

Part 6: Historic Urban Character Appraisal



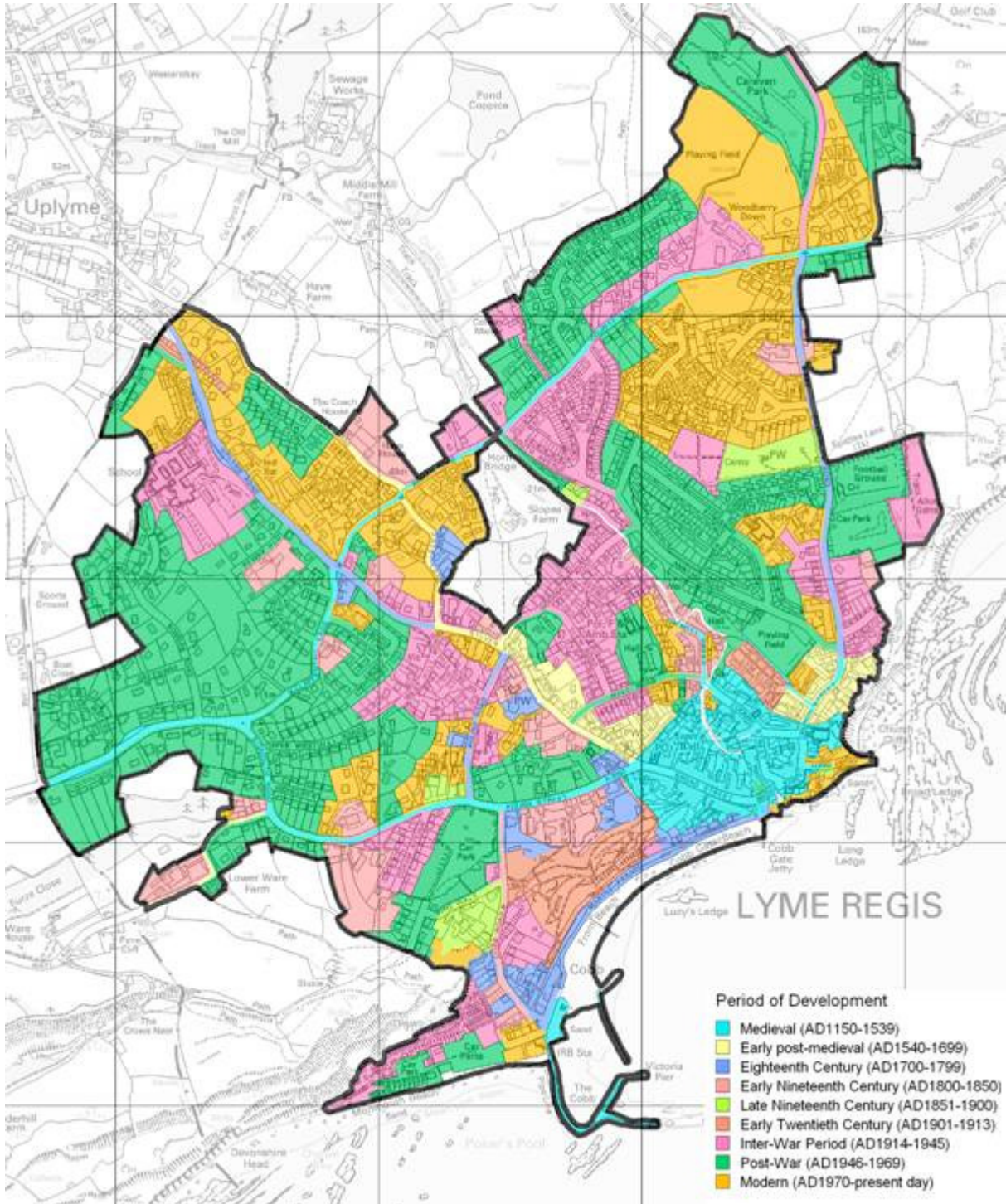


Figure 35: Map showing the major periods of development in Lyme Regis.

6.1 The historic urban character of Lyme Regis

Perhaps more than any other town in Dorset, the geology and the topography of Lyme Regis have had a profound effect on the location, form and character of the town. The steep unstable slopes and exposure to the sea have constrained and shaped the development of the town and have had a major influence on the communication routes to and from Lyme. The steepness of the topography meant that most routes running inland were too steep for easy movement of goods and people and the unstable character of the ground meant that the coastal routes were very prone to landslipping. For much of the history of the town, seaborne communication was predominant, though still fraught with difficulties. The steep hillsides, the narrow river valley and the dynamic coastline also provide a very impressive backdrop to the town in all directions.

The character of Lyme Regis has been shaped by its history as both an historic port and as a seaside resort. Much of the underlying structure of the town has been the result of its earlier history as a significant port, while the character of many of the historic buildings and the suburban expansion of the town are the result of its status as a seaside resort town.

The plan layout of the town consists of a series of routes radiating out from the mouth of the river Lim and another route running NE-SW across the northern part of the modern town. The course and the importance of the historic routes have changed over time and the present road layout dates largely to the 18th-20th centuries. The town comprises a number of different parts. Historically, the two main elements are the town centre at the mouth of the river and The Cobb and Cobb hamlet further along the coast, which are physically separated from the town and were linked in the past only by a track along the beach. The beach and seafront have been developed as part of the seaside resort from the later 18th century onwards. The historic core can be divided into two contrasting areas, Broad Street and the Coombe Street area. The latter comprises narrow densely occupied streets with small irregular plots along the bottom of the river valley. The church is located on the edge of this area and is now close to the edge of the cliff due to coastal erosion. The Broad Street area, on the other hand, has a wide straight market street with regular properties running back from both sides along it, suggesting a degree of deliberate planning. Behind the town, on the hillslopes mainly to the

west, is an area of 18th and early 19th century villa development, which has been largely subsumed within later suburban housing estate development on the higher slopes to the north of the town (Figure 35).

The historic buildings form a major element of the historic character of Lyme Regis. There are many 18th and 19th century buildings in the historic core, largely reflecting the history of Lyme as a seaside resort. In particular, these include houses, shops and hotels along Broad Street and the large late 18th and early 19th century villas along Pound Street, Sidmouth Road and Silver Street.

There has been substantial modern development, particularly to the north and northwest, including the infilling of the grounds of some of the large villas. The modern development has been mainly private housing estates, with a small amount of social housing. The private housing comprises a large number of bungalows as well as semi-detached houses, mainly arranged in estates with looped networks and culs-de-sac road layouts.

Public open spaces include the Langmoor and Lister Gardens, which preserve the historic separation of the town and the Cobb and the seafront. There is a significant contribution from mature trees and garden planting in the grounds of some of the larger houses and also in the area towards the northern edge of the town. The route along the river provides a semi-rural pedestrian route out of the town and the historic routes of Haye Lane, Colway Lane and Roman Road have a rural aspect with surviving hedgebanks in places.

6.2 Historic Urban Character Areas of Lyme Regis

A total of seven Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined for Lyme Regis as shown on Figure 36. They comprise the historic core and development along the river valley (Character Area 1), Broad Street, a possible planned medieval market street (Area 2), the coastal strip (Area 3), an area of 18th and early 19th century villa development (Area 4), and areas of later suburban development (Areas 6-7).

- 1 Coombe Street and the Lim Valley
- 2 Broad Street
- 3 Marine Parade and Cobb Hamlet
- 4 Pound Street
- 5 Woodmead Road
- 6 Uplyme Road
- 7 Colway Mead and Charmouth Road

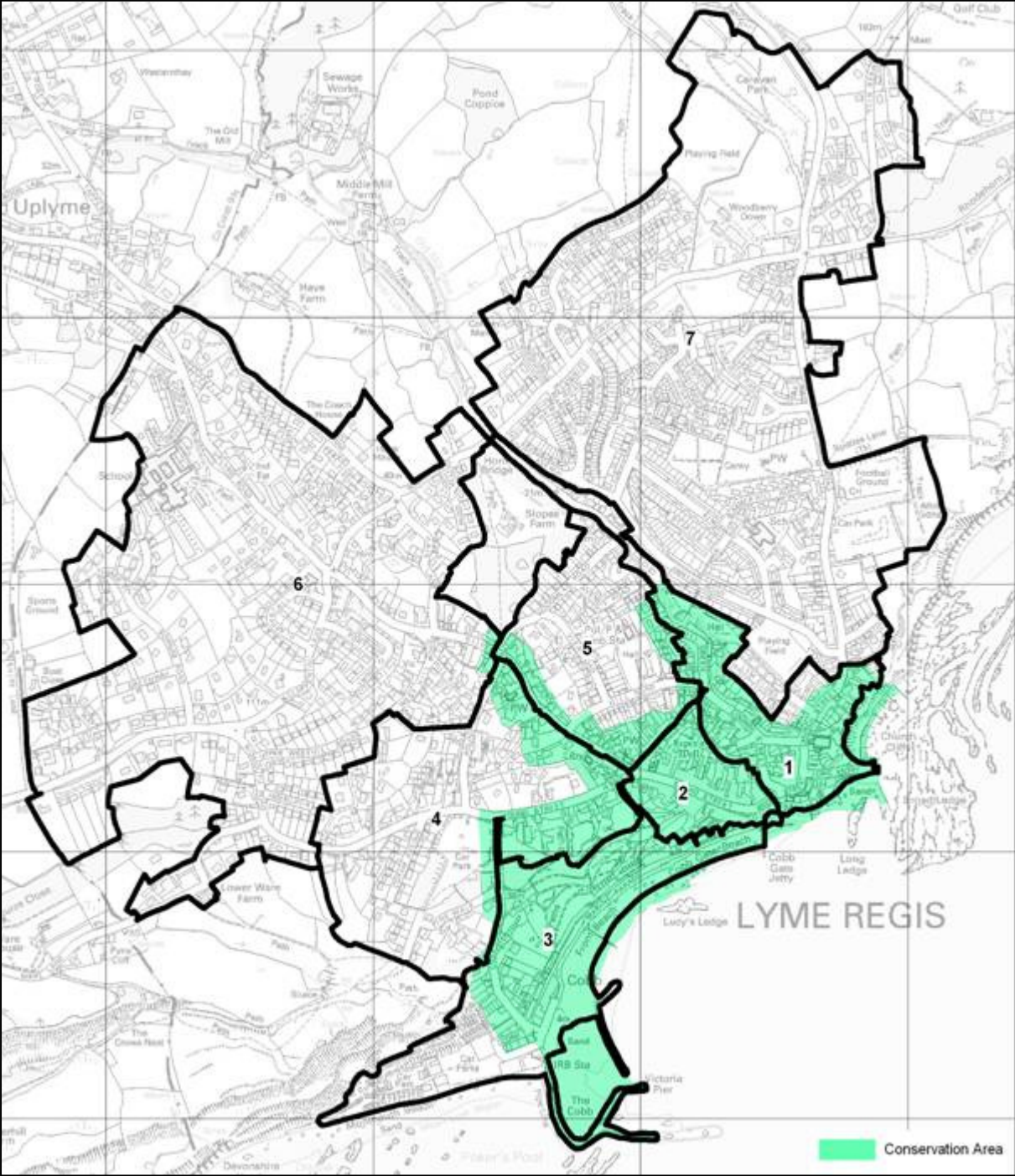


Figure 36: Lyme Regis Historic Urban Character Areas in relationship to the Conservation Area.