

5.3 Late Eighteenth—Early Nineteenth Century Weymouth (1540-1847)

5.3.1 Historical Summary

In 1750 Ralph Allen, the ‘uncrowned king of Bath’ came to Weymouth because his wife had been advised to try the new medical treatment of sea bathing. He was soon followed by many fashionable people who first found lodgings in the available houses, but soon began to build more suitable accommodation, culminating in the early 1780s when the Duke of Gloucester built Gloucester Lodge, to which his elder brother, King George III was to come in 1787.

The nascent tourist industry required new types of buildings, in particular terraces to provide suitable accommodation for the steadily increasing numbers of fashionable visitors. These extended along the esplanade, including both a development to the east of East Street and along the narrow isthmus that connected the town to the mainland. The importance of the royal connection was emphasised by the construction of the Kings Statue in 1809.

Entertainment was also important, a seventeenth century house was turned into an Assembly Rooms, The Old Rooms, in due course these were replaced by a purpose built building and a theatre was added, the Theatre Royal.



Figure 19: The Old Rooms, Weymouth’s first Assembly Rooms

These developments began to place a premium on flat land, so that during this period the Cove was filled in, the buildings in Hope Street that once faced onto the Cove now faced onto the narrow alley of Cove Passage. In Melcombe the reclamation of the Backwater began with the reclaiming of a large area of land which it was intended to form into a public park. On the other side of the peninsula an inlet was infilled to form an open space and garden initially called The Rings, now Alexandra Gardens. The rate of development declined after about 1840, as the immediate needs of the visitors had been met and there was insufficient money to continue with speculative building.

The long period of the French Wars led to a new appreciation of the vulnerability of Weymouth to attack. Actively encouraged by King George, barracks were built at the base of the Nothe and on Dorchester Road.

The harbour, which had been declining since the early eighteenth century, and which, by 1780 had little trade apart from local coasting vessels and fishing boats also revived as a result of the royal visits. Its proximity to the Channel Islands was noticed and, in 1794, Weymouth became the base for the Channel Island Packet boats, carrying mail to the Islands. In 1827 the first steam vessel carried the mail from Weymouth to Guernsey.

Holy Trinity Church was built between 1834 and 1836, in order to serve the new parish of Weymouth which was created in 1836 out of part of Wyke Regis parish.



Figure 20: Gloucester Lodge, where King George III stayed during his visits.

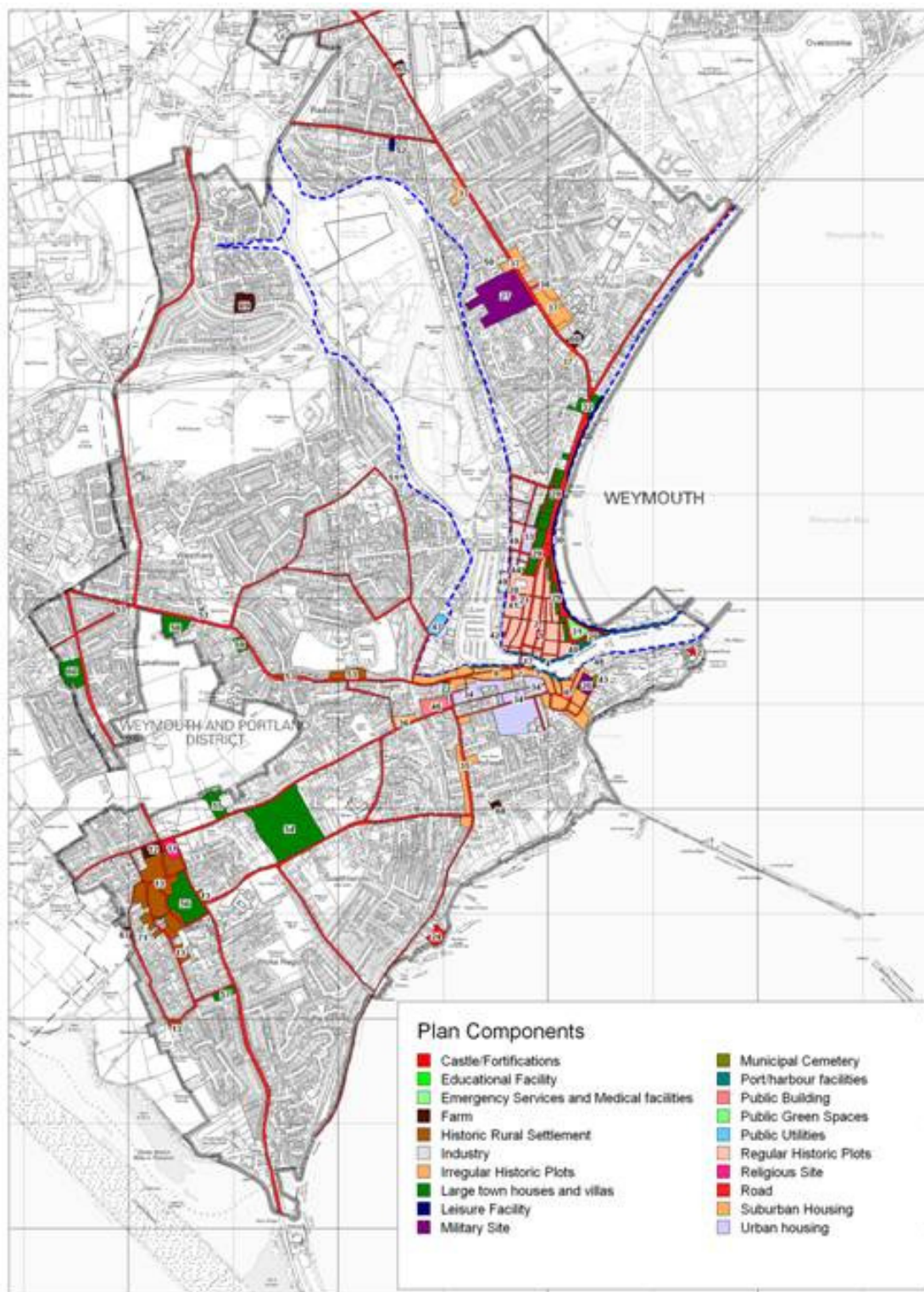


Figure 21: Late Eighteenth—Early Nineteenth Century Plan Components—south

5.3.2 Town Layout

The late 18th century sees the historic core of Weymouth and Melcombe assuming the form we see today. The Esplanade was begun in about 1780, with elegant terraces behind, York Buildings and Gloucester Row to the north and

Pultney Buildings and Devonshire Buildings to the south. After 1816 there was further development on the northern side of the town with Brunswick Terrace, Frederick Place and Waterloo Place being constructed. Victoria Terrace was planned at this time but not com-

pleted. These developments tended to continue the medieval grid pattern north and east.

It was during this period that the dichotomy that still characterises Weymouth developed, with houses and facilities aimed at tourists and holidaymakers fronting Weymouth Bay, and commercial and industrial buildings along the harbour.

On the southern side of the harbour there was less room for development, and this area does not possess the fine Georgian buildings that are such a feature of Melcombe. Where there was new development, such as on the reclaimed land of the Cove in 1807, this tended to be of small houses, intended for people working in the town or harbour. Some development also began south of the High Street, again with smaller houses. One, Abergavenny Cottage, was built with timber salvaged from the wreck of the *Earl of Abergavenny* which sank in Weymouth bay in 1805.

Other Places

In Wyke Regis the majority of the houses were still concentrated around the church, square and down the high street towards Portland. There were few other buildings outside this area. One exception was Belfield House built in about 1790, traditionally to take advantage of the views over Portland Roads.

Broadway remained a very small village, the few new houses being built along Dorchester

Road or Watery Lane. Elwell was similar, though some houses had been replaced and a little infilling had taken place.

5.3.3 Late Eighteenth—Early Nineteenth Century Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century town are shown on figures 20 and 21, and are listed below.

1. *St Mary's Church, Melcombe Regis.* St Mary's Church was rebuilt between 1815 and 1817 to the designs of James Hamilton.
2. *Historic Plots, Melcombe Regis.* There was little change to the underlying street plan.
3. *Melcombe Regis Friary.* Any surviving buildings were demolished in the mid nineteenth century.
4. *Melcombe Regis Quay.* A series of informal landing places, possibly owned by individual merchants, seem to have developed along the backwater. A substantial pier was built at the eastern end of the quay.
8. *Historic Plots, Weymouth.* There was little change to the underlying street plan.
9. *Weymouth Quay.* The Cove was filled in around 1806, and the quay seems to have been extended to below the Nothe.



Figure 22: Holy Trinity church, built in 1836 for the new parish of Weymouth



Figure 23: Hope Street Chapel built in 1822

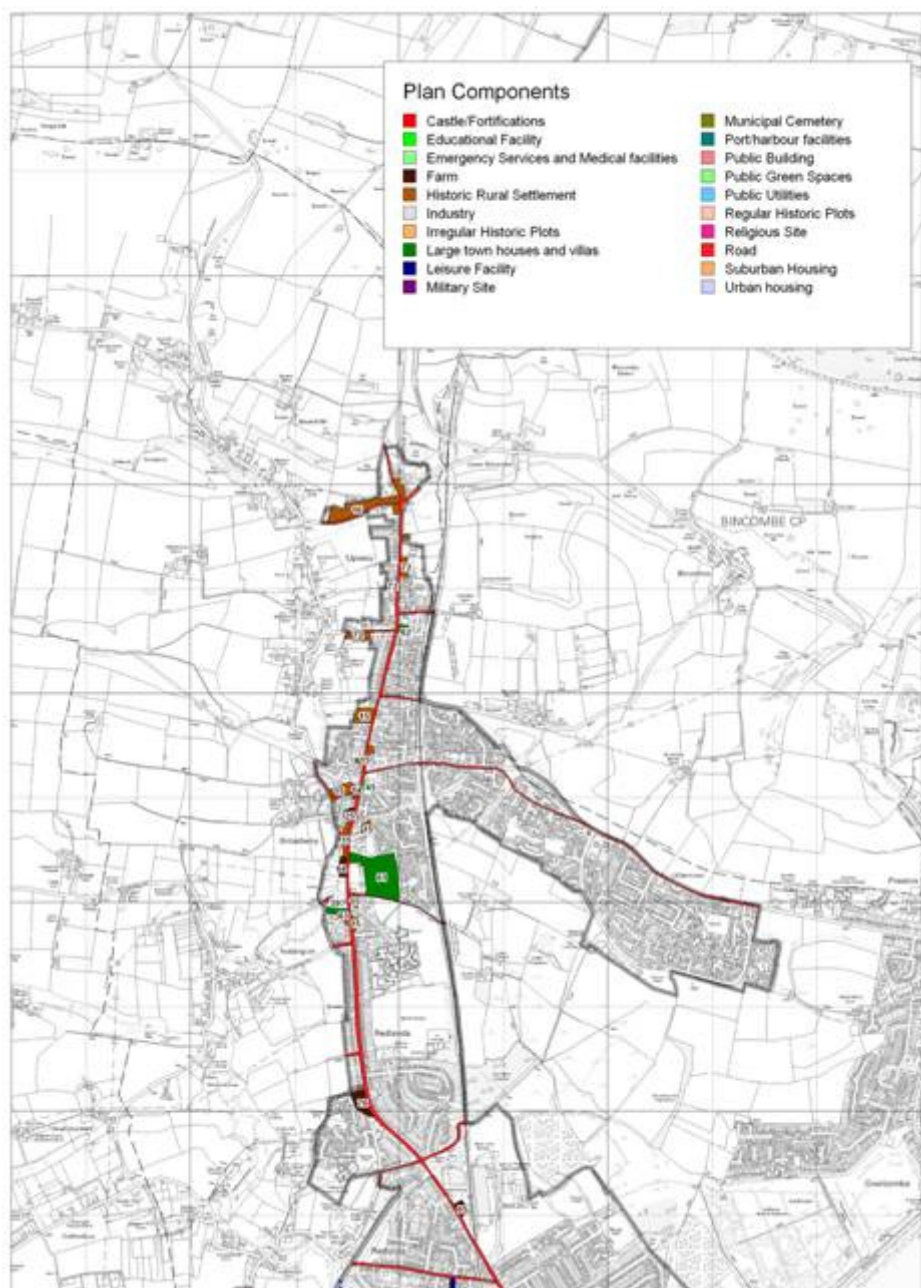


Figure 24: Late Eighteenth—Early Nineteenth Century Plan Components—north

10. *Land reclamation and Coastal Defence.* The Cove was filled in c1806 and houses built on the newly-created land. Cove Street represents the western edge and Cove Passage the eastern edge of the reclaimed area.

12. *All Saints Church, Wyke Regis.* There was little change to the church during this period.

14. *Historic Wyke Regis.* There was little change to the form of the settlement during this period.

15. *St Nicholas Church, Broadway.* There was little change to the church during this period.

16. *Historic Broadway.* There was little change to the form of the settlement during this period.

17. *Historic Elwell.* There was little change to the form of the settlement during this period.

18. *Town Bridge.* The bridge was rebuilt in 1824, in the location of the present bridge, at the end of St Thomas Street.

19. *Sandsfoot Castle.* The ruins of Sandsfoot Castle became a tourist attraction, featured in numerous prints.

20. *Red Barracks.* The barracks were built in 1795 and rebuilt in 1801 after a fire.

21. *Radipole Barracks.* The barracks were built in about 1800.

22. *Esplanade.* First built c 1780, the Esplanade

was completely rebuilt after destruction by a storm in 1824-5.

23. *The Rings*. Was created as a promenade on reclaimed land around 1800.

24. *Greenhill*. The first buildings here dated from c 1830, and were conceived as an elegant suburban addition to Weymouth.

25. *Park District*. The land was reclaimed around 1930, and intended for use as a public park.

26. *Holy Trinity Church*. Built between 1834 and 1836, Weymouth became an independent parish in 1836.

27. *Radipole Spa*. Spa house was built in 1833 as one of two spas in the vicinity of Weymouth (the other, at Nottingham, lies just outside the study area).



Figure 25: Cove passage, once the waterfront onto the harbour.



Figure 26: Statue erected in 1809 to commemorate the visits of King George III.

5.4 Later Nineteenth and Earlier Twentieth Century Weymouth (1857-1913)

5.4.1 Historical Summary

The apparent stagnation of Weymouth in the mid nineteenth century was reversed in 1857 when the Great Western Railway reached Weymouth. The station was situated on re-claimed land at the northern edge of the town, though the line was later to be extended along the harbour side for the convenience of the Cross Channel and Channel Island steamers. Pleasure steamers were a feature of the town at this time, the paddle steamers of the firm of Cosens were based at a large yard to the west of the Bridge.

Whilst projects such as Victoria Terrace were completed, there were still financial pressures on the town, so that the proposed Town Park was instead turned over to development as the Park District. Development at Rodwell consisted of predominantly smaller terraced houses, as did those at Westham, with the new Melcombe Regis cemetery to the north. Larger villas were built along Dorchester Road as far as Radipole.

Greenhill Gardens were built in the 1860s, associated with the new developments of Brunswick Buildings and Victoria Place, whilst later the Rings were redeveloped as Alexandra Gardens.

The Nothe Fort was begun in the 1850s to protect the northern side of Portland Harbour.

Other public buildings included the Hospital and almshouses, both just to the south west of Weymouth.

A new industry came to Weymouth in the form of the Whitehead Torpedo Factory at Ferry-



Figure 27: The rails and former loading platforms on Custom House Quay.

bridge, which included a number of terraced houses for the workers.

5.4.2 Town Layout

The historic core of the towns remained largely as it had done in the eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century. There were a number of new buildings and shops erected, but overall there were no great changes to the central part of the town. The major changes to the town included the development of the Park District, in the 1870s and the beginning of suburban expansion along Chickerell Road, Buxton Road and around Radipole.

At Wyke Regis groups of terraces were built to the south of the village and development started at Ferrybridge, associated with the Whitehead Torpedo Factory.

At Broadwey the building of villas extended ribbon development along Dorchester Road.

5.4.3 Later Nineteenth and Earlier Twentieth Century Town Plan Components

The main plan components of eighteenth and nineteenth century town are shown on figures



Figure 28: Victorian Terracing in Park Street

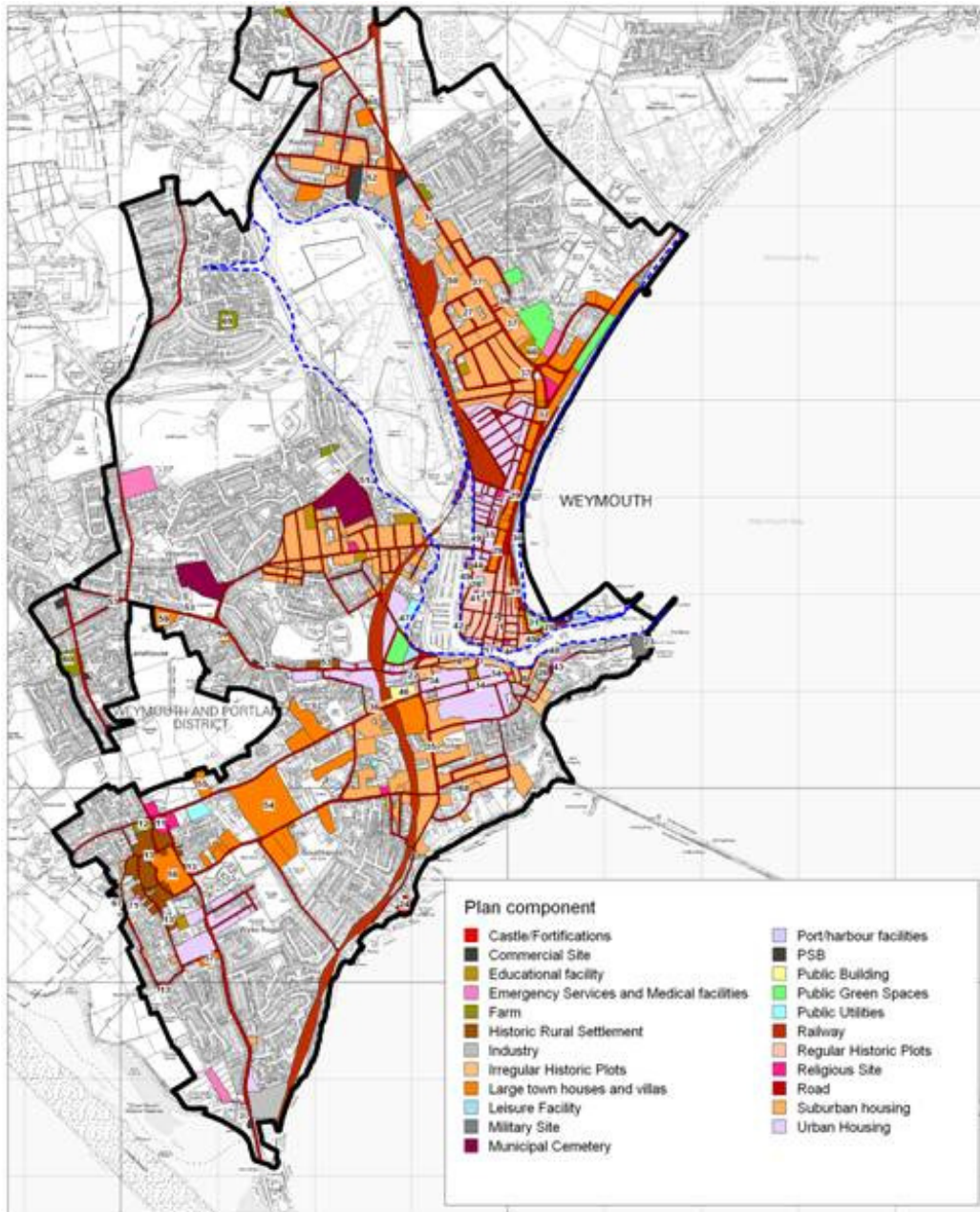


Figure 29: Nineteenth Century Plan Components—south

29 and 30, and are listed below.

1. *St Mary's Church, Melcombe Regis*. There was little change to the church during this period.
2. *Historic Plots, Melcombe Regis*. There was little change to the underlying street plan.
4. *Melcombe Regis Quay*. A spur railway line was laid along the whole length of the quay, around the backwater as far as the end of the pier, with mooring points all along the extended quay.
8. *Historic Plots, Weymouth*. There was little change to the underlying street plan.
9. *Weymouth Quay*. There was little change to

the extent of the quay at this time.

10. *Land reclamation and Coastal Defence*. The marsh, behind Marsh Road, was fully reclaimed and built upon. The area was later extended eastwards with the creation of a sports field.
12. *All Saints Church, Wyke Regis*. There was little change to the church during this period.
14. *Historic Wyke Regis*. There was little change to the form of the settlement during this period.
15. *St Nicholas Church, Broadway*. The church was completely rebuilt in 1874.
16. *Historic Broadway*. There was little change

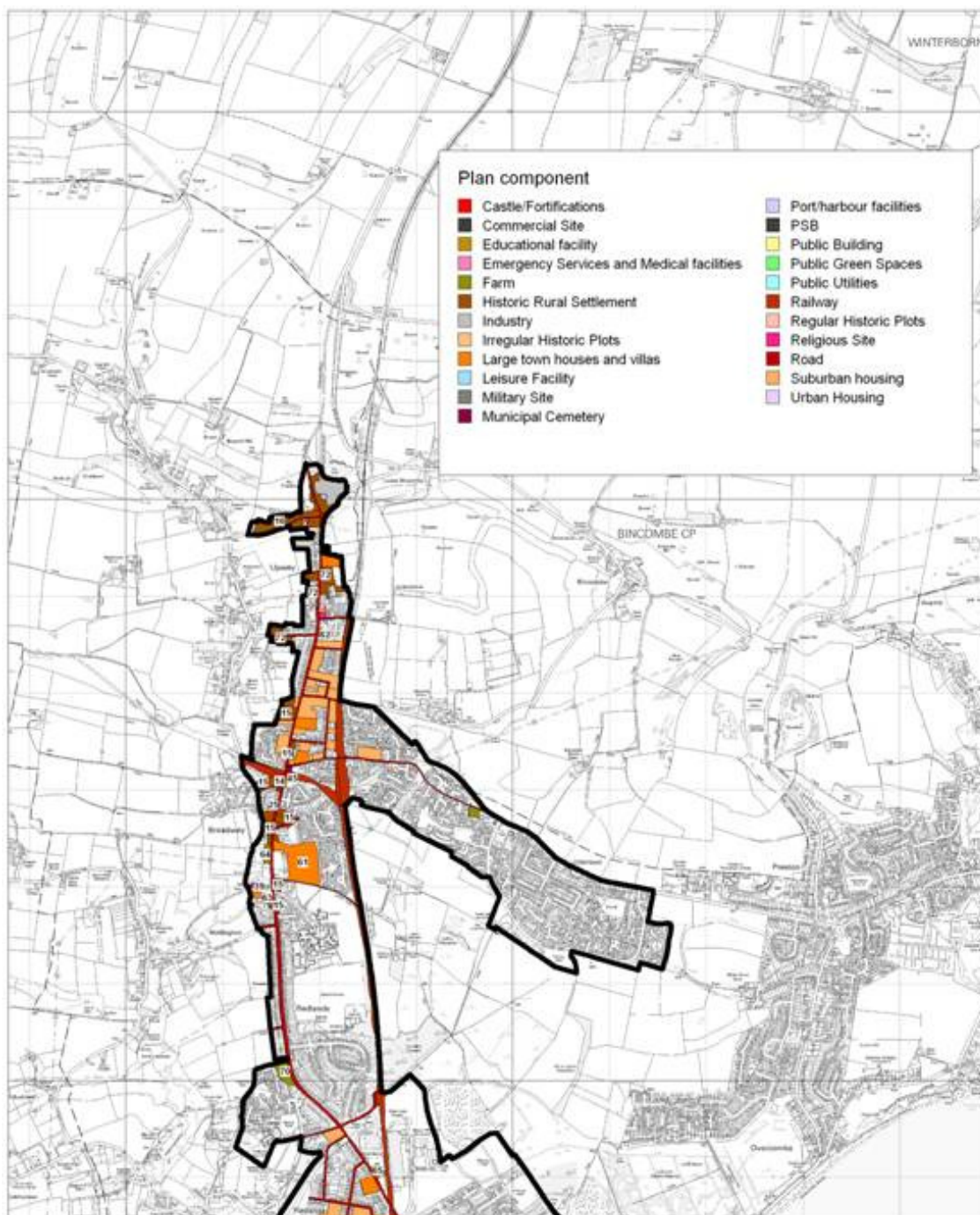


Figure 30: Nineteenth Century Plan Components—north

to the form of the settlement during this period.

17. *Historic Elwell*. There was little change to the form of the settlement during this period.

18. *Town Bridge*. There was no change to the bridge at this period.

19. *Sandsfoot Castle*. The ruins of Sandsfoot Castle became a tourist attraction, featured in numerous prints.

22. *Esplanade*. During this period the esplanade was extended to Greenhill, various features were added including the Jubilee clock (1887) and sev-

eral shelters.

23. *Alexandra Gardens*. The Rings were redeveloped as the Alexandra Gardens with a central bandstand.

24. *Greenhill*. There was extensive building here during this period. Greenhill gardens were developed as an extension of the Esplanade.

25. *Park District*. After the coming of the railway this area was developed with a series of small terraced houses.

26. *Holy Trinity Church*. The church was refitted

and reoriented in 1887.

27. *Radipole Spa*. The spa had closed by 1860.

28. *Nothe Fort*. Built between 1859 and 1862.

29. *Railway to Dorchester*. Opened in 1857.

30. *Railway to Portland*. Opened in 1865.

31. *Westham*. Developed with a number of short terraces of small houses.

32. *Edwards Almshouses*. Built in 1894 for Sir Henry Edwards in Tudor Revival style.

33. *Weymouth Workhouse*. Workhouse built in 1836 by two of the guardians, Thomas Dodson and Thomas Hill Harvey in dressed Portland stone.

34. *Gas Works*. On the western side of the break-water, opened in c1870.

35. *Backwater Bridge*. Built in the 1870s.

36. *Melcombe Regis Burial Ground*. Built with undenominational chapel in gothic style.

37. *Weymouth Burial Ground* Built with undenominational chapel in gothic style.



Figure 32: *Ferrybridge Cottages, built for workers at Whitehead's Torpedo Works.*



Figure 31: *Chapel in Melcombe Regis cemetery*



Figure 33: *Jubilee Clock built in 1887*