

5.7 Later 20th Century Wareham (1946-Present Day)

5.7.1 Historical Summary

In common with many towns in Dorset, the period following the Second World War was a period of change and suburban expansion for Wareham. The population rose rapidly, more than doubling from 2,750 in 1951 to 5,680 in 2001. Although there was some influx of light industry to the town, Wareham increasingly became a dormitory town for Poole and Dorchester.

The suburban and industrial expansion has taken place away from the town centre, at Northport and Sandford, leaving the historic town within the walls relatively unchanged by large-scale modern development. The construction of a by-pass built in two stages in the early 1980s and the 1990s has relieved much of the pressure of through traffic on the town centre.

Wareham continued to function as a small market town after World War 2, but on a gradually reducing scale. Livestock auctions continued regularly until 1954, when the regulations changed and most animals were taken to bigger markets elsewhere, though cattle markets were still held about five times a year. Livestock markets had dwindled by 1975 and the last annual April Fair was held in 1979 (Cottees 2009). Wareham's weekly Thursday market continues to this day, and a Saturday market on the Quay.

In the second half of the twentieth century tourism has become more important to Wareham, with increasing numbers of visitors attracted by its historic small town character and its position as a 'gateway' to Purbeck. Wareham has managed to retain much of its historic character due to the constraints of its topographic location on the expansion of the town centre. The

location of the rivers and their floodplains to the north and south of the town has enabled a green buffer to be maintained around the historic town centre, thus retaining its small town atmosphere.

5.7.2 Town Layout

The second half of the twentieth century saw some significant changes to Wareham and its environs, but there was relatively little change to the layout of the historic core of the town. The construction of the Wareham bypass in the late 1970s/early 1980s and 1990s around the outside of the western and northern part of the town was a major addition to the road layout, but has not altered the layout of the centre of the town, other than reduce the flow of through traffic. However, it has severed the links between the historic town and the station and the suburban settlement at Northport.

Within the walls, the historic street layout remained largely unchanged, but with increasing infilling of the areas behind the main streets with residential housing. The inter-war housing estate in the northeast corner was replaced by a new housing estate, laid out with new streets and roads in a suburban estate form unlike the rest of the historic core of the town. There was also expansion of suburban housing along Bestwall Road and Worgret Road to the east and west of the town centre. However, the main area of suburban expansion in the twentieth century lay to the north of the town at Northport and Sandford, beyond the Study Area.

A number of modern developments within the historic core, such as the Rempstone Centre and Anglebury Court (Figure 45), although fitted within the existing street pattern, are of a much larger scale than the historic urban grain.



Figure 42: View across the Piddle floodplain towards Wareham by-pass and Northport.



Figure 43: Westport House

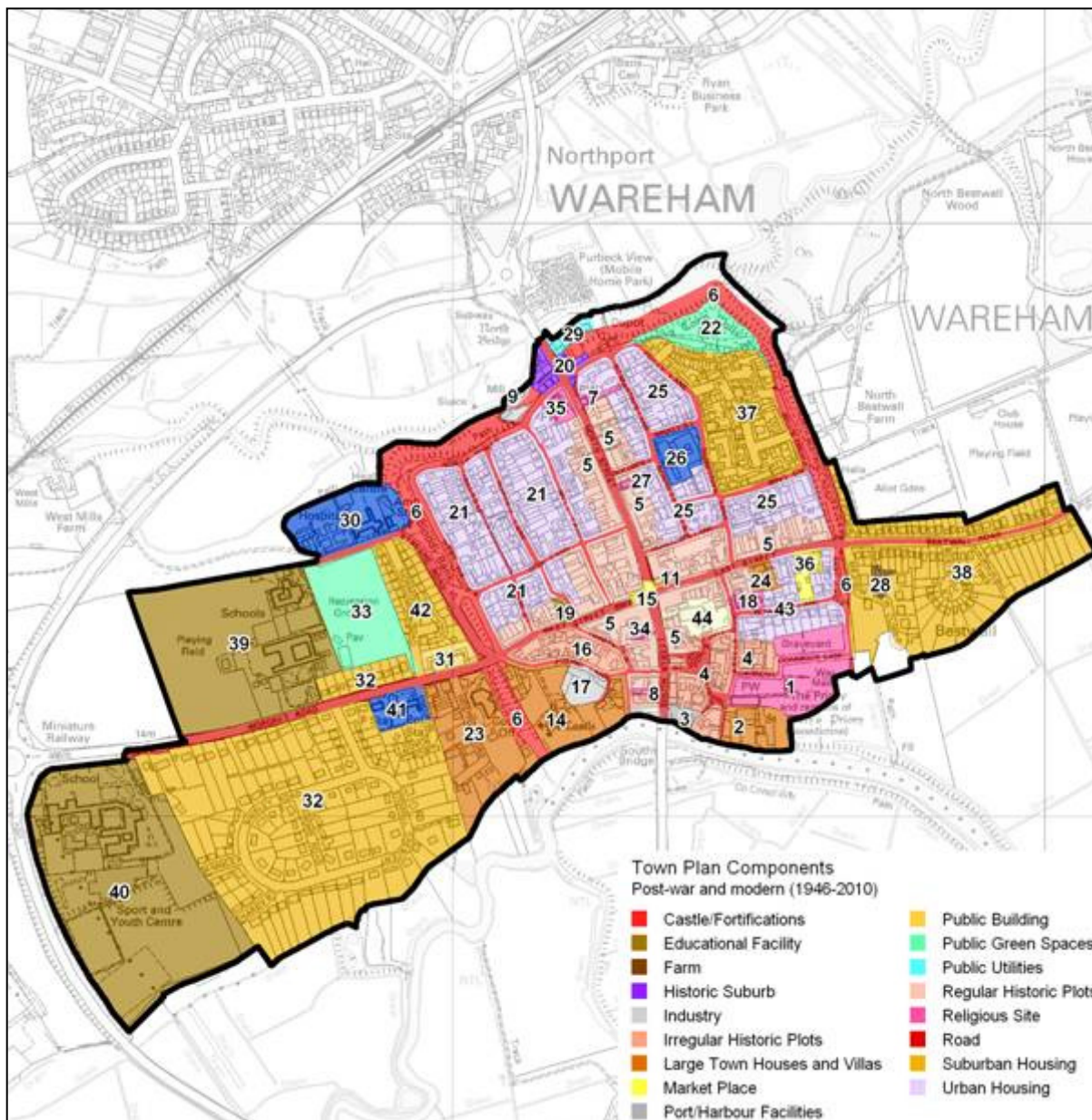


Figure 44: Wareham modern plan components

5.7.3 Later Twentieth century Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the later twentieth century town are shown on Figure 44 and are listed below.

1. *The Church of Lady St Mary.* There were no known significant developments to Lady St Mary church during the 20th century. The cemetery to the east of Lady St Mary Church was further extended post-war. Subsequently a new municipal cemetery has been opened at Hill View, west of the bypass on the Worgret Road.

2. *The Priory.* Priory House was sold in 1976 and converted into a hotel.

3. *The Quay.* The Quay has become a very popular public open space beside the River Frome, combined with a small car park.

4. *St John's Hill.* There have been a number of developments in and around St John's Hill. The square is now a car park. The Police Station was converted into a small retail development in the 1970s. To the north of the square, a number of historic buildings were demolished as part of the Rempstone Centre development. There has been some infilling of back plots. A new library was opened in 2003.

5. *Burgages.* The second half of the 20th century has seen the infilling of the rear of a large number of former burgage plots with modern housing. These houses are frequently arranged

within a short cul-de-sac which fits entirely within one or more former burgage plots. As such, a large number of former burgage boundaries survive, although often in a truncated form. The best preserved examples lie on the west side of South Street.

6. *The Town Defences.* The ramparts were scarped during WWII as an anti tank defence. In 1956 the Town Walls were leased to Wareham Town Council, with certain obligations to preserve the earthworks. A car park was created at West Walls.

7. *St Martin's Church.* There were no significant changes during this period.

8. *Holy Trinity Church.* The church was disused for part of this period. Then in 1973 it was repaired and adapted for use as an art gallery. The building now also houses the Purbeck Information and Heritage Centre.

9. *North Mill.* The mill was converted into a private dwelling during this period.

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

15. *The Market.* The market place was no longer used for markets during this period. The produce market moved to Cottees after the Second World War.

16. *Pound Lane.* A number of modern detached and semi-detached houses have been built in this area in the second half of the 20th century. These include numbers 3-11 and 17 Pound Lane and Number 3 Tanners Lane and a block of flats on the east side of Tanners Lane in the 1960s.

17. *Pound Lane Brewery.* The surviving former Panton's Brewery buildings have been converted to residential use.

18. *Wareham United Reformed Church.* The Congregational Church became the United Reformed Church in 1972 following the Union of

Congregationalists and Presbyterians in England.

19. *Former Congregational Chapel.* The chapel was demolished and replaced by flats before 1988, though the frontage was retained and incorporated into the new development.

20. *North Bridge.* There has been little discernible change to this area.

21. *Northwest Quarter.* There continued to be infilling of this area with further semi-detached houses and short terraces along the existing lanes. The exception is the development at Cooper's Close, which comprises a cul-de-sac fitted into former back plots behind North Street.

22. *Bowling Green.* An archaeological excavation conducted during the 1970s on the Bowling Green confirmed its 18th century date and function (Parrington 1974).

23. *Westport Road Villas.* Westport house was demolished and replaced by the current Purbeck District Council offices, some time after 1974. Some large detached houses were built along Westport Road in the post-war period.

24. *East End Villa.* The house known as East End Villa survives, together with its large garden, but the adjacent Chichester House was demolished in 1973.

25. *Northeast Quarter.* There has been increasing infilling of this area with housing, interspersed with some light industrial units and utilities, though these are gradually being replaced by more residential development.

26. *Anglebury Court/Purbeck Lodge.* Rodgett's School was demolished in the later 20th century and replaced by Anglebury Court, a residential care home and day-care centre and Purbeck Lodge, a mental health facility. (Figure 45).

27. *Wareham Methodist Chapel.* The late 19th century chapel was demolished in 1972 and replaced by the present Methodist church.



Figure 45: Anglebury Court.



Figure 46: Wareham Health Centre and Ambulance Station.

28. *South Bestwall Farm*. South Bestwall Farm-house survives as a residence within a suburban housing estate.

29. *Gas Works*. The gas works were closed some time after 1948. The last surviving gas holder was removed by 1972.

30. *Wareham Community Hospital*. In 1948 the former workhouse became a joint user establishment with both hospital and temporary hostel facilities. The hospital was modernised in 1964 and in the 1990s a new hospital was built to the east with an ambulance station attached (Figure 46). The old workhouse was converted to residential use (Higginbotham 2008).

31. *Streche's Almshouse*. The almshouse still provides accommodation for 11 of the town's elderly and infirm.

32. *Worgret Road*. Stowell Crescent, a new housing estate on the south side of Worgret Road, was begun in the late 1940s and had been completed by the early 1960s. A small housing estate at Encombe Road was built during the 1960s.

33. *Recreation Ground*. A new pavilion was built post-war.

34. *Unitarian Chapel*. The chapel was closed around 1975 and is now the Wareham Conservative Club.

35. *St Edward's Catholic Church*. There was little change during this period.

36. *Cottees Market*. Regular cattle markets were held until 1954 when new regulations meant that a large amount of trade moved to the larger markets. However, occasional livestock sales continued as well as Wareham's weekly produce market. Livestock sales ceased in 1974 and Wareham's last annual fair also took place in 1979. The site is now home to Cottees Auctioneers (Cottees 2009).

37. *Bell's Orchard Housing Estate*. The inter-

war council house estate was demolished and replaced by a new 'suburban-style' housing estate in the 1990s on a new road layout (Figure 47).

38. *Bestwall Housing Estate*. Suburban development along Bestwall Road was interrupted by the Second World War. Further houses were built both on the north and south sides of the road in the 1950s and 1960s. Meadow View Close was developed on the site of South Bestwall Farm yard in the 1980s.

39. *Wareham Middle School*. The former secondary modern school became a middle school as part of the comprehensive reorganisation in 1974.

40. *Purbeck School*. The Purbeck School is a mixed community Comprehensive School for the Purbeck area with approximately 1200 students. It was opened in 1974.

41. *Law Courts and Emergency Services Buildings*. A new Magistrates Court, Fire Station and Police Station opened on Worgret Road during the 1960s.

42. *Monmouth Road*. A small suburban estate was built in the 1960s off the north side of Worgret Road.

43. *Southeast Quarter*. A series of bungalows and houses were built along Wyatt's Lane during the 1960s and 1970s. Church Street Flats were built on the corner of Wyatt's Lane and Church Street in the 1960s.

44. *Rempstone Centre*. The Rempstone Centre was developed during the 1970s within the former gardens of the manor house on South Street. It includes a supermarket and a number of small retail outlets.



Figure 47: Bells Orchard housing estate.