

5.4 Later Nineteenth–Earlier Twentieth Century Lyme Regis (1850–1945)

5.4.1 Historical Summary

This period saw the change from a largely middle class watering place to a seaside resort catering for day trippers and holidaymakers, but Lyme still attracted its share of well-known visitors. The town was almost completely reliant on the tourist trade, with a large number of hotels, boarding houses and shops catering for the visitors. In 1903 Lyme was finally connected to the railway network, via a branch line from Axminster, which made it easier for tourists to reach the town. The road connections were also improved with the closure of the old Charmouth Road, which was very prone to slippage, and the construction of the present road via Fernhill in 1924.

The population of Lyme was 2852 in 1851 and declined slightly during the second half of the 19th century to 2237 in 1891. The population rose in the first half of the 20th century from 2772 in 1911 to 3497 in 1939. The rise in population in the early 20th century, was accompanied by an expansion of the urban area. A number of new private housing estates were built on the edge of the historic core. Also, the first council houses were built on Corporation Terrace (now Lym Close) in 1911 and a second larger council estate was built at Colway Mead a little outside the town in 1929 (Figures 26–27). A number of the substandard houses in the town were demolished.

Lyme's industries had dwindled, with cloth production ceasing in the middle of the 19th century. There was some continuing coastal shipping trade, mainly bringing coal from the north-east England and timber from Russia and the Baltic. The quarrying of the cliffs and ledges continued until the First World War, with large

quantities of stone being shipped from the Cobb. A cement factory was built on Monmouth Beach making hydraulic cement from stone quarried from the adjacent cliffs. There was also a brick works adjacent to the cement factory. The gas works moved from East Cliff to Poole's Court in the 1850s. In 1909 the first electric lights were switched on in Lyme, provided by the new Lyme Regis Electric Light and Power Company Ltd. Lyme became the third town in Dorset to have an electricity supply. The generating station was in the old malthouse in Mill Lane (Figure 23), with a supplementary water turbine generator at Higher Mill. A turbine was fitted to the Town Mill in 1936. The electricity supply was transferred to the National Grid in 1947 (Greene 2006).

Lyme's first hospital was in Sherborne Lane and transferred in 1866 to Keble Cottage, Sidmouth Road. In 1897, it moved to 'The Gables' in Church Street, before moving to Holmlea, Pound Lane in 1927. The hospital was extended in 1935.

The Lyme Regis National School was established in 1834 and was originally in a school building adjacent to St Michael's Church. In 1891, the school moved to a new building opposite on Church Street (Figure 24). There was also a British School on Mill Green in the 1840s–50s. In 1923 a grammar school was founded in Lyme Regis, originally on a site in Hill Road, before moving to the site of the present Woodroffe School on Uplyme Road in 1932 (Warr 2007).

5.4.2 Town Layout

Within the historic core, there was little change to the town layout, other than the normal replacement of buildings and limited new devel-



Figure 23: Former malthouse, then electricity generating station, Mill Street.



Figure 24: St Michael's School (left) and master's house, (right), Church Street.

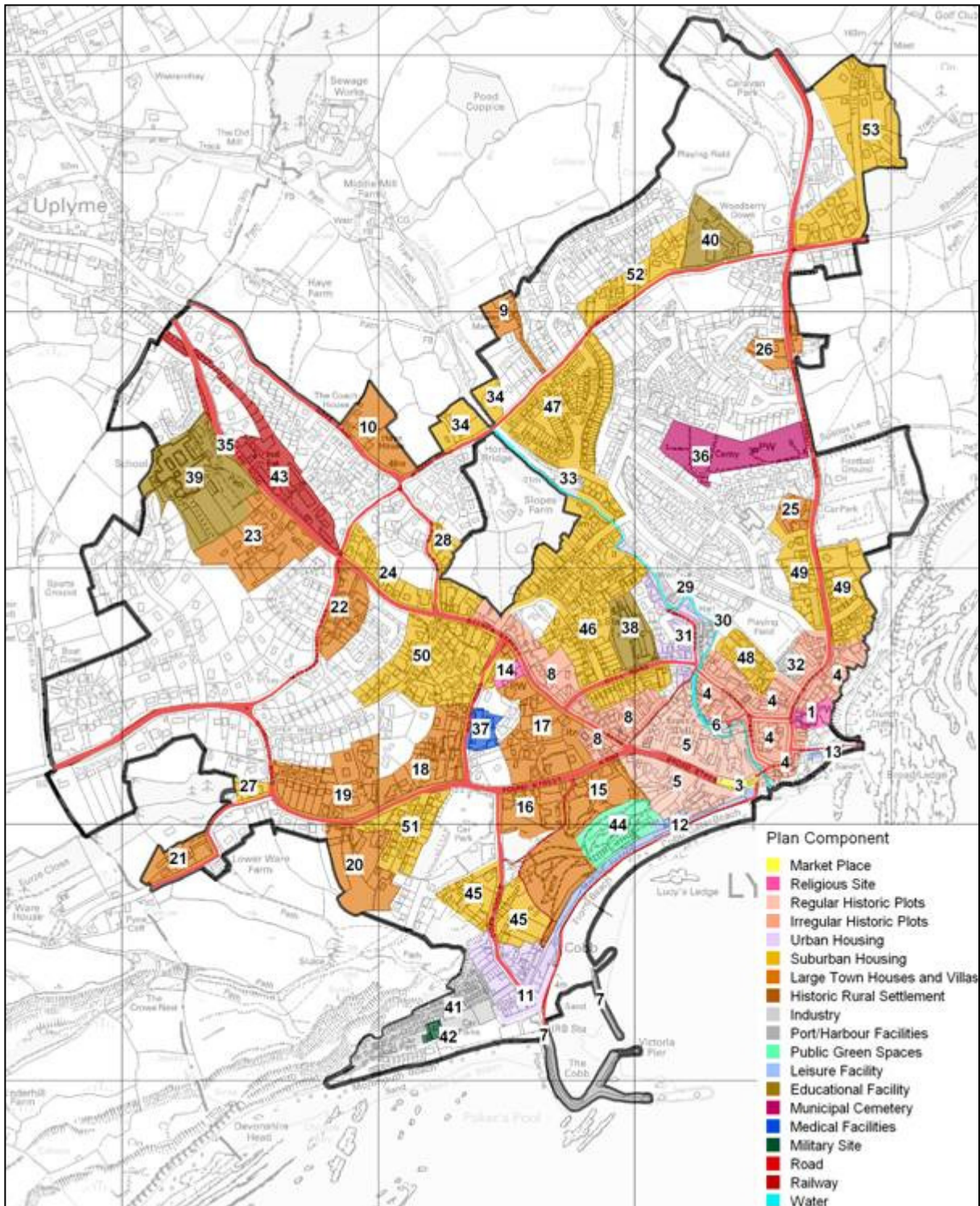


Figure 25: Lyme Regis Later Nineteenth and Earlier Twentieth Century Town Plan Components.

opment. In 1913, Bridge Street was widened, with the demolition of a row of houses along its southern side. The Assembly Rooms were demolished to make way for a car park. There was some slum clearance of houses in the 1930s (Draper 2007).

Beyond the historic core, this period saw suburban expansion to the north and west, mainly

in the period after the First World War. To the north of Sherborne Lane a number of new roads were laid out in the early years of the 20th century, but were not fully developed until the 1920s. There was also suburban development off Sidmouth Road (Holmbush), Silver Street (West Hill) and Charmouth Road. There was council house development at Colway Mead off Colway Lane and closer to the town

off Poole's Court (Lym Close). A number of large houses were built in the early 20th century along Colway Lane and on Timber Hill.

The railway station on Uplyme Road was set at quite some distance from the centre of the town because of the difficulties of the topography. Woodroffe School was built adjacent in the 1930s.

5.4.3 Later Nineteenth and Earlier Twentieth Century Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth century town are shown on Figure 25 and are listed below.

1. *St Michael's Church*. The church was restored in 1885, when the side galleries were removed and the south vestry added (RCHME 1952, 141). The west wall of the old nave was rebuilt in 1933.

3. *Broad Street Market*. The market dwindled during the second half of the 19th century.

4. *Coombe Street*. This was rebuilt with houses in mid 19th century following the 1844 fire. The Guildhall was rebuilt in 1887 and the Museum was built in 1901 by George Vials, after the clearance of Cockmoile Square. George's Square was made in 1909. Bridge Street was widened in 1913. The Bluebird Coach Depot was built in Coombe Street in the 1920s.

5. *Broad Street*. Part of the lower end of Broad Street was destroyed by fire in 1889. Some new shops and shopfronts were inserted along the street and a number of buildings demolished and replaced, most notably the 17th century 'Great House', demolished in 1913. The open gutter running down the street was canalised. The cinema was built in 1937.

6. *Town Mill*. There were modifications to the water wheel and machinery during the second half of the 19th century. It was largely used as

an animal feed mill in the earlier 20th century and was sold to the Borough in 1928. In 1936 a water turbine was added to the mill for electricity generation, which continued until 1947 (Graham *et al.* 2005).

7. *The Cobb*. The Cobb was repaired in 1857 and again in 1939 (Keystone 1994). A tramway was built to carry stone from the cliffs along the Cobb in 1857.

8. *Silver Street*. There was little change during this period. A number of slum houses were demolished in the 1930s (Draper 2007).

9. *Colway Manor*. The manor house burnt down in a fire in 1921 and was rebuilt. Only the 17th century entrance survives from the earlier house.

10. *Haye House*. There are no major alterations to Haye House during this period.

11. *Cobb Hamlet*. This continued as a working commercial area serving the harbour. A lifeboat house was constructed on the site of the shipyard in 1866 and in 1884 another new lifeboat house was built in Cobb Square, this closed in 1932. Ozone Terrace was built in the early 1890s on the site of the former shipyards. The Cobb Arms was constructed in 1937.

12. *Marine Parade*. Marine Parade and the Assembly Rooms continued to be the focus of Lyme society in the late 19th century. The sea wall was completed in the 1860s. Following a landslip in 1902, a series of concrete bays were constructed to retain the soil further up the slope. The sea wall was breached in the 1920s. The shelter was built in 1924 and the Bay Hotel was also built in that year. The toilets were built in the late 1920s. The Assembly Rooms were extended with the addition of the Victoria Hall in 1866. They were demolished in 1928 and site turned into a car park (Draper 2007).

13. *Drill Hall*. Jefferd's Baths were replaced by the Drill Hall, built in 1884 by George Vials. It



Figure 26: Broad Street, with red brick houses built after the 1889 fire on left.



Figure 27: Council Houses, Lym Close.

was heavily adapted in the 1930s to become a cinema.

14. *St Michael's and St Nicholas' RC Church.* There were no significant changes to the church in this period.

15. *Poulett House and other large houses on Pound Street.* Poulett House became the Alexandra Hotel in 1901. Much of the grounds became part of Langmoor Gardens.

16. *Belmont.* There was little change in this area.

17. *Villas on west side of Silver Street.* There was little change to these villas during this period.

18. *Coram Court.* Coram Court was built as a new vicarage in 1852. It became St Michael's theological college in 1888. Coram Tower is a tall prominent four-storey building on the corner of Sidmouth Road and Pound Road, built for the masters of the college in the 1880s-90s.

19. *High Cliff.* There was little change during this period. It was the home of the surgeon Joseph Lister from the 1870s.

20. *Little Cliff and Holme Cleve.* There was little change during this period.

21. *Lower Ware.* There was little change during this period.

22. *Clappentail Lane.* There was little change during this period.

23. *Colway House.* There was little change during this period.

24. *St Andrew's House.* A number of suburban villas were built in the 1920s. The Victoria Hotel was built in 1901.

25. *Summer Hill.* This house was rented by A S Neil from 1924-27 as the first home for his experimental 'Summerhill School' (Draper 2006a,

106).

26. *Fairfield House.* There was little change during this period.

27. *Ware Lane.* A couple of additional houses were built on the south side of the lane in the early 20th century.

28. *Little Park.* A small number of houses or cottages were built in the later 19th century. Francis Palgrave, the writer, lived at Little Park.

29. *Upper Cloth Mill.* This reopened as a silk factory in 1854. This had become disused by the end of the 1880s. It was a laundry in the early 20th century.

30. *Lower Cloth Mill.* The 1889 Ordnance Survey map shows this as a disused cloth and silk mill.

31. *Mill Green.* There were a number of houses built or replaced during this period.

32. *Gas Works.* The gas works moved to a site off Poole's Court from East Cliff in the 1850s. It was operated by the Lyme Regis Gas and Range Company, who, from 1857, also made cooking ranges here (Draper 2006a).

33. *Higher Mill.* This was converted into a corn mill in the second half of the 19th century. An electricity generating turbine was installed here by the Lyme Regis Electric Light and Power Supply Company Ltd in 1909. It was removed in 1921 (Greene 2006).

34. *Horn Tavern.* Several large suburban houses set in large grounds were built on either side of Horn Bridge in the 1920s.

35. *Uplyme Road Cottages.* There was little change during this period.

36. *Cemetery.* The municipal cemetery was laid out 1856 and was extended in the 1930s.

37. *Hospital.* The hospital moved to the site on



Figure 28: Council Houses, South Avenue, Colway Mead.



Figure 29: Inter-war housing, Woodmead Road.

Pound Road in 1927 from The Gables, Church Street. Previously it had been at Keble Cottage, Sidmouth Road before moving to Church Street in 1897.

38. *School*. Lyme Regis County Secondary School was built in 1923 and its name was changed to Lyme Regis Grammar School in 1927. The school moved to the present Woodroffe School site in 1932.

39. *Woodroffe School*. This was built as a grammar school by Alban Woodroffe in 1932.

40. *St Albans School*. Built on Colway Lane in the 1920s.

41. *Cement Factory*. The cement factory was built in 1865 and rebuilt about 1901 (Draper 2001). It was built to convert the Blue Lias quarried from the adjacent cliffs into cement. It closed in 1914 and was demolished in 1936. Between the cement factory and the Cobb was a brickworks. Beach huts started to appear beyond the cement works from about 1900 and had increased in number by the 1930s. A bowling green was built on part of the area of the cement works.

42. *Barracks*. The RAF barracks were constructed behind Monmouth Beach in 1937 for the Air Sea Rescue service (Figure 31).

43. *Railway*. The Axminster and Lyme Regis Railway branch line was opened in 1903 and was absorbed by the LSWR in 1907.

44. *Langmoor Gardens*. The area was originally part of the grounds of the Poulett House (Alexandra Hotel) and other properties on Pound Street. The area was subject to a major landslip in 1903 following an attempt by Mrs Talbot of the Alexandra Hotel to develop it. The ground was bought by the Borough following a bequest of James Moly of Langmoor House near Charmouth. Langmoor Gardens opened to the public in 1913.

45. *Cobb Road*. In the later 19th century, a number of villas were built on the west side of Cobb

Road, north of Cobb hamlet. Several houses were built on the east side in the 1920s.

46. *Woodmead Road and Hill Road*. Woodmead Road was laid out in 1907 and some houses built, but was mainly developed in the 1920s (Fowles 1990) (Figure 29). Hill Road was constructed at about the same time, linking Gosling's Bridge and the end of Coombe Street with Silver Street, providing an alternative route to Sherborne Lane accessible by motor vehicles. A small housing estate was built along it and along View Road from about 1913 onwards, but was mainly developed in the 1920s. A police station was built on Hill Road.

47. *Colway Mead*. A council housing estate was built in 1928-9. It was extended in the 1930s.

48. *Corporation Terrace*. The first council housing in Lyme Regis was built here in 1911, possibly some of the earliest council houses built in Dorset. The estate was extended in 1926.

49. *Charmouth Road*. Development along Charmouth Road first took place along the east side of the road, where a small estate was built in the 1920s-30s on the site of Rose Cottage and Mr Moore's plant nursery. The west side was developed slightly later.

50. *West Hill Road*. West Hill Road and Hill View Road were laid out some time before 1930 and there was some housing development along these roads.

51. *Holmbush Estate*. A new housing estate was built in the early 1930s. Coram Avenue was laid out in 1932.

52. *Colway Lane*. There were a small number of large detached houses set in large grounds built along Colway Lane in the 1920s.

53. *Timber Hill*. A large house, Overton House, set in extensive grounds was built on the corner of Charmouth Road and Timber Hill early in the 20th century. In the later 1930s and 1940s, there was further houses built higher up Timber Hill.



Figure 30: Marine Theatre, formerly Drill Hall and 1930s cinema.



Figure 31: RAF Barracks, Monmouth Beach.

5.5 Later Twentieth Century Lyme Regis (1945-present day)

5.5.1 Historical Summary

The second half of the twentieth century saw a large increase in the size of Lyme Regis. The population increased from 3200 inhabitants in 1951 to a high of 3760 in 1991, but has fallen back slightly to 3500 in 2001 (DCC 2007). This increase is largely the result of the influx of people retiring to the town. The built area of Lyme Regis has expanded with the construction of a number of large suburban estates to the north and northwest of the town.

Lyme remains a seaside resort town with no industry other than tourism to sustain it. It retains a small and generally local range of shops and commercial businesses. It has also continued to attract a number of writers and artists, most notably John Fowles. The railway was closed in 1965 and although the roads have been improved, they remain narrow and difficult to negotiate for large volumes of traffic, particularly in the historic centre. A number of large car parks, on Charmouth Road, at Holmbush, on Monmouth Beach, and off Hill Road have been constructed to absorb the increasing number of visitors arriving by road.

Lyme continues to be affected by coastal erosion and unstable geology, with a number of landslips and breaches of the sea defences during this period. The most significant landslip was probably that of 1962, which destroyed Cliff House, the western end of Marine Parade and part of Cobb hamlet and which subsequently led to the creation of the Lister Gardens in the affected area. Numerous other slips have also occurred in the town. There was some major remodelling and improving of the sea defences in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s a major coastal protection scheme was started in Lyme, initially with the construction of a new sea wall and promenade next to



Figure 32: View of suburban housing development to north of Lyme Regis.

the River Buddle and incorporating a new sewage works at Gun Cliff in 1995. This has been followed in 2005-7 by new coastal defences and beach between Cobb Gate and the Cobb, including the rebuilding of Marine Parade and major stabilisation works in Langmoor and Lister Gardens.

5.5.2 Town Layout and Plan Components

The broad outline of the major routes and areas of the historic core remain largely as in previous periods, with two major routes into the town along Charmouth Road and Sidmouth Road, with another route along Uplyme Road. Colway Lane and Roman Road remain a cross-town route. The major change is the large increase in suburban housing with their attendant local access roads, which cover most of the area between Charmouth Road and Sidmouth Road (Figure 34).

5.5.3 Town Layout and Plan Components

The main plan components of the later twentieth century town are shown on Figure 34 and are listed below.

1. *St Michael's Church.* The bells were recast in 1953 and the ring augmented to ten in 1988.
3. *Broad Street Market.* The market is defunct and there are no major alterations to during this period to the buildings in this area.
4. *Coombe Street.* There was relatively little major change in this area during the second half of the twentieth century.
5. *Broad Street.* Broad Street has retained its role as the main commercial street of the town. There have been numerous changes to the



Figure 33: 1970's shelters, Marine Parade.

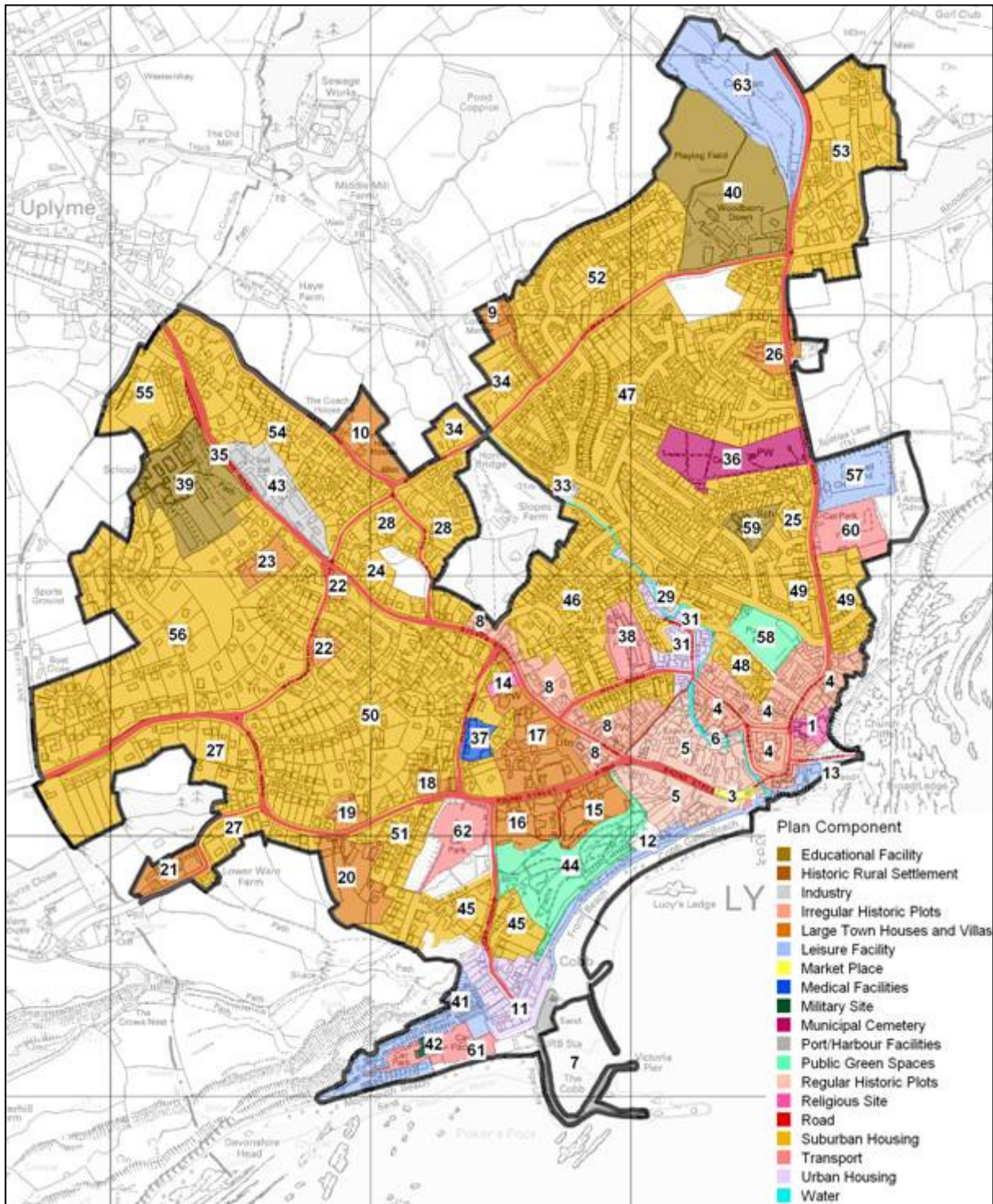


Figure 34: Lyme Regis Later Twentieth Century Town Plan Components.

shopfronts and a number of properties have been demolished and rebuilt. A car park was created behind the street frontage in the former grounds of Great House.

6. *Town Mill*. The mill became disused after 1947, then was used as the town council depot. The buildings became progressively more derelict until the mill was restored as a working mill by the Town Mill Trust, and opened to the

public in 2001 (Graham *et al.* 2005).

7. *The Cobb*. The southern arm of the Cobb was protected by the addition of the Beacon Rocks rock armouring in the 1970s and in 1986-7, there was extensive strengthening of the structure and the construction of concrete aprons. In 2005 the Beacon Rocks were extended and realigned and other changes made as part of an extensive coastal protection

scheme for Lyme Regis.

8. *Silver Street*. There was little change during this period. A number of houses were demolished in the 1960s and the Library was constructed at about the same time.
9. *Colway Manor*. There are no major alterations to Colway Manor during this period.
10. *Haye House*. There are no major alterations to Haye House during this period.
11. *Cobb Hamlet*. This area has changed from a working port area to an area predominantly catering for tourists. Some new shops built and older buildings converted. The Lifeboat Station was re-established in 1967, and the present building constructed in 1997. There was some damage to buildings in the 1962 landslip.
12. *Marine Parade*. The 1962 landslide partly destroyed Marine Parade, which was repaired and reinforced. In the early 1970s the upper walkway and shelters were built. The sea wall was breached in 1974. In 1978-9, the whole of the sea wall was encased and reinforced. In 2005-7, there was extensive remodelling of the beach, which buried Lucy's Jetty and Cobb Gate Jetty, together with the construction of new jetties and other improvement works.
13. *Marine Theatre*. The cinema in the old drill hall was adapted to become the Marine Theatre in the 1960s (Figure 30).
14. *St Michael's and St Nicholas' RC Church*. There were no significant changes to the church in this period.
15. *Alexandra Hotel and other large houses on Pound Street*. Pound Street was widened in the 1950s. Cliff House was destroyed in the 1962 landslip. Otherwise, there has been relatively little change to this area. A number of the houses have been renovated and divided.
16. *Belmont*. There was little change in this area.
17. *Villas on west side of Silver Street*. The Grange was demolished post-war and the area developed for housing from the 1960s onwards. Other infill housing has also been built in the grounds of other villas along this street.
18. *Coram Court*. The grounds of Coram Court have been developed as a housing estate in the 2000s.
19. *High Cliff*. The grounds of this house were gradually lost to housing development, first with the construction of High Cliff Road in the 1960s. Further housing infill took place around the house itself in the 1980s.

20. *Little Cliff and Holme Cleve*. There was little change during this period.
21. *Lower Ware*. There was little change during this period.
22. *Clappentail Lane*. There was little change during this period.
23. *Colway House*. The grounds of Colway House were infilled with housing in the post-war period.
24. *St Andrew's House*. Blocks of flats have been built on some plots and other houses have been converted into hotels and guest houses.
25. *Summer Hill*. Summerhill House was demolished in 1987 and replaced by blocks of flats.
26. *Fairfield House*. Now a residential care home.
27. *Ware Lane*. Some additional houses had been built along the lane by the 1970s.
28. *Little Park*. A small housing estate was built on Springhill Gardens in the 1970s and another small estate on St Andrew's Meadow in the late 1990s.
29. *Upper Cloth Mill*. The former mill building has been converted into flats.
30. *Lower Cloth Mill*. The area was redeveloped for housing in the 1980s or 1990s.
31. *Mill Green*. There was little change during this period.
32. *Gas Works*. The gas works were demolished in the 1980s. A social housing development has been built on part of the site.
33. *Higher Mill*. The mill building has been converted into flats.
34. *Horn Tavern*. There was little change during this period.
35. *Uplyme Road Cottages*. There was little change during this period.
36. *Cemetery*. The municipal cemetery continues in use.
37. *Hospital*. The hospital is now a nursing home.
38. *Woodmead Car Park*. The site of the former school is now a car park and Woodmead Halls.
39. *Woodroffe School*. Lyme Regis Grammar School changed its name to The Woodroffe School after it was made comprehensive in 1964. The school was extended in 1979-81

and a new sports hall and drama studio added in 1998-2000 (Warr 2007).

40. *St Albans School*. The school was used as an outdoor pursuits and education centre. It is now Woodberry Down Activity and Field Studies centre.

41. *Monmouth Beach*. There was an increase in the number of huts along the base of the cliffs and a caravan park was established along the back of the beach itself.

42. *Barracks*. The RAF barracks were closed in 1962 and are now the home of the Boat Building Academy.

43. *Railway*. The railway was closed in 1965 and the railway station buildings removed in 1979 and re-erected at Alresford on the Mid-Hants Railway; the area is now an industrial estate.

44. *Langmoor and Lister Gardens*. The western part was severely affected by a landslip in 1962, which destroyed Cliff House. The area became the Lister Gardens in the late 1960s. Extensive stabilisation work was carried out in the gardens in 2005-6.

45. *Cobb Road*. A small housing development was built off Pine Walk below Holmbush Car Park in the 1950s.

46. *Woodmead Road and Hill Road*. There was little change to the housing estates. The police station moved to the Fire Station and the station on Hill Road was demolished and replaced with housing.

47. *Colway Mead*. Virtually the whole area between the inter-war council housing estate at Colway Mead and Charmouth Road was developed for housing. In the post-war period there was development along Anning Road, Kingsway and Summerhill Road. Fairfield Park housing estate was built in the 1970s and the housing development at Pine Ridge and at Queens Walk and Henry's Way was constructed in the 1980s or 90s.

48. *Lym Close*. The name was changed from Corporation Terrace to Lym Close in 1974.

49. *Charmouth Road*. There was little major change other than the demolition of Cloverdale Garage in 1987 and its replacement by a block of flats on the corner with Anning Road.

50. *West Hill Road*. There have been a small number of individual houses built in this area during the second half of the 20th century.

51. *Holmbush Estate*. There was little change during this period.

52. *Colway Lane*. Further houses were built along Colway Lane from the late 1940s.

53. *Timber Hill*. A new housing estate was built at Dragon's Hill in the 1970s. There have been a number of new bungalows built on the east side of Timber Hill and infill development of the grounds of Overton House from the 1970s onwards.

54. *Haye Lane*. There has been modern housing development infilling the whole area between Haye Lane and Uplyme Road. The first development was on Haye Close in the 1950s, with more informal housing to the north and west built in the 1960s. The small St George's Hill estate and Haye Gardens were built in the 2000s.

55. *Woodroffe Meadow*. Several large houses built along the county boundary post-war, with a modern housing estate along Woodroffe Meadow, built in the 2000s.

56. *Somers Road* There were extensive housing estates built in the 1960s and early 1970s.

57. *Football Ground*. The Lyme Regis football ground was built in the 1960s on former allotment gardens.

58. *Anning Road Playing Field*. The playground and sports field was created in the 1950s.

59. *St Michael's Primary School*. A new primary school was constructed on Kingsway in the 1980s.

60. *Charmouth Road Car Park*. A car park was built in the 1960s on former allotment gardens.

61. *Monmouth Beach Car Park*. A car park was built along the beach in the 1960s.

62. *Holmbush Car Park*. A car park was built in a former field in the 1960s.

63. *Timber Vale Caravan Park*. A caravan park was established on the slopes of the hill in the 1950s.