Part 5: Historical Analysis

5.1 Medieval Cranborne (AD1066-1539)

5.1.1 Historical Summary

Cranborne appears to have developed at a crossing of the River Crane by an early important route between Salisbury (Old Sarum) and Poole Harbour (Good 1966, 22, 38). The earliest mention of Cranborne lies in the foundation of a Benedictine Monastery by Aylward Snew *c.* 980. That Cranborne was of some importance is suggested by the fact that Tewkesbury Priory was made dependant on Cranborne Abbey. Cranborne became a royal estate following the Norman Conquest and was held by Queen Matilda in 1086. The Domesday manor contained 8 villagers, suggesting a small settlement, although it probably functioned as the central place for a large part of east Dorset as suggested by the size of Cranborne hundred at that time. The locations of the four Domesday mills are unknown, and may not have been within the modern urban area (Thorn and Thorn 1983).

William II granted Cranborne to Robert Fitz Hamon who proceeded to remove the abbot from Cranborne Abbey to Tewkesbury in 1102 and from this point Cranborne became a dependant priory of Tewkesbury. The current parish church contains some 12th century structural elements, although it was largely rebuilt in the 14th century (Figure 6). The parish church was also likely to have been the priory church and on the site of the earlier abbey church. King John acquired Cranborne through marriage and built a hunting lodge, now the core of Cranborne Manor House (Figure 7). John became a frequent visitor to Cranborne, suggesting that the early 13th century would have been a period of economic prosperity in the town.

In the later 13th century Richard de Clare was granted a fair to be held at Cranborne. Cranborne was described as a manor and borough in 1314 when 45 burgesses were mentioned in an inquisition. It was again called a borough in 1316 and had a reeve of the market in 1330 (Penn 1980 49).

Fifty-two taxpayers were recorded in the 1327 lay subsidy and 50 in 1332. The recorded names of the taxpayers provide clues to the medieval layout and economy of Cranborne, although it was counted with Holwell and Alderholt in the subsidy rolls. The dispersed nature of settlement in the area is attested by the number of taxpayers listed whose names are indicative of places outside the town. These include *atte Crouch* (modern Creech Hill with three taxpayers), *le Bour* (possibly modern Boveridge with two taxpayers) and *atte Pyle, atte Forde, atte Barre.* Many of the names also reflect the royal patronage and forestry/hunting nature of the area's economy. These include woodsmen (*Waldrich*), horn workers or horn blowers (four taxpayers named *Horn*), a falconer (*hobescot*), soldiers and knights (*Hermann, le Knyghtz, Nygel*) and people of royal association (*Roigne)*. Other rural trades are also represented, with a baker, a skinner, a taverner, a cooper and a shepherd (Rumble 1980 91-3; Mills 1971, 75).

By 1482 the manor had passed into the hands of King Edward who established a weekly Thursday market and a fair on the feast and vigil of St Nicholas (December 6th) in the town. However, these were recorded as having been held from time immemorial before then (Hawkins 1983, 11). The town had a borough bailiff in 1489 but may have been in decline by that time (Penn 1980, 49).

The 16th century lay subsidy rolls suggest that the town may have entered a rapid decline following the dissolution of the priory in 1540,

Figure 6: View of Cranborne Parish Church from the north .

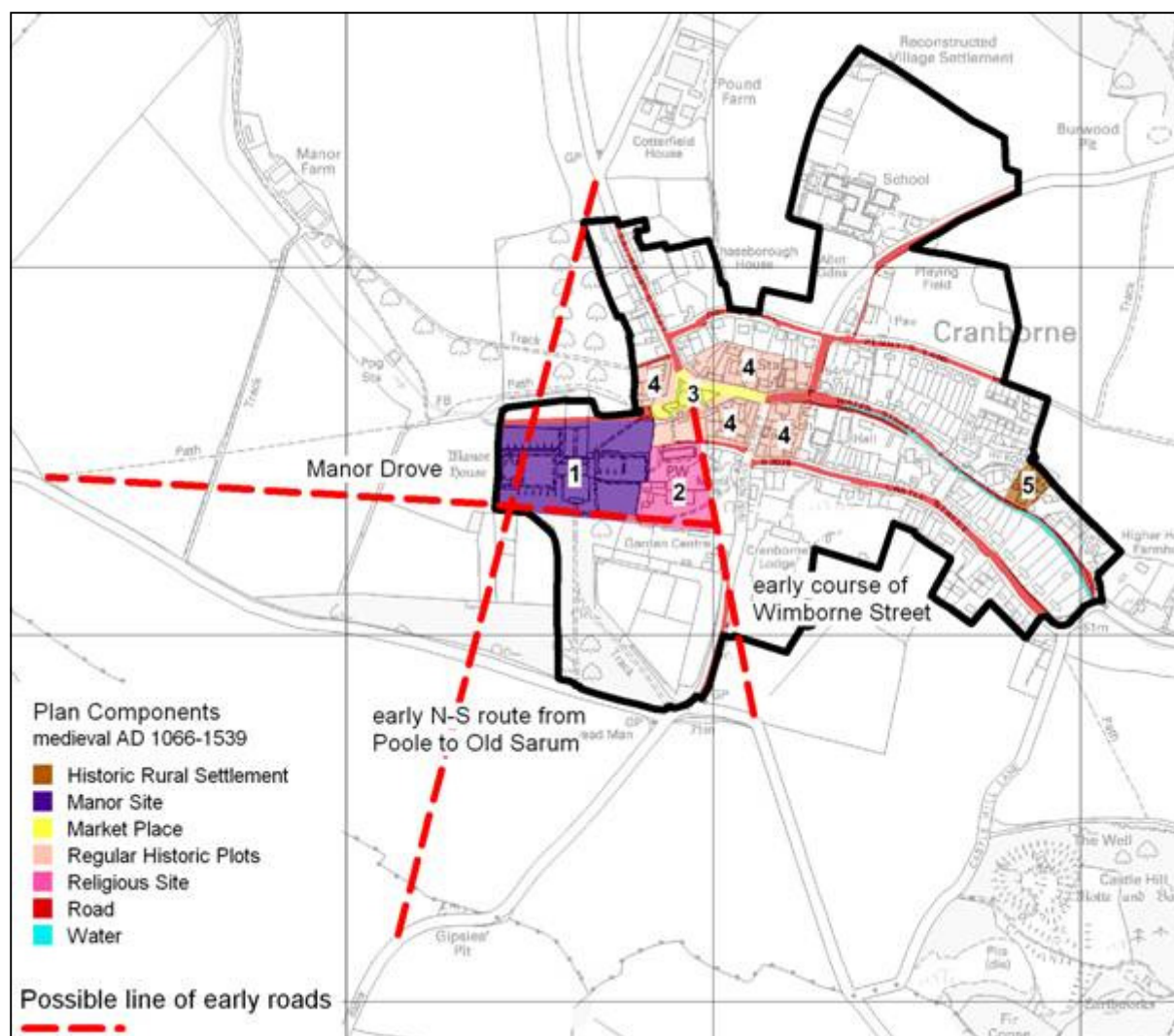*Figure 7: View of the south front of Cranborne Manor House.*

Figure 8: Cranborne Medieval Town Plan Components.

since only 35 taxpayers are listed in 1545 and 26 in 1594 (Stoate 1978, 106-7; 1982, 122-3). It is not clear if these figures reflect the economic fortunes of the town or a change in the way that the tax was collected. The market house was in ruins by the early 16th century (Penn 1980, 49) and yet in 1547 the Cranborne Borough Lawday Court fined a butcher, a baker and a shoemaker for selling their wares at excessive profits (Mackenzie 1987, 17).

5.1.2 Town Layout

It is possible that the early N-S route between Old Sarum and Poole Harbour originally passed to the west of the current Manor House (Figure 8) and that the Saxon settlement lay to the west of the current market place. There is no secure evidence for this assertion other than an apparent diversion of the main N-S road to the east in order to accommodate the medieval market. Nevertheless, a fragment of carved stone, thought to date from the 9th century, was recovered from the manor fishpond to

the north of the manor in 1935 (Kendrick 1947; Marquess of Salisbury 1947). This spot lies adjacent to the suggested early N-S route. Furthermore, earthworks in *The Close* to the north of the manor are suggestive of both a building platform and an adjacent hollow way. A 17th century map by John Norden gives a stylised representation of the town in which *The Close* was under arable cultivation. The site of the Saxon manor remains unknown and the earthworks in *The Close* would require careful survey and partial excavation in order to ascertain their form and function. The Norman manor was moved to Castle Hill in the late 11th or 12th century. The current manorial site may not have been occupied before the early 13th century construction of the house.

Norden's map seems to depict the priory buildings on the south side of the parish church which may also mark the site of the 10th century Cranborne Abbey. If so then the juxtaposition of church and manor probably represent the earliest plan element of the medieval town.

Norden's map also seems to suggest that the modern line of Wimborne Street, running south from the town, dates to later than the 17th century. The map shows the earlier road running from the SW corner of the market place, immediately east of the church, before dividing into a southerly branch to Edmonsham and a SW branch to Wimborne St Giles. The modern course of Wimborne Street may have been created as a turnpike. Another facet of the medieval town layout depicted on the Norden map is that the major E-W route through the town seems to follow the line of Castle Street and then Manor Drove, which runs along the south side of the manor and church and then heads westwards to All Hallows Wimborne (Norden 1605). When these early routes are plotted on a map (Figure 8) the position of the manor, on the SW fringe of the medieval town becomes more understandable, as do those of the church, priory and Norman castle. The latter is in a prime position to control all major routes through the town.

Evidence for a dispersed settlement pattern outside the medieval town comes not only from documents such as Domesday, in which 12 smallholders and 8 cottagers are mentioned in the manor, but also from the excavation of a middle Saxon pit at 10 Penny's Mead in 1982 (Wilson and Chowne 1986).

The only contemporary document which describes the layout of the medieval town is Leland's description in the early 16th century. He passed northwards through the town and described it as '*…a praty thoroughfare and for one streat meatly well builded. Ther runnith a fleting bek thorough it and passid doun through the street self on the right hond'.* The single street described by Leland seems to have been High Street/Crane Street/Water Street which to this day has the Crane running down its right side. The church and manor sit slightly above the river on the south side and a double row of houses may have fronted on to either bank of the Crane north of the church. Regular plot boundaries of properties fronting on to High Street are suggestive of burgages in this area.

The medieval market lay at the junction of High Street with Salisbury Street/Wimborne Street. High Street also represented an east-west through route along the Crane valley during the medieval period (Good 1966). Back lanes are likely to have marked the rear of the High Street plots, as well as providing access along the valley in times of flood. These may be represented by the modern Church Street, Castle Street (formerly Dry Street) and Grugs Lane.

Figure 9: View of The Close, north of Cranborne Manor, looking south.

Figure 10: View of the 12th century north entrance to St Mary's and St Bartholomew's church.

Figure 11: View of the market place from the east.

5.1.3 Medieval Urban plan components

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

1. Cranborne Manor. The current manor was built in 1207-8 by King John as a hunting Lodge. It remains unknown as to whether this was built on the site of the Saxon manor. The Norman manor is likely to have been at Cranborne Castle, outside the town to the southeast. Nevertheless, the 13th century manor occupies a primary settlement location, adjacent to the church and priory. These settlement components are likely to have been established close

to the crossing point of a pre-existing N-S route over the River Crane.

2. *Cranborne Abbey and Priory.* Cranborne Abbey was founded in 980 as a Benedictine monastery. However, the only piece of Saxon masonry found in the town is a carved cross fragment recovered from a pond in 1935 approximately 150 yards to the NW of the church. If this was originally part of the late Saxon Abbey then it may not have been found *in situ*. The location of the Abbey church has been assumed to lie on the site of the current parish church of St Mary and St Bartholomew. The earliest part of the church is the 12th century north doorway (Figure 10). The nave and aisles were rebuilt in the early 14th century, but the present nave and the west tower date to the 15th century (Pitfield 1981). The remains of the Priory are thought to have been depicted on Norden's map of 1605; approximately 50 yards to the south of the church. These structures were pulled down in 1703 (RCHME 1975, 5). A tithe barn was built to the south of the priory between 1389 and 1421 and was removed in 1870 (Penn 1980, 49).

3. *Market Place (Figure 11).* The market house is recorded as being in ruins in 1510-30 and a new one was built on one side of the current market by 1605. This triangular market had already become infilled with buildings by that time and is likely to represent the site of the medieval market (Penn 1980, 52).

4. *High Street.* The plot boundaries on High Street suggest that medieval Cranborne comprised a simple planned double row of houses fronting on to a wide street or green through which flowed the river Crane. This is a common settlement pattern in the region of Cranborne Chase. The central green became the market place, High Street and square by the early 14th century, and is likely to have been the site of the medieval fairs.

5. *Penny's Farm.* Although it is difficult to be sure when the current Penny's Farm was established, excavations in advance of housing development between 1982 and 1996 have demonstrated that there were a number of pits dating from the middle Saxon to the medieval period in the vicinity (Wilson and Chowne 1986; Bellamy 2000).

5.2 Post-medieval Cranborne (1540-1799)

5.2.1 Historical Summary

Cranborne appears to have been a small town of some local trading importance in the post-medieval period. It entered a period of decline in the second half of the 18th century.

Cranborne Priory was dissolved on January 31st 1540 (Page 1908, 70-73), although the priory buildings don't seem to have been removed until 1703. It is unclear how much effect the dissolution had on the town. In 1547 Cranborne contained at least two butchers, a baker, a shoemaker and a candlestick maker. It had two fairs in the early 17th century, one on the feast of St Bartholomew (August 24th) and the other remained on the feast of St Nicholas. In 1605 the Grammar school was held in the market house. Commercial activity of some importance in the late 17th century is suggested by the issuing of trade tokens by two Cranborne traders. In 1750 the Thursday market was still held for cattle and a butchers' shambles is recorded there. In the 1770s Cranborne boasted ribbon manufacturers, glovers, tanners and maltsters. The town had a well supplied corn market and large cattle fairs.

Plague struck the town in 1604. Seventy people died in Cranborne in that year, five times the normal death rate (Mackenzie 1987, 20-27). This may have been the event which led to the digging of a plague pit to the southeast of the town on land later to become the gardens of Cranborne Lodge (Hawkins 1983, 13).

The manor passed to Robert Cecil, the 1st Earl of Salisbury in 1607, when the medieval lodge was transformed into the current manor house. The associated gardens also partly date from the 17th century. This is still the seat of the Marquess of Salisbury (Penn, 1980, 49-52; RCHME V, 1975, 5, 10). The 2nd Earl of Salis-

bury was a parliamentarian at the outbreak of the civil war. In 1643 a 4,000 strong royalist army arrived and plundered the manor house. Charles I lodged at Cranborne in 1644 on his way to defeat at the second Battle of Newbury and by 1645 Cromwell's troops were quartered in Cranborne Manor House. In 1671 the 3rd Earl of Salisbury sold the Chase to the Earl of Shaftesbury. After this the Chase Courts were removed to Wimborne St Giles and parts of the manor house fell into disuse (Mackenzie 1987, 30-38).

A significant number of the domestic buildings in Cranborne date from the 17th and 18th centuries, some on 'green field' sites, to the east and north along Salisbury Street, indicating that the town continued to expand during this period. A fire broke out in Water Street in 1748 and spread from house to house in a southwesterly direction. It destroyed a malthouse, 13 dwellings and several outhouses, causing a total of £2,607 of damage (Hutchins 1868, 375). The traditional roofing material has always been thatch in the Cranborne area. It is interesting to note that the oldest domestic buildings in the town date from the 16th century and lie just outside the centre at the Fleur-de-Lys Inn (Figure 12) and Sinodun (Figure 13). The very centre of the town comprises buildings constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries, and may indicate the location of the 1748 fire.

In 1755-6, the Blandford to Salisbury Road was turnpiked. This new road passed about 5 km to the northwest, bypassing the town. This may have lead to the decline of Cranborne in the 19th century (Hawkins 1983, 11). The road from Cranborne to Wimborne, Wimborne Street, was also turnpiked, but the road north along Salisbury Street was not, which left Cranborne without a good quality through road.

Figure 12: View of the Fleur-de-Lys Inn.
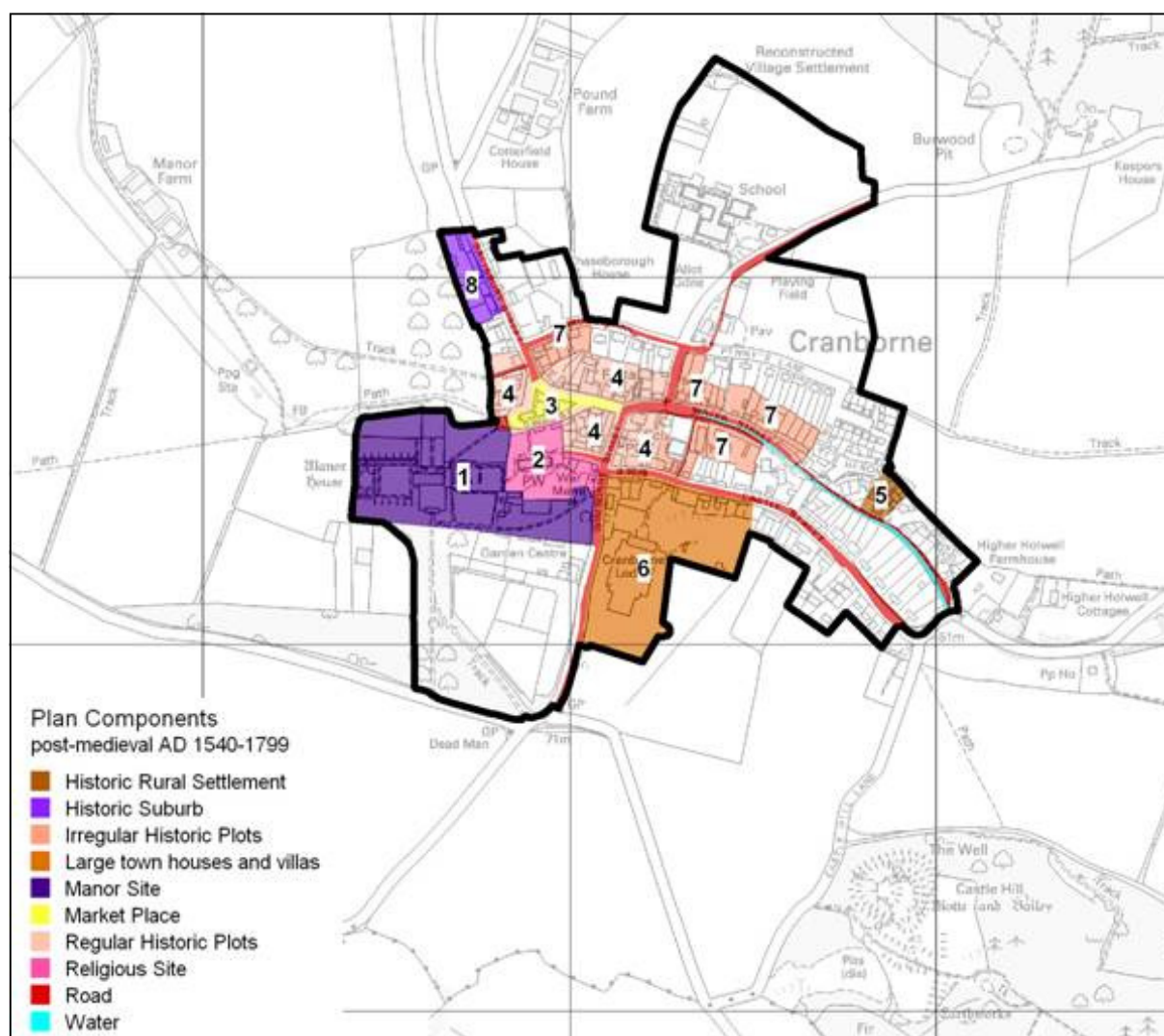

Figure 13: Sinodun, Grugs Lane.

Figure 14: Cranborne Post-medieval Town Plan Components.

5.2.2 Town Layout

The major change to the layout of the town in this period was the turnpiking of Wimborne Street in the late 18th century to run along its present line further east of the church. A gate-house was constructed on Wimborne Street to the south of the junction with Castle Street. The town continued to expand beyond the me-dieval limits to the north along Salisbury Street and the east along Water Street and Dry Street (now called Castle Street). Other significant alterations included those to the grounds of Cranborne Manor during the 17th century and the creation of Cranborne Lodge in the 18th century.

5.2.3 Early Post-medieval Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the late six-teenth-eighteenth century town are shown on Figure 14 and are listed below.

1. Cranborne Manor. The medieval manor passed to Robert Cecil, the 1st Earl of Salisbury in 1607. It was he who employed John Norden to conduct a survey of the estate. He also set about constructing a new house, re-using the walls of King John's hunting lodge. The floor levels and windows were changed and the SW tower increased in height, with a corresponding tower added in the SE corner. The main ap-proach was reversed to face the south with a new porch. The range was extended to the east with the construction of a new kitchen and pantry. Later, in the mid 17th century the west range was re-built. However, the house re-mained mostly unoccupied and in the 18th cen-tury it was divided into two farmhouses (RCHME 1975, 8-10). Formal gardens to the north (Figure 15) and south of the house are depicted on the early 17th century plan (English Heritage 2005).

2. Cranborne Abbey and Priory. The Priory was dissolved in 1540, although the buildings were not completely removed until 1703 and

the tithe barn survived into the 19th century. The old Priory House is mentioned in the Hearth Tax returns of 1662-4 as having 8 hearths (Mackenzie 1987, 54). The church then became the Parish Church of St Mary and St Bartholomew. The original extent of the graveyard is unknown, but it may have been extended to the north during the post-medieval period.

3. Market Place. A new market house was built by 1605, at which time the grammar school was held there. The centre of the market place had already been infilled with buildings by that date. Many of the houses on the north side of High Street date from the 18th century.

4. High Street. It is not clear whether there were ever any burgage plots on the south side of Swan Street, but the churchyard certainly extended into this area by the 19th century. Other plot boundaries seem to remain largely unchanged from the medieval period. Houses on the north side of High Street/The Square were reconstructed within their medieval plots during the 18th century (Figure 16), possibly following the devastating fire of October 14th 1748.

5. Penny's Farm. Penny's Farm House probably dates from the 19th century, although buildings are depicted in the vicinity of the farm in the Norden survey of 1605.

6. Cranborne Lodge. Cranborne Lodge was built circa 1700 as the house of the Stillingfleet family with east and west wings added to the southern block during the mid 18th century. It is set within approximately 3 hectares of parkland.

7. Grugs Lane, Water Street and Castle Street. This represents post-medieval expansion of the medieval town, mainly to the east along the three parallel roads. The earliest building is *Sinodun* on Grugs Lane. This has brick and flint banding as well as a cob boundary wall and some timber-framed elements (Figure 17). It may date from as early as the 16th century. The majority of historic buildings in this area date to the 18th century, and it may be at this time that the town began to expand substantially beyond its medieval limits.

8. Salisbury Street. During the late 18th century Cranborne continued to expand to the north along Salisbury Street with large detached suburban villas. The earliest was 35 Salisbury Street, built in Flemish bond brickwork circa 1770 (Figure 18).

Figure 15: View of the north front and gardens of Cranborne Manor .

Figure 16: View of The Web, 10-11 The Square .

Figure 17: View of Sinodun and Pound House, Grugs Lane.

Figure 18: Red Lion House, 35 Salisbury Street.