

## 5.5 Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century Wareham (1800-1913)

### 5.5.1 Historical Summary

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century Wareham had settled down to a role as market town for a wide region of heathland, pasture and wetlands within the eastern Frome and Piddle valleys. Census returns indicate that the population of Wareham and its immediately surrounding area grew significantly in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, almost doubling by 1851, when there were 2103 inhabitants in the town (Davis 1984, 51). The population remained fairly constant during the second half of the century with 2670 recorded from the town in 1891. This increase in population promoted an increase in housing within the town, gradually filling in the areas of paddocks and gardens behind the main streets. This period also saw the suburban expansion outside the area of the town walls along Worgret Road and also the beginnings of the development at Northport, focused around the railway station.

In terms of a wider sphere of trading, Wareham had been eclipsed by the rise of Poole in the late medieval and post-medieval periods. However, Wareham still benefited from its proximity to Poole and there was regular trade between the two ports. In 1830 there were four boats weekly between Wareham and Poole for both goods and passengers, although this had been reduced to two boats a week by 1852 and apparently ceased altogether by 1865. By this time conveyance to and from Wareham was entirely by road or rail (Pigot 1830; Slaters 1853; Harrods 1865). The railway arrived in Wareham in 1847. The railway station was built to the north of the town in Northport. The station was rebuilt in 1887.

Wareham was a successful small market town and grew economically during the 19<sup>th</sup> century through small scale retail and craft industries. The evidence from trade directories suggests that Wareham's retail businesses were thriving and multiplying during this period. In 1830, for example, Wareham had five grocers and five shoemakers, by 1842 there were 13 grocers and nine shoemakers and by 1852 there were 16 grocers and nine shoemakers (Pigot 1830; Kelly 1842; Slater 1853). Wareham contained a healthy number of the usual tradesman including in 1830; nine bakers, seven blacksmiths, four brewers and maltsters, five builders and carpenters, four butchers, two butter factors, two coal merchants, two coopers, 16 inns and taverns, three linen drapers, two curriers/fellmongers, three saddlers, five tailors,

three watch and clock makers and many others including a single tanner, a miller and a china dealer (Pigot 1830). Many of these businesses were dependent on local produce for the raw materials of their trade. The surrounding region was particularly geared up for rearing cattle, a fact reflected in Wareham's weekly market and annual fairs. The weekly Saturday market continued during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A weekly Tuesday corn market was added by 1865 and regular specialist cattle markets had also begun by 1865 in a purpose built arena on East Street. Wareham continued with its two annual fairs in April and September, also for cattle, which were well attended throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Wareham did not have a significant industrial base. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was known for its manufacture of woollen stockings. A sailcloth manufactory was established in a disused malthouse on the south side of Trinity Lane at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was not a success and closed in 1816 (Davis 1984). Panton's Brewery in Pound Lane had expanded into a large scale brewery in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 32). Industry in the Wareham area was dominated by the ball clay extraction industry in the vicinity of Wareham, to the south of the town. By 1830, 10,000 tons of clay was shipped annually from the region and this volume of trade continued throughout the century. Most of the clay was conveyed directly to Poole Harbour by a purpose-built narrow gauge railway and did not pass through Wareham quay, which by then had become silted up and was impassable to large vessels, though a small amount of clay was shipped out of Wareham on lighters. However, L W Pike, the owner of the works was a Wareham man and the industry certainly benefited the town. The Sandford Pottery manufacturing drain pipes and bricks was established at Sandford to the north of the town in 1850 and provided some employment for Wareham.

In 1839, the Wareham Gas Company was formed and a gas works established at North Bridge. The first gas lighting in the town was switched on in 1840 and by the early 1850s gas lighting had become widespread throughout the town. Attempts to provide a fresh water supply for the town began in 1898 with the sinking of test shafts at Worgret using equipment provided by L W Pike. Pumping operations started in 1899, but it was not until 1906 that the public piped water network was finished and in use.

Electoral, Wareham had become something of a rotten borough by the time of the Reform Act in 1832. The borough had returned two members of Parliament since the reign of Edward I, this was reduced to one and the electoral constituency extended. After 1880 Wareham lost its remaining member of parliament when the constituency was merged with that of East Dorset.

The Wareham and Purbeck Poor Law Union was formed in September 1836 and the new Union Workhouse was built in 1836-7 close to the common to the northwest of the town (Figure 31). The institution had to overcome a number of problems at the outset. The building was not opened until 1838 following the bankruptcy of the builder. A flour mill had been purchased to provide employment for the inmates, but this proved to be unreliable and the inmates were set to work crushing bones (Higginbotham 2008).

By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Lady St Mary's church, now the Parish Church of Wareham, was considered too small and dilapidated. Therefore, in 1841-2, the existing church was largely demolished and the present church erected in its place. The cemetery of the church had become overcrowded by the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a new cemetery was formed to the east of the church in 1880.

The first Roman Catholic church in Wareham, St Michael's, was built in 1889 at Westport, in the grounds of Westport House. It was dismantled and moved to Dorchester in 1907.

There continued to be changes to the nonconformist congregations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1828, doctrinal differences lead to a new split in the congregation of the Old Meeting in 1828 and the Unitarians founded a new Unitarian Chapel in South Street. Conversely, the differences between the Old Meeting and the Congregationalists in West Street were resolved and the two groups were re-united in 1849. A Wesleyan Methodist chapel was established on Dollins Lane by 1830. A new chapel was built



Figure 31: Wareham Union Workhouse.

adjacent to it but fronting on to North Street in 1896 and the old chapel was converted to a Sunday school.

Wareham had an Endowed Free School on East Street by 1830 with three schoolteachers. This school continued into the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there was both a church school associated with the National School Society and a British School. The church school was installed in the vacant Holy Trinity Church by 1825. In 1886, the church school was transferred to a new purpose-built building in Bonnett's Lane. The British School was started in the schoolroom of the Old Meeting-house in 1828 and moving to the vacant Congregational Chapel on West Street by 1852.

The cavalry barracks at Westport were closed at the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the buildings demolished. Westport House was subsequently built on the site.

### 5.5.2 Town Layout

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the town started to spread beyond the area of the old Saxon town walls. The Wareham and Purbeck Union Workhouse was built outside the northwest corner of the town in 1836-7. Westport House was built outside the western entrance the town during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a small suburb of large houses and villas soon developed around it and along Worgret Road. There was also expansion to the north of the town around the railway station at Northport (which lies beyond the study area). There was little expansion to the east of the town. North and South Bestwall Farms were built (or rebuilt) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, just outside the town.

Within the town walls the road layout remained essentially unaltered, although the northern and eastern parts of the town were gradually being infilled in a piecemeal fashion with isolated cottages, suburban villas and short terraces. Large areas within the walls were given over to allotment gardens.



Figure 32: Brewery House, Pound Lane .

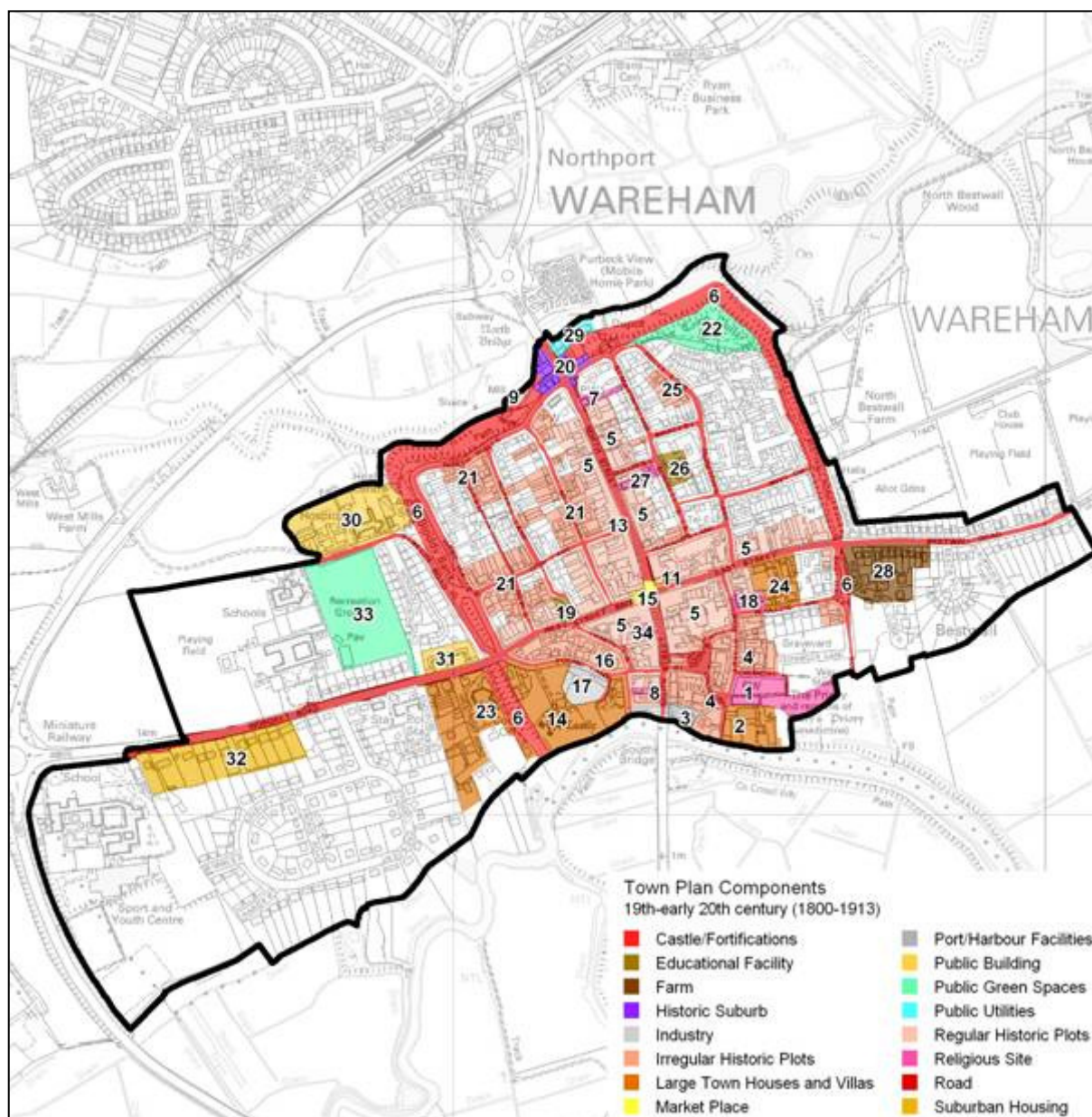


Figure 33: Wareham nineteenth and early twentieth century plan components

### 5.5.3 Town Plan Components

The main plan components of nineteenth and early twentieth century town are shown on Figure 33 and are listed below.

1. *The Church of Lady St Mary.* The early 8<sup>th</sup> century church survived in large part until 1841 when the nave and aisles were demolished and rebuilt in 1841-2 (Figure 15). It was at this time that the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century British inscribed stones were found built into the walls and piers of the 8<sup>th</sup> century nave. The cemetery to the east of the church was established in 1880.

2. *The Priory.* The early 16<sup>th</sup> century Priory House has been added to and extended considerable over the years (Figure 17). During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century a kitchen and service wing

was built on the west side of the original 16<sup>th</sup> century hall (RCHME 1970, 318).

3. *The Quay.* The quay had become neglected and had almost become a swamp. In the 1840s, it underwent some repairs. The quay was largely used for barges carrying coal, corn and clay by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

4. *St John's Hill.* There are no known significant developments to St John's Hill during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A police station was built in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century on the former site of St John's Chapel (Figure 34).

5. *Burgages.* The 19<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed the disappearance of many burgage plots as they were partly enclosed or amalgamated. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the main street frontages

had been almost completely built up. On the east side of North Street, a large town house 'St Martin's', designed by Crickmay, was built in 1861 for Freeland Filliter. Many burgage plots remained intact, particularly on the north side of East Street and the west side of South Street. The east end of East Street gradually filled up with the construction of a number of houses and villas during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

6. *Town Defences*. There were no known significant developments to the town walls during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Livestock markets and fairs were held at West Walls during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cottees 2009).

7. *St Martin's Church*. The church remained disused and derelict during this period.

8. *Holy Trinity Church*. Holy Trinity remained disused until it was used as a church school from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1886, when the school moved to a new purpose-built school in Bonnett's Lane. It subsequently was used as a mission chapel and public hall.

9. *North Mill*. A large brick wing added on the southeast side of the mill house during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (RCHME 1970).

11. *Town Hall*. The Town hall was rebuilt in 1869-70.

13. *All Hallows' Chapel*. All Hallows was used as a warehouse during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was demolished in the late 1880s. Traces of the crypt remain in the cellar of the present house, 19 North Street.

14. *The Castle*. The site of the castle was enclosed by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. A large villa 'Castle Close' was built on top of the motte in 1911. Part of the foundations of the stone keep was encountered during the building of this house.

15. *The Market*. Wareham's weekly Saturday market remained throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the addition of an extra Tuesday market for

corn by 1865.

16. *Pound Lane*. During the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of houses and cottages were built around the base of the motte of Wareham Castle.

17. *Pound Lane Brewery* (Figure 32). In 1842 a Samuel Townsend was listed in the trade directories as brewing in Pound Lane. In 1852 James Panton was listed as the brewer here, though his family had been brewing in Wareham since 1830. His company expanded with breweries at Swanage and Ringwood and with pubs as far afield as Southampton by the 1890s. The company was sold in 1893 to Charles and David Faber.

18. *Wareham Old-Meeting House*. The chapel was altered in about 1830 and subsequently enlarged with two wings and a porch added in 1860 and 1895 (Stell 1991). A British School was started here in 1828, but moved to the West Street chapel in the 1850s.

19. *Wareham Congregational Chapel*. The chapel in West Street became vacant after 1849 when the congregation reunited with the Church Street congregation. The British School moved here in the 1850s. The building was converted into two classrooms in 1858 (Davis 1984).

20. *North Bridge*. Coventry House and Elm Villas were built on the west side of the road next to North Bridge in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

21. *Northwest Quarter*. This area continued to expand during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the addition of further short terraces and cottages along existing lanes. A large block of land against the western town walls became allotment gardens during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

22. *Bowling Green*. Excavations suggest that the bowling green went out of use before the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Parrington 1974). The area was part of the town commons.

23. *Westport House*. Westport House was built



Figure 34: The Old Police Station, South Street; built on the site of St John's Chapel.



Figure 35: The Old Smithy, 1 Howard's Lane.

on the site of the cavalry barracks outside the west gates of the town during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was set within extensive formal gardens. A number of suburban villas and cottages were also built in the vicinity during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century on the newly constructed Westport Road. St Michael's RC Church was built in the north-east corner of the grounds of Westport House in 1889.

24. *Chichester House, East Street.* Two larger houses with fairly extensive grounds were built on the south side of East Street in the early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of these houses, Chichester House, was the home of the Whittle family who were farmers. Later the house was let as apartments by Mrs Whittle.

25. *Northeast Quarter.* There was piecemeal expansion into the northeast quarter of the town during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This comprised cottages and small terraces, along with small scale industrial development. This latter included a smithy on Howard's Lane (Figure 35) and a possible kiln of unknown function at the north end of St Martin's Lane. A Drill Hall was constructed in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the rest of the north-eastern part of the town was given over to allotment gardens in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

26. *Rodgett's School.* A new purpose-built church school was constructed on Bonnett's Lane in 1885-6, replacing the schoolrooms in Holy Trinity Church. The cost of the new school was met by Mrs Rodgett of Sandford House.

27. *Wareham Methodist Chapel.* By 1864, the Wesleyan Methodists were meeting in Dollins Lane. In 1896 a new chapel and minister's house was built by Burt and Vick on North Street (Ladle 1994). The earlier building was used as a Sunday school house.

28. *South Bestwall Farm.* South Bestwall is known from historical documentary sources from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The current farm house

was built during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Regency style. The farmyard appears to have been 19<sup>th</sup> century also.

29. *Gas Works.* The gas works were established at North Bridge in 1839. By 1851, George Battrick had been appointed manager of the North Bridge Gas Works and the works were extended in 1852. By 1855, an additional parcel of land was acquired and new workshops and storehouses were built (Davis 1984).

30 *Workhouse.* The Wareham and Purbeck Poor Law Union was formed in September 1836 and the Union Workhouse was opened just outside the town walls in 1838. The workhouse was designed on the cruciform plan and cost £4560 (Higginbotham 2008).

31. *Streche's Almshouse.* New almshouses were built just outside the town walls at Westport in 1908, to replace the earlier ones in East Street (Figure 36).

32. *Worgret Road.* A series of Edwardian villas were built along the south side of Worgret Road.

33 *Recreation Ground.* A recreation ground was formed in a field just south of the workhouse, probably in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

34. *Unitarian Chapel.* A Unitarian chapel was built in South Street in 1830, following a split from the Old Meeting in Church Street in 1828 (Stell 1991).



Figure 36: Streche's Almshouse, Worgret Road.

## 5.6 Inter-war Wareham (1914- 1945)

### 5.6.1 Historical Summary

This period was one of change for Wareham. The First World War saw a large military presence in the town and its surroundings, stimulating the local economy and providing an influx of people from outside the area. The inter-war years saw much improved sanitary conditions in the town with the construction of a sewerage system in 1925 and the replacement of many sub-standard houses. A large number of new houses were built both within and outside the walls and in new suburban developments at Northport. The population of the municipal borough had declined to 1,930 in 1921, but then increased through the rest of the period with 2,370 inhabitants recorded in 1931.

In November 1914 a substantial army camp was developed alongside the Worgret Road, first with tents then wooden huts. The war brought unexpected prosperity to the town, not only from the numbers of servicemen based there, but also from the development of the armaments factory at Holton Heath which provided employment to many of the women of the town. This lasted until the early 1920s when all the troops were moved to Bovington, and the Holton Heath factory was substantially reduced in scale.

Following the First World War, there was a shortage of suitable housing for the working classes. A new council estate was built at Bell's Orchard in the northeast part of the town in 1920 and extended in the late 1920s and 1930s. In addition, a number of other detached and semi-detached houses were built within the town, particularly in the northwest quadrant. A suburban estate was built immediately east of the town on Bestwall Road (Figure 37). A number of cottages in the town, which were deemed to be below an adequate standard,



Figure 37: Bestwall Road Inter-war suburban housing.

were demolished during this period.

Wareham seems to have been relatively fortunate in terms of avoiding the worst depredations of unemployment and poverty during the depression of the 1920s and 30s. This may be partly explained by the potential for commercial exploitation in a range of natural resources within the town's hinterland, in particular, the continuing success of Pike's ball clay works, The Sandford Pottery Company to the north of the town exported its products as far as London, and the salmon fishery on the River Frome was revived. Furthermore, Wareham's agrarian economy, markets and fairs were largely dependent on cattle and this aspect of the rural economy was less susceptible to unemployment due to mechanisation.

Wareham's weekly market had changed to a Thursday by 1923. The two annual fairs also continued on the third Thursday in April and the second Thursday in September, both for cattle and both well attended. The frequency of the specialist cattle market had declined slightly in 1923, only held twice yearly on the first Thursday in February and the first Thursday in March (Kelly 1923). This may have been partly due to the lack of a permanent site, with cattle markets moving several times during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, sites included West Walls and St John's Hill. Poultry auctions were held in the Corn Exchange. Eventually in 1926 a new permanent site was established on a site between East Street and Wyatt's Lane (Cottees 2009) (Figure 38).

The 1920s-30s saw increasing numbers of tourists visiting the area and a number of new cafés, restaurants and guest houses were opened in the town. The rise in road traffic through the town led to the replacement in 1927 of the 18<sup>th</sup> century South Bridge with a new wider bridge, more suitable for larger vol-



Figure 38: Cottees Auctioneers and former cattle market.

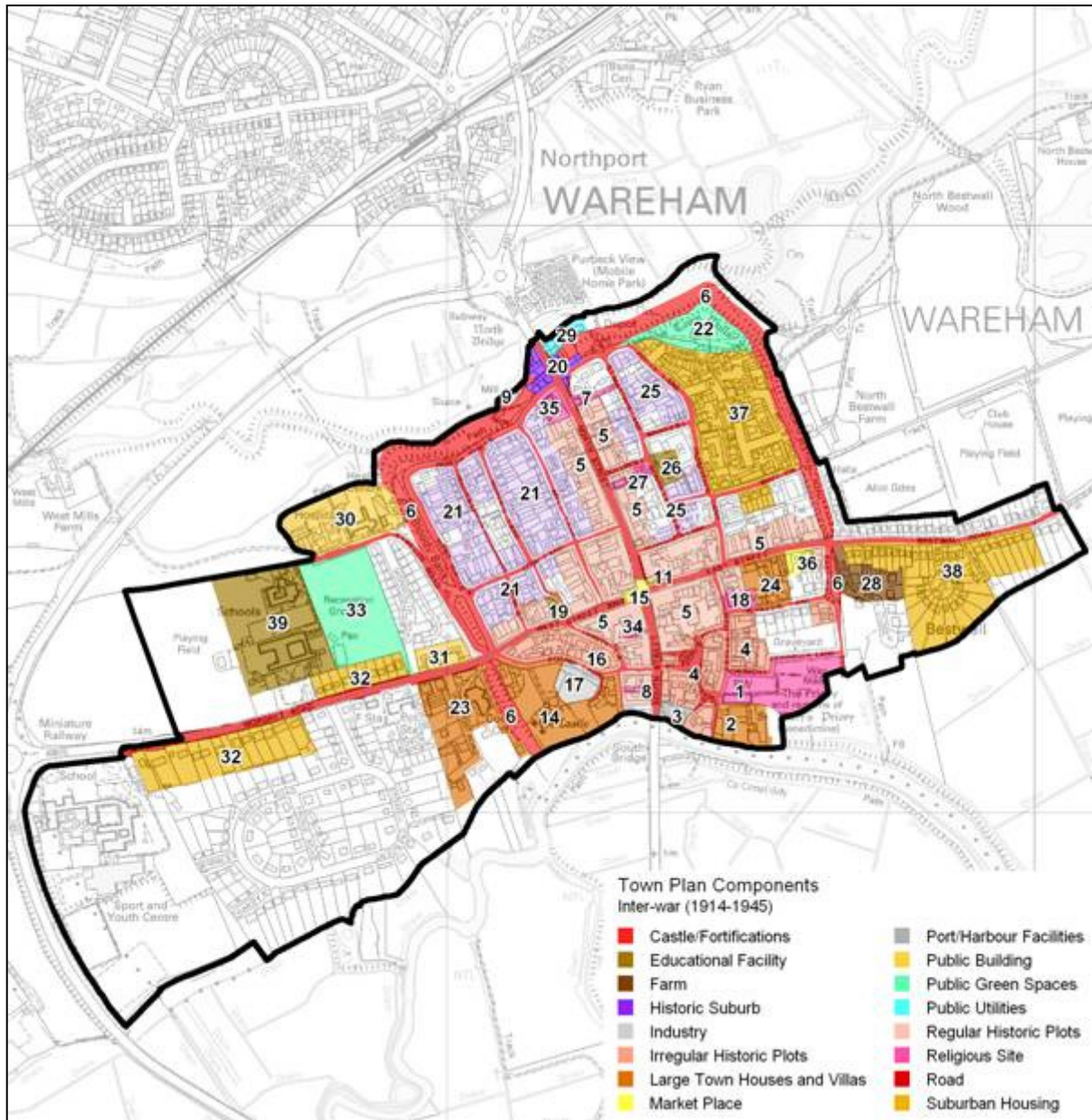


Figure 39: Wareham inter-war plan components

umes of motorised vehicles.

In 1933 a Roman Catholic Church of St Edward the Martyr was built on Shatters Hill.

A new senior school was built to the north of Worgret Road in 1939 on part of the site of the earlier army camp.

The Second World War did not result in large numbers of troops being billeted in the town as in WW1, but a number of houses were requisitioned. A single bomb fell on Wareham in 1942, damaging a number of houses at the north end of North Street, as well as the Drill Hall and St Martin's Church.

### 5.6.2 Inter-war Town Layout

The basic layout of the town remained similar to the previous period, but with some housing infill within the northern part of the town and some suburban housing development to the east and west of the town. Much of this development was along existing roads and streets, though there were some new culs-de-sac and crescents constructed as part of the housing estate in the northeast part of the town. Behind the frontages of Bell's Orchard and Bestwall Road, there was housing development set around a central green, in typical suburban style. Despite the gradual infill of formerly open areas of the town within the walls, there still remained some areas of allotment gardens and a plant nursery.

At the south end of South Street, a new, wider, South Bridge was constructed, necessitating the widening of South Street through the demolition of several cottages and the truncation of Bridge House.

### 5.6.3 Inter-war Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the inter-war town are shown on Figure 39 and are listed below.

1. *The Church of Lady St Mary.* There were no significant developments to Lady St Mary church during this period. The cemetery to the east of the church was enlarged in 1914.
2. *The Priory.* Priory House was a private home during this period.
3. *The Quay.* There was little major change to the Quay, which was no longer in use for commercial shipping. The former Gillingham's warehouse was converted into the Old Granary Tea House by the mid 1930s to cater for the increasing tourist trade.
4. *St John's Hill.* St John's Hill was briefly the site of Wareham livestock market during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when a brick square with rails for tying livestock was erected outside Fearn's (Cottees 2009). The police station building was extended and redeveloped in the 1970s as small shops and business units.
5. *Burgages.* There were no significant changes during this period.
6. *Town Defences.* Cattle markets were held at West Walls. The ramparts were scaped during WWII as an anti-tank defence.
7. *St Martin's Church.* The church was restored in 1935-6 and re-dedicated. The effigy of T E Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) by Eric Kennington was added in 1939 (Pitfield 1985).



Figure 40: WW2 Pillbox, St Martin's Church.

8. *Holy Trinity Church.* There was little change to the church during this period.

9. *North Mill.* There was no significant change during this period. It was still milling in the 1920s.

11. *Town Hall.* There was no significant change during this period.

14. *The Castle.* There was little change during this period.

15. *The Market.* The market place on North Street/South Street is likely to have remained the site of the weekly produce market during this period.

16. *Pound Lane.* There was no significant change during this period.

17. *Pound Lane Brewery.* The brewery appears to have ceased brewing some time in the late 1920s or 1930s. Several buildings appear to have been demolished by 1937, according to the Ordnance Survey map evidence.

18. *Wareham Congregational Chapel.* There was little significant change during this period.

19. *Former Congregational Chapel.* The former chapel was still being used as a school in the 1920s and 1930s.

20. *North Bridge.* There was little change to this area during this period. A pill box was constructed in the retaining wall of St Martin's Church yard, adjacent to the Lord Nelson public house, in the early part of the Second World War (Figure 40).

21. *Northwest Quarter.* There was a continuing process of infill of this area with a number of semi-detached houses built along existing lanes. The Wareham electricity supply works were constructed adjacent to West Walls in the 1920s.

22. *Bowling Green.* There was no significant change to the area of the Bowling Green.



Figure 41: The Roman Catholic Church of St Edward the Martyr



23. *Westport House*. There was little change during this period. St Michael's RC Church was demolished following the opening of the new Catholic church on Shatters Hill in 1933.

24. *Chichester House, East Street*. Chichester House was sold in 1926 and part of the gardens separated off for the new Cattle Market. The house was resold as a residence.

25. *Northeast Quarter*. There was some infill of the area with primarily detached, and semi-detached houses built along existing lanes, with a small number of short terraces.

26. *Rodgett's School*. There was little change to the school during this period.

27. *Wareham Methodist Chapel*. There was little change during this period.

28. *South Bestwall Farm*. Outbuildings associated with South Bestwall Farm were demolished during the inter-war period to make way for a suburban housing estate.

29. *Gas Works*. There was little significant change during this period. The gas works were acquired by Bournemouth Gas and Water Company in 1937.

30. *Workhouse*. The workhouse became a Public Assistance Institution by 1929 (Higginbotham 2008).

31. *Streche's Almshouse*. There was no significant change to the almshouses during this period.

32. *Worgret Road*. There were a number of detached suburban houses built along both the north and south sides of Worgret Road. Those on the south side were fitted between the existing Edwardian villas.

33. *Recreation Ground*. There was little significant change during this period.

34. *Unitarian Chapel*. There was little significant change during this period.

35. *St Edward's Catholic Church*. The Roman Catholic Church of St Edward the Martyr was built on Shatters Hill in 1933 (Figure 41).

36. *Cottees Market*. Samuel Cottee bought Chichester House in 1926 and used part of the grounds for a new cattle market. Many of the large buildings on the site date from this time (Figure 38). Regular cattle markets were held here until after the Second World War (Cottees 2009).

37. *Bell's Orchard Housing Estate*. The Bell's Orchard council housing estate was begun in 1920 and initially comprised eleven houses. By the mid 1930s, the estate had grown to cover

most of the northeast corner of the town.

38. *Bestwall Housing Estate*. A suburban housing estate was built along the south side of Bestwall Road in the late 1930s, comprising detached bungalows and houses along the frontage, with some development of the area behind, with houses arranged around a central green.

39. *Wareham Modern School*. Wareham Secondary Modern school opened in 1939 on the north side of Worgret Road in part of the area of the former army camp.