

5.4 Inter-War Blandford Forum (1914- 1945)

5.4.1 Historical Summary

The two World Wars and the intervening period had a significant effect on the economy, population and layout of Blandford Forum. A Royal Naval Division (RND) base was established on the site of the former race course on Monkton Down in November 1914. A German PoW camp was also set up next to it. The RND vacated the camp in 1918, although they were replaced by the RAF Record Office. A railway branch line from Blandford Station to the camp was built around this time, but was removed in 1923 and the cutting used as a municipal rubbish dump. The camp itself was closed completely at the end of 1919, the wooden huts removed and the land returned to agricultural use. Nevertheless, the camp was reactivated during 1939 as a mobilisation and training centre for reservists and later as a battle training camp. During 1944 the first of five US Army hospitals were built on the site to receive wounded from the invasion of Europe. The hospitals were closed following VE day, having treated some 20,000 patients. The camp remains in use today as the home of the Royal Signals (ArmyNet 2009; Cox 1995, 94).

The effect of the wars was also felt within the borough itself. The 8th Dorset Rifle Corps had been established in Blandford during 1859 (Hutchins 1874, 241). Barracks and a Drill Hall were established during WWI on Milldown Road, opposite and adjacent to the Cottage Hospital. Part of this site was used as a scout hut during the inter-war period but taken over by the Home Guard in 1940. An airfield was established to the north of the Salisbury Road cemetery. A linear group of concrete WWII anti-tank traps lie on the west side of West Street (Figure 29), along with reinforced walls

and rifle slots, within and adjacent to the grounds of the Crown Hotel (Cox & Chandler 1996, 6-7). A further well preserved group lies along the rear boundary plots of villas fronting on the west side of White Cliff Mill Street. These are part of an extensive complex of World War II defences, including pill boxes, along the western edge of Blandford, which occupied a highly-significant strategic position.

Between the wars the population and economy of Blandford seems to have declined in line with national trends. The population fell from 3,649 in 1901 to a low of 3,193 in 1921. By 1939 the population had risen again to 3,811, although this figure might be partly attributable to an influx of reservists at Blandford Camp. In one month alone between December 1928 and January 1929, during the worst of the depression, 549 vagrants were admitted to the Union Workhouse on Salisbury Road. However, the economic situation in the town was not entirely dominated by depression. Just a few years earlier, in 1924, an open air swimming pool had been opened in The Ham and the town's main sewage scheme became operative in central Blandford in 1921 (Cox 2003, 30-31). Industrial output also continued; the glove industry remained in Blandford until around 1940, as did the iron foundry on Orchard Street and the candle factory on Alfred Street.

Blandford's economic mainstay of weekly wool and livestock markets continued until about 1930 at a site behind the Crown Hotel. After this period the cattle trade seems to have been lost to Sturminster Newton and Shaftesbury markets. The annual sheep fairs continued on the Fairfield site until 1939 (Cox 1992, 5). Saturday sheep markets also continued throughout the period on Sheep Market Hill (Blandford Town Council 2001, 37).



Figure 29: A line of WWII concrete anti-tank traps against the garden wall of the Crown Hotel, West St.



Figure 30: Inter-War housing, Langton Road

5.4.2 Town Layout

Suburban expansion was perhaps the biggest factor affecting the town layout during the inter-war period. Lines of detached houses and bungalows were built on both sides of the main radial routes. Salisbury Road in the vicinity of Cemetery Farm, Langton Road (Figure 30) and Milldown Road are the most notable examples, although Leonard's Avenue was also developed at this time along with a small housing estate on the north side of Langton Road, behind the street frontage.

5.4.3 Inter-War Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the twentieth century town are shown on Figure 31 and are listed below.

1. *The Church of Ss Peter and Paul.* There was no discernible change to the parish church during the inter-war period.
2. *The Market.* The Corn Exchange behind the Town Hall ceased to be used for its original purpose around 1930. However, the butchers' shambles, beneath the Town Hall, continued to be used on market days (Cox 1992, 5).
3. *Burgages.* There was little discernible change to the town centre burgages during the inter-war period.
4. *St Leonard's Chapel.* There was little discernible change to St Leonard's Chapel during the inter-war period. The farm buildings expanded to include structures on the north side of St Leonard's Path.
6. *Plots north of the Plocks.* Blandford Post Office was built on the north side of The Plocks between 1929 and 1946 (Figure 32). Blandford's weekly Saturday sheep and produce market continued on Sheep Market Hill during the inter-war period (Blandford Town Council 2001, 37).
7. *Blandford St Mary suburb.* Perhaps surprisingly, the suburb of Blandford St Mary did not see a development of inter-war suburban housing comparable to that along Salisbury, Milldown and Langton Roads. A few new cottages were built in the vicinity of the brewery.
8. *Bryanston, White Cliff Mill and Salisbury Street urban plots.* There was little discernible change to these plots during the inter-war period.
9. *Eagle House/Park House Ornamental Villas.* A new hall was built NE of Park House during the inter-war period. This is now the headquarters of the Blandford Scout troop.
10. *Dale House/ Salisbury House.* There was little change to this area during the inter-war period.
11. *Dorset/ Orchard Street Housing Estate.* There was little change to this area during the inter-war period.
12. *The Plocks and the Sheep Market.* The weekly sheep market on Sheep Market Hill continued throughout the inter-war period.
13. *Church Lane Townhouses.* The Parish Rooms were extended during the inter-war period.
14. *The Crown Hotel.* The Crown Hotel was largely rebuilt in about 1937-8 (Cox & Chandler 1996, 5). A cattle market was established at the rear of the Crown Hotel at some time between 1901 and the 1930s. It had been dismantled by 1946.
15. *Damory Court and Cowards Farms.* A small block of semi-detached houses were built on Salisbury Road, opposite Damory Court Farm, during the inter-war period.
16. *Hall and Woodhouse Brewery.* There was little discernible change to the brewery site during the inter-war period.
17. *The Municipal Cemetery.* The cemetery site expanded slightly to the north during the inter-war period to form a true triangular plot.
18. *Cemetery Farm.* There was little discernible change to Cemetery Farm during the inter-war period.
19. *The Isolation Hospital.* The Blandford Isolation Hospital on Shaftesbury Lane appears to have remained in use at least until 1946.
20. *Blandford Union Workhouse.* This was known as the Poor Law Institution by 1929.
21. *Station Suburb.* The station suburb expanded considerably between 1901 and 1929. Groups of semi-detached, detached and short terraces were built filling in vacant plots on Edward Street, Albert Street and Alexandra Street. Furthermore, a larger area of development, appended to the east and south sides of the suburb along Alfred Street, Queen's Road and King's Road at the turn of the century, expanded significantly during the inter-war period.
22. *Blandford Station, Goods Yard and Railway.* A branch line to Blandford Camp was opened in about 1919 but closed again by 1923. This is marked as an 'old tramway' on the Ordnance Survey 1929 edition. The line was embanked where it left the main line south of Langton

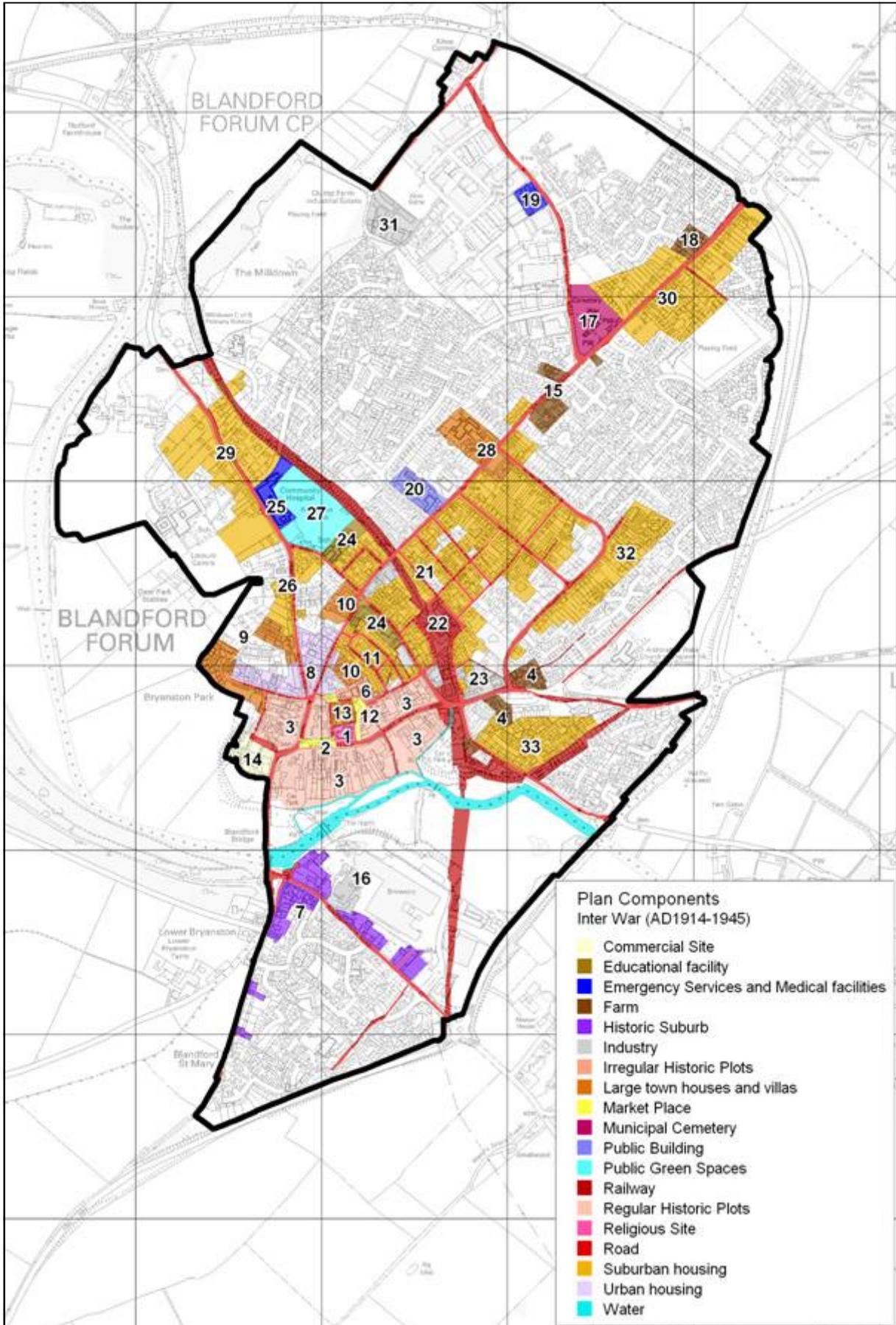


Figure 31: Blandford Inter-War Plan Components

Road and then passed through a cutting approximately on the line of the modern Langton Crescent. This cutting was used as a municipal land fill site shortly after closure.

23. *Station Industrial Area.* Industrial activity in the station area continued during the inter-war period. A garden nursery survived until 1929 at the north end of Damory Street, to be replaced by semi-detached housing on Nursery Road by 1946. Extra industrial units, including a large glasshouse, were built between Wimborne Road and Charles Street between 1901 and 1929.

24. *Damory Street Schools.* The National school on Park Road received an extra building between 1901 and 1929.

25 *The Cottage Hospital.* A Drill Hall and three detached houses were built to the north of the original cottage hospital between 1901 and 1929. These were demolished and incorporated into the hospital site in 1970.

26. *White Cliff Mill Street Suburban Villas.* There was little discernible change to these villas during the inter-war period.

27. *Park Road Recreation Ground.* A football pitch and associated buildings were constructed in the northern part of the recreation Ground between 1929 and 1946. Some of these buildings survive, although more were lost in the extension of the hospital in 1970.

28. *Nordon and Barnes Homes.* A new block, adjacent to Salisbury Road, was added to Nordon between 1901 and 1929.

29. *Milldown Road Suburban Housing.* Two rows of large detached houses were built on Milldown Road within large rectangular plots and set back from the street frontage. Those on the east side of Milldown Road were largely completed by 1929; those on the west side were added by 1946.



Figure 32: View north across Sheep Market Hill to the Post Office

30. *Salisbury Road Suburban Housing.* Similarly, a double row of large detached houses and bungalows were built on either side of Salisbury Road between the cemetery and Cemetery Farm during the inter-war period. A small group of houses with gable ended roofs were built on the south side of the road by 1929. Later houses and bungalows with hipped roofs were added on the north side of the road and opposite Cemetery Farm on the south side of the road by 1946.

31. *Milldown Industry.* A saw mill was constructed at the south end of Tin Pot Lane between 1901 and 1929. No trace of the buildings remains and the site has been redeveloped as the Clump Farm Industrial Estate.

32 *St Leonard's Avenue Suburban Housing.* A single row of detached and semi-detached houses were built on the south side of St Leonard's Avenue between 1901 and 1946. Later houses tend to be detached with hipped roofs. There is also a short terrace, St Leonard's Terrace, at the extreme eastern end of St Leonard's Avenue which was constructed between 1901 and 1929 (Figure 33). The houses were originally set within long narrow plots, although these have become truncated in recent years with modern infill.

33. *Langton Road Suburban Housing.* A group of short terraced houses along the north side of Langton Road and Langton Crescent date from between 1929 and 1946. They comprise several regular short terraces of four houses with hipped ends on Langton Crescent and gable ends on Langton Road. A small estate of semi-detached houses arranged around circular crescents with central greens was established behind these terraces by 1946, although it is possible that these latter houses were immediate post-war in date. They have since been demolished to make way for the modern Windmill Road.



Figure 33: St Leonard's Terrace

5.5 Modern Blandford Forum (1946- Present Day)

5.5.1 Historical Summary

The story of later 20th century and early 21st century Blandford Forum is one dominated by large scale suburban expansion. This process began during the immediate post-war period; although it is only since the 1980s that the town's population has exploded beyond its previous mid 19th century peak. Between 1851 and 1891 Blandford had a relatively stable population of approximately 4,000. This had fallen to about 3,200 by 1921, gradually recovering over the following decades to 3,920 in 1981. The population more than doubled during the next ten years to 7,850 in 1991. The current population (2008 mid year estimate) stands at around 9,610.

Blandford railway station was closed to passenger traffic on the 7th March 1966 and the track was lifted in 1969 after being closed to goods traffic from January 6th 1969 (Clapcott 2007). Damory railway bridges were demolished in 1978.

The weekly sheep market ceased in 1977 or shortly after (Cox 1986, 37). Traditional industries in Blandford had been in decline during the earlier 20th century; the glove industry ceased around 1940 (Lavington 1988, 30) and the iron foundry site on Orchard Street was used as a depot by 1962. Former industrial sites around the station were dominated by builders' yards and garages by 1962. Blandford Heights Industrial Estate also began to develop from the 1960s. The earliest units were housed in structures built from materials recycled from Nissen huts on the site. The estate is now dominated visually by the BOCM animal feeds mill. The Hall and Woodhouse brewery modernised and expanded their Blandford St Mary

site over a similar period.

There were significant developments in the organisation and provision of education within the town during the later 20th century. Blandford Secondary Modern School was erected in Lord Portman's former deer park during 1955. The former Blandford Grammar school became a comprehensive school and moved from Damory Street to a new site adjoining the secondary modern school in 1968 (Cox 1995, 173-4). Until recently there were three schools on the site; The Blandford School, Blandford Middle School and Blandford First School. However, under Dorset County Council's review of education provision in Blandford, the Milldown Primary School has been created from the First School and a new building is under construction in 2010. The former Grammar School site on Damory Street has now been redeveloped as apartments at Wessex Court and the Damory/ Salisbury Street junction widened. The former infants' school building has been retained, although this has also been converted into apartments. The National Boys School (Archbishop Wakes School) on Park Road moved to new premises on Black Lane in 2009. The old school buildings on Park Road have been retained for education purposes, although the land at the back of the site is under redevelopment as care homes for the elderly. Blandford St Mary First School moved to a brand new site on Birch Avenue, completed in 1997. The old Victorian building has been replaced by a Homebase supermarket, although architectural elements from the old school have been incorporated into the new building (Figure 34).

The bounds of Blandford Borough had been extended in 1935 to include the area of the station suburb, Salisbury Road as far as Cow-



Figure 34: Homebase Store, Blandford St Mary. Architectural fragments salvaged from the former Blandford St Mary Primary School have been set into the wall on the left.



Figure 35: View of Modern Housing estates under construction along Shaftesbury Lane.

ards Farm and a large part of Milldown Road. However, in the government's reorganisation of local authorities in 1974 Blandford lost its borough status.

5.5.2 Town Layout

Rapid and extensive suburban expansion dominated changes to the town layout in the later 20th century. This expansion has tended to be on the higher ground to the north and east of the historic town centre, although during the late 1990s a new modern housing estate was built on the higher ground south of Blandford St Mary, within the ring of the Blandford by-pass. The by-pass opened on 1st January 1992 and effectively encloses the town around three quarters of its periphery to the south, east and north. The modern housing estates are arranged around new curvilinear culs-de-sac, although these link to the pre-existing street pattern, which was largely unchanged from the inter-war period. The dismantling of the railway led to new housing and commercial developments in the vicinity of the station and the site of the junction with the Blandford Camp branch is now a supermarket. To the north of the station the track bed has been retained as a public path and green corridor.

Other major developments include the Blandford School and Archbishop Wakes School sites. The Blandford Heights industrial estate also forms a major plan component above the town to the north east. Modern housing developments within the confines of the ring road are continuing into the 21st century to the north of the cemetery (Figure 35).

5.5.3 Modern Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the twentieth century town are shown on Figure 38 and are listed below.

1. *The Church of Ss Peter and Paul.* There was



Figure 36: View of Greyhound Yard (left), a former burgage plot, with Morrisons Supermarket on the right.

no discernible change to the parish church during the late 20th century.

2. *The Market.* The weekly Saturday produce market continues in the Market Place. There have been changes and improvements to the car park and roads around the market place.

3. *Burgages.* There have been some minor changes to the town centre burgage plots during the late 20th century. A supermarket was built during the 1980s at the west end of West Street on the site of the former Conyer's coach building workshops (Figure 36). There have also been small areas of modern infill at the back of former burgage plots at Marsh's Court and Tabernacle Walk. Otherwise the burgage plots remain remarkably intact .

4. *St Leonard's Chapel.* During the late 1980s and early 1990s North Dorset District Council undertook remedial steps to stop the ruin of St Leonard's Chapel from completely collapsing. The St Leonard's Farm buildings had been demolished during the 1980s in advance of housing development. The farmhouse and the chapel are now all that remain of the earlier complex. Another farm on the south side of Wimborne Road was demolished to make way for a modern housing estate. 1 Fisher Close is the only survival of this farm.

6. *Plots north of the Plocks.* The Post Office site was expanded through the construction of a sorting house and yard.

7. *Blandford St Mary suburb.* The Victorian school building on School Lane was extended during the 1960s in order to accommodate an increasing parish population derived from post-war housing developments south of Bourne-mouth Road, notably on Pigeon Close. A new school was built on Birch Avenue in 1997 (Figure 37). The old school was demolished and replaced with a Homebase store in 2004. The rear of historic plots at the junction of Dorchester Hill and Bournemouth Road were truncated through the construction of modern housing



Figure 37: Blandford St Mary Primary School, Birch Avenue.

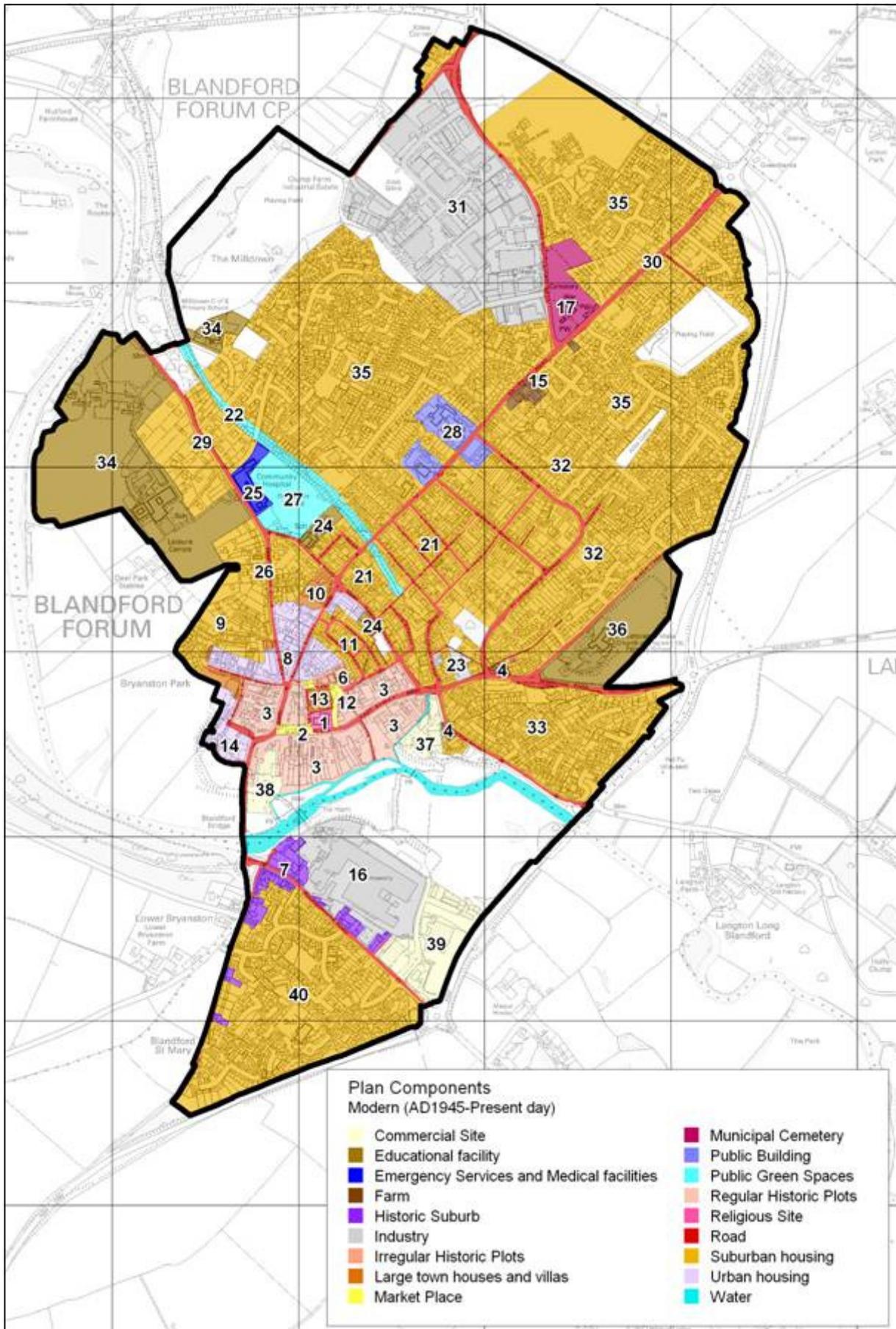


Figure 38: Blandford Modern Plan Components

during the 1990s. The street frontages of Bournemouth Road and Dorchester Hill have been greatly altered through the construction of an extensive modern housing estate.

8. *Bryanston, White Cliff Mill and Salisbury Street urban plots.* A number of historic buildings on Bryanston and White Cliff Mill Streets, behind the King's Arms Hotel, have been demolished to make way for supported housing for the elderly at Ryan Court. Modern housing has also infilled plots behind Ryves Almshouses at Fields Oak and Parkers Mews.

9. *Eagle House/Park House Ornamental Villas.* Park House was demolished during the late 20th century to make way for a modern housing development at Park Lands, Eagle House Gardens (Figure 39) and Hanover Court. Eagle House itself has been restored as a Doctor's Surgery (Cox 1995, 67 and 69).

10. *Dale House/ Salisbury House.* Salisbury House was demolished after Blandford Grammar School moved to Milldown in 1968. The Cedars residential apartments, associated garages and an electrical substation have been built on the site of former suburban villas at the south end of Park Road.

11. *Dorset/ Orchard Street Housing Estate.* Former industrial buildings on Orchard Street and Dorset Street have been demolished to make way for modern housing; some buildings have been retained and converted to domestic use.

12. *The Plocks and the Sheep Market.* The weekly sheep market on Sheep Market Hill was discontinued shortly after 1977.

13. *Church Lane Townhouses.* The Parish Rooms were further extended during the modern period.

14. *The Crown Hotel.* Land behind the Crown Hotel, on the site of the former cattle market was developed for housing during the late 1990s.



Figure 39: Eagle House Gardens.

15. *Damory Court and Cowards Farms.* Cowards Farm was recently demolished to make way for a modern housing estate of over 70 houses arranged in short terraces. Damory Court Farm House and outbuildings have been converted to domestic and commercial use.

16. *Hall and Woodhouse Brewery.* The Brewery site was extensively modernised and expanded during the late 20th century.

17. *The Municipal Cemetery.* The cemetery site expanded very slightly again to the north east during the modern period.

18. *Cemetery Farm.* The farm house has been retained, although the farmyard has been developed as a modern cul-de-sac called Dairy Field.

19. *The Isolation Hospital.* The Blandford Isolation Hospital was demolished to make way for the Blandford Heights industrial estate. Only the former matron's lodgings on Shaftesbury Lane (Pines House) survives.

20. *Blandford Union Workhouse.* The workhouse buildings were largely demolished during the 1970s apart from the entrance block which was converted to use as a residential care home, Castleman's Homes.

21. *Station Suburb.* The station suburb continued to expand during the late 20th century. Much of this expansion took place on a large tract of previously undeveloped land between Alfred Street and Leonard's Avenue. The infilling of small vacant plots along Edward, Albert and Victoria Streets also continued.

22. *Blandford Station, Goods Yard and Railway.* The station and goods yard were demolished during the 1970s and modern apartments and houses have been built in its stead. The track bed to the south of Wimborne Road has been lifted and a supermarket built on the site, although a section of the bridge over the River Stour survives (Figure 40). To the north of the station the track bed is used as a footpath and green corridor; part of the North Dorset Trail-



Figure 40: A short surviving section of the former railway bridge over the River Stour.

way.

23. *Station Industrial Area.* Industrial activity in the station area has been reduced to a minimal level following the closure of the railway to goods traffic in 1969. Coal and builder's yards have been replaced with modern housing. The former gas works were demolished and, after functioning as a car park for a while, is now abandoned. Modern housing dominates the former industrial area between Charles Street and Wimborne Road, although a Council depot survives here.

24. *Damory Street Schools.* The National school on Park Road has recently been replaced by the new Archbishop Wakes Primary School on Black Lane. The old school buildings have been retained for educational purposes. The former girls and infants school on Damory Street has been converted to domestic use. The Blandford Grammar School was made comprehensive in 1968 and moved to the Milldown site. The former school buildings, including Salisbury House were demolished and replaced with modern apartments (Wessex Court).

25 *Blandford Community Hospital.* The Cottage Hospital was incorporated into the NHS in 1948 at which time the former trustees formed the Friends of Blandford Hospital. During the late 1970s the former drill hall and cottages to the north of the hospital were demolished and a new Community Hospital was built.

26. *White Cliff Mill Street Suburban Villas.* There was little discernible change to these villas during the modern period.

27. *Park Road Recreation Ground.* Some buildings at the north end of the site were lost during the extension of the hospital in the 1970s.

28. *Nordon and Barnes Homes.* Barnes Homes has changed little during the late 20th century. Nordon is now the site of North Dorset District Council's Offices and has temporary modern buildings attached to it. The former grounds

have been partially converted into a car park.

29. *Milldown Road Suburban Housing.* The street frontage is largely unchanged, although some of the former large plots have been truncated at the rear and filled with modern culs-de-sac (The Orchard and Chestnut Grove).

30. *Salisbury Road Suburban Housing.* The street frontage is largely unchanged from the inter-war period. Cemetery Farm yard has been developed for housing, as has a vacant plot behind the street frontage and adjacent to the cemetery (Davis Gardens).

31. *Blandford Heights Industrial Estate.* In 1962 the Milldown Saw Mills and the Isolation Hospital were still in existence. Some new units had been constructed adjacent to Cowards Farm. Much of the area of the current industrial estate remained allotments at that time. A large animal feed mill was constructed by BOCM at Blandford Heights during the late 1970s or early 1980s and this still dominates the skyline today (Figure 41). Many of the current industrial units date from the 1980s and 1990s, although development of the site at Uplands Way and Clump Farm (on the site of the former saw mill) has continued into the late 1990s and early 21st century.

32 *St Leonard's Avenue and King's Road Suburban Housing.* A post-war housing estate was developed on land formerly belonging to Damory Court Farm. Some of the walnut trees planted on the Damory Court Estate still survive in this housing estate (Figure 42). Construction had begun as early as 1946 and by 1962 the estate comprised semi-detached houses and short terraces of four houses arranged around linear culs-de-sac, some with circular greens at their termini. Elizabeth Road was the main access road to the estate, with major branches at Barnes Close and Hunt Road. Some of the large plots associated with inter-war housing along St Leonard's Avenue were truncated and filled with modern housing during the late 20th



Figure 41: View west of Blandford Heights Industrial Estate, with the BOCM animal feed mill dominating the skyline.



Figure 42: Post-war housing estate, Elizabeth Road, with prominent walnut tree in centre.

century. These estates represent the core from which the modern extensive housing estates north east of Blandford Forum developed.

33. *Langton Road Suburban Housing.* This estate was extended through the construction of bungalows along Stour Road and Riverside Road during the 1960s and 1970s. Earlier inter-war housing was replaced along Windmill Road during the 1980s. The estate was completed following the construction of the Blandford By-pass in the late 1990s with modern housing along Westbury Way.

34. *The Blandford and Milldown Schools.* Blandford Secondary Modern School was erected in Lord Portman's deer park in 1955. Blandford Comprehensive School was built adjacent in 1968. The secondary modern school then became Milldown Middle School and a new Milldown First School was constructed east of the railway. A recent reorganisation of education provision in Blandford has led to the creation of a new Milldown Primary School in new premises under construction in 2010 within the grounds of the Middle School.

35. *North East Blandford Housing Estates.* Although there had been a few small developments along Salisbury Road during the post-war period, the major part of Blandford's modern housing estates to the north and east of the town were constructed during the 1980s. During this decade alone the population of the town doubled from four to eight thousand. These estates comprise vast networks of curvilinear cul-de-sac built in a single period. During the late 1990s and early 21st century additional housing was built around the fringes, between the earlier

estates and the new by-pass, a process that is still continuing.

36. *Archbishop Wake Primary School.* A new primary school was opened on Black Lane in March 2009 to replace the former National School on Park Road.

37. *Langton Road Supermarket.* A supermarket was constructed on the site of the former railway junction south of Wimborne Road during the late 20th century.

38. *West Street Supermarket.* A supermarket was constructed on the site of Conyer's coach building workshop at the west end of West Street in the early 1980s. The workshop was demolished and some burgage plot boundaries removed in the process. The supermarket is now owned by Morrisons.

39. *Blandford St Mary Retail Park.* A new Tesco Supermarket was opened in Blandford St Mary in 1995-6. This formed part of a new retail complex adjacent to the Blandford by-pass. It includes a garage as well as office space at Stour Park and Observatory House.

40. *Blandford St Mary Housing Estate.* Initial development in this area comprised a few post-war detached houses along Dorchester Hill and a small post-war estate of short terraced houses on Pigeon Close. In the 1980s a large housing estate was built between Dorchester Hill and Pigeon Close. A further triangle of land in the angle between Dorchester Hill and the Blandford By-pass was developed in 1994 and a new building for Blandford St Mary Primary School opened on Birch Avenue in 1997.