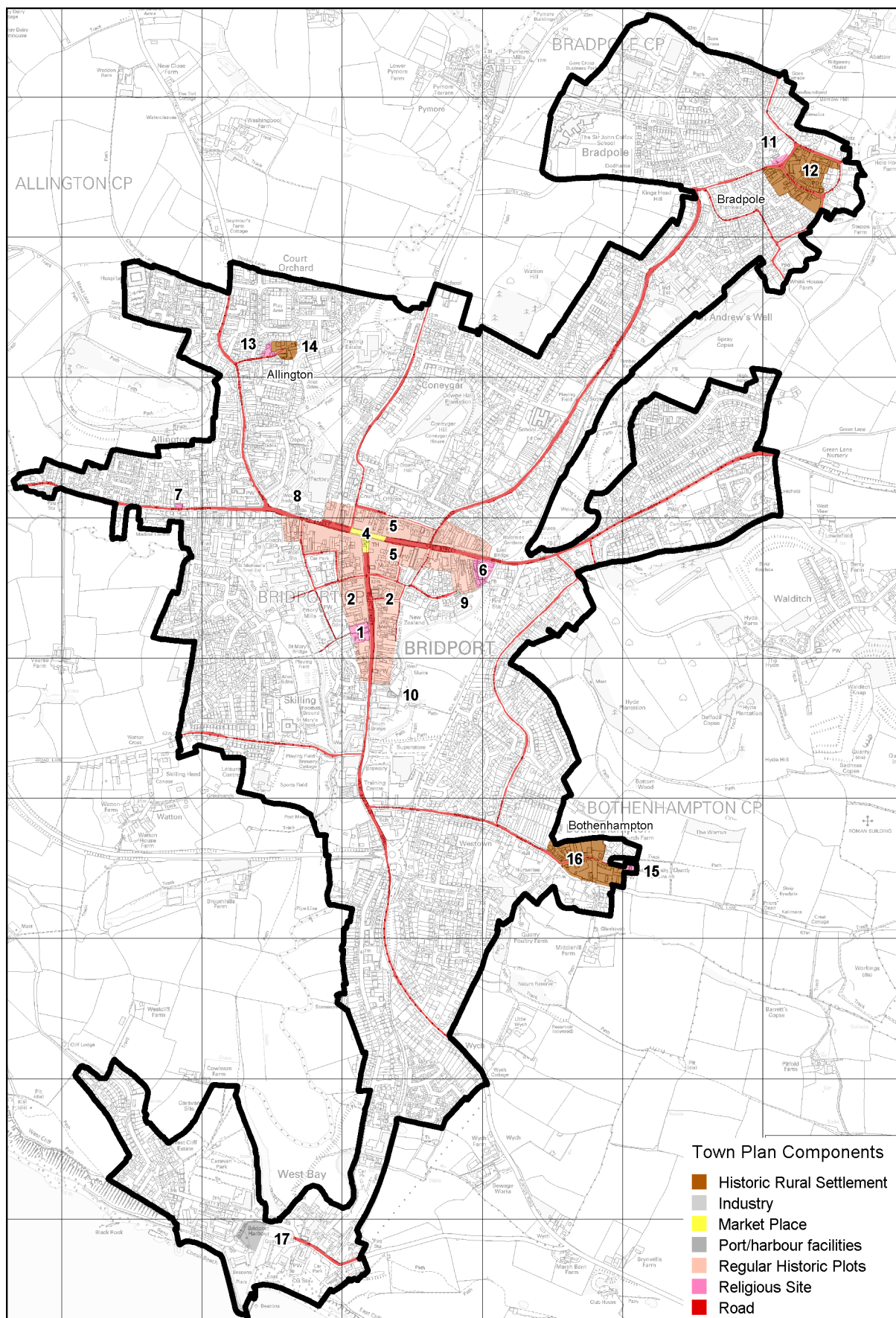
Figure 14: Bridport Medieval Town Plan Components.

Town Plan Components

- **Historic Rural Settlement**
- Industry
- Market Place
- Port/harbour facilities
- Regular Historic Plots
- Religious Site
- Road

perhaps indicating the increasing size of the population of Allington. The 1525 Lay Subsidy assessed the tithing of Allington at £4 0s 4d to be paid by eighteen taxpayers (Stoate 1982). It is not known what the size or extent of the settlement may have been at this date. A leper hospital of St Mary Magdalen located off West Allington was established some time before 1232 (Calthrop 1908a).

Bradpole was part of the lands of the Priory of Loders, which held the chapel of St Andrew in Bradpole in the 12th century and also held the vicarage of Bradpole, which had been endowed "long before 1310" (Calthrop 1908c; Hutchins 1863, 157). St Andrew's Chapel was probably located in the area close to St Andrew's Well. Holy Trinity Church in Bradpole was probably founded in the 12th or 13th century and largely rebuilt in the 15th century (Hutchins 1863, 156). The 1525 Lay Subsidy assessed the tithing of Bradpole at £2 6s 10d to be paid by seventeen taxpayers (Stoate 1982). The medieval settlement was probably focused in the area south of the church around the medieval manor house, which was probably in the area of Court Close (Broadley 1905, preface).

Bothenhampton was part of the possessions of the Priory of Loders and had a chantry chapel, that became a chapel of ease to Loders in the 16th century (Hutchins 1774, 360; Pitfield 1981). Bothenhampton is not listed in the 1525 Lay Subsidy and was probably assessed as part of the tithing of Loders (Stoate 1982), suggesting it was still a relatively minor place.

5.3.3 Medieval Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the medieval town are shown on Figure 14 and are listed below.

1. *St Mary's Church.* St Mary's Church remained the principal church of Bridport in the medieval period. The present church contains early 13th century, late 14th, and early 15th century fabric.

2. *Burgage plots on South Street.* This block of properties along South Street was part of the Saxon and Norman town. The burgage plots appear to have been laid out by the mid-13th century. The form of the plots is clearest on the late 18th century Hutchins' map and many of the boundaries are still extant in the modern town. A small number of probable burgage boundaries have been found during archaeological investigations, but not enough to be able to assess the boundary change since the medieval period. A boundary formed by a row of 12th/13th century pits was discovered during excavations on the site of the Bridport Library, 23 South Street and there was some indication

that the plots here were about seven metres wide (Godden *et al.* 2000). Two probable burgage boundary ditches dating to the late 13th/14th century were found beneath the Tourist Information Centre, 51 South Street in 2000-1 along the lines of the existing property boundaries (Valentin 2000). The location of the surviving medieval buildings along South Street, in particular 'The Castle' and Daniel Taylor's almshouses, suggest that the medieval South Street frontage was on the same line as the present frontage. The remains of two robbed out medieval buildings close to the frontage of 43 South Street, also suggest this is the case (Godden *et al.* 2000).

4. *The Market.* The medieval market was located at the junction of East/West Street and South Street. St Andrew's Chapel was constructed in the mid 13th century on the southeastern part of this junction. The Toll Hall, first mentioned in the early 14th century, was on the northwest side of the junction, with a number of shops beneath (Short 1988). There are a number of surviving leases of stalls and shambles in East, West and South Streets and adjoining St Andrew's Chapel dating from the early 15th-17th centuries in the Borough Archives (DHC DC/BTB O17-O40). There are also deeds for various shops on the north side of St Andrew's Chapel and on the south side of East Street dating from the 14th century (DHC DC/BTB S38, S222). The usual order of shambles from north to south was fish, then meat, then shoes (Short 1976, 11).

5. *East and West Streets.* The 'new town' was laid out by the mid 13th century along West and East Streets. The regularity of the burgage plots, particularly to the north, suggest an element of deliberate planning. The properties on East and West Streets appear to have been fitted around the existing properties on South Street. A west gate is mentioned in the late 13th century and may be marked by the conspicuous narrowing of West Street to the east of the junction with St Michael's Lane. There is a reference to a 'tourel' on the south side of the west gate, standing near the river (Penn 1980, 29). The northern side of this 'new town' was protected by a defensive ditch (sometimes called the 'Wide Ditch') that ran along the south side of Rax Lane. There are references to it from the mid 13th century in a number of deeds and its existence has been confirmed archaeologically (Bellamy 2005; HMC 1877, 481). It remained a significant boundary feature until the end of the 18th century and its course is marked on an 18th century map (DHC DC/BTB B3/R2). Short (1975) cites a deed which appears to indicate a ditch along the south side of East and West Streets: this has yet to be confirmed on the ground. The eastern limit of this 'new town' may have been originally along the line of Stake Lane (Barrack Street) and King Street, as the

properties further east are a different length. This, and the overall shape of the area, suggests it is a later addition to the town. The properties on the north side of East Street were longer than those further west and their northern side was defined by a bank and ditch called the 'muridge', which is mentioned in documentary sources in 1593 (Wainwright n.d., 59).

6. *Hospital of St John The Baptist,* East Street. This lay adjacent to the East Bridge and was first mentioned in the mid 13th century (Calthrop 1908b). It was dissolved during the reign of Edward VI (1547-1553). An oriel window of probable 16th century date said to be from the prior's house of the hospital survives in a later house at 124-128 East Street (Figure 15).

7. *Hospital of St Mary Magdalen.* A lazar house or hospital for lepers dedicated to St Mary Magdalen was established in West Allington, some time before 1232. By the later medieval period Allington must have practically merged into Bridport and the leper hospital of St Mary Magdalen in Allington was usually entered in official documents under Bridport (Calthrop 1908a. It was dissolved in 1547. The Magdalen Almshouses are now on the site.

8. *West Mill.* West Mill is first mentioned in 1390 -1 (HMC 1877, 476).

9. *Killing's Mill.* Killings Mill is first mentioned in 1224-5 (HMC 1877, 480).

10. *South Mill.* South Mill is also likely to have its origins as a medieval mill, but documentary evidence confirming this is lacking.

11. *Holy Trinity, Bradpole.* The location of original church was immediately southeast of the present church. It seems to have had its origin in the 12th or 13th century, but was probably largely rebuilt in the 15th century. It was described as being mostly in the Perpendicular style, probably dating to the time of Henry VII (1485-1509) (Hutchins 1863, 156). A 15th century window and font from this building can be found in the present church.

12. *Bradpole.* The medieval core of the village lay close to the junction between Village Road and Higher Street on the main route between Bridport and Beaminster. The church lay on the northwest side of this junction and the medieval manor house is said to have been to the southeast in Court Close. The remains of the late medieval brew-house belonging to the manor house was apparently uncovered during the construction of The Knapp in the 1890s, together with some medieval metal work and a wooden axle (Broadley 1905, preface). The manor house belonged to the Gorges family and is said to have burnt to the ground in the mid 16th century. The size and extent of the medieval village is not clear, but may have included cottages, paddocks and orchards along Middle and Higher Street, in the area between the church and the floodplain of the River Asker. The 1525 Lay Subsidy assessed the tithing of Bradpole at £2 6s 10d to be paid by seventeen taxpayers (Stoate 1982).

13. *St Swithun's, Allington.* Earlier in the medieval period, Allington had a chapel dependent on Bridport, perhaps dedicated to St Mary Magdalen (Hutchins 1863, 206). At some time after 1442, it became an independent parish church rededicated to St Swithun (Pitfield 1981).

14. *Allington.* There is little information on Allington during this period. The creation of the parish church of St Swithun in the later fifteenth century may indicate a growing population. The 1525 Lay Subsidy assessed the tithing of Allington at £4 0s 4d to be paid by eighteen taxpayers (Stoate 1982). It is not known what the size or extent of the settlement may have been at this date. It may have been a dispersed settlement, but is assumed to have been focused on the church.

15. *Holy Trinity, Bothenhampton.* The Priory of Loders had a chantry chapel at Bothenhampton, which in the 16th century became a chapel of ease to Loders (Hutchins 1774, 360; Pitfield 1981). The Church of the Holy Trinity contains some 14th century work in the chancel, but the tower and east window are of 15th century date (Figure 16). A plain circular font is thought to be

Figure 15: Oriel window said to be part of prior's house, Hospital of St John the Baptist, rear of 124-8 East Street.

Figure 16: Holy Trinity, Bothenhampton.

13th century (Pitfield 1981).

16. *Bothenhampton.* Bothenhampton was part of the possessions of the Priory of Loders. It was not listed in the 1525 Lay Subsidy and was probably assessed as part of the tithing of Loders (Stoate 1982). This suggests it was a small insignificant, perhaps dispersed, settlement at this date.

17. *Bridport Harbour.* The first documentary reference to a harbour at Bridport dates to 1274 and at this time the burgesses of Bridport owned part of the west bank of the river mouth (Hannah 1986, 28; Symonds 1912, 164-5). Although there is evidence for a fair amount of activity in the 13th century, it does not appear to have been an important port in the 14th century and there was no real harbour (Hannah 1986). A series of attempts to raise money to create a proper harbour or to repair the existing facilities took place during the late 14th and 15th century. However, no effective improvements were made and for the next few hundred years the history of the harbour was one of continual battle with storm damage and the blocking of the river mouth with sand and gravel. Nevertheless there is evidence that small-scale shipping continued despite the problems (Hannah 1986, 29).