

## 5.5 20<sup>th</sup> Century Wimborne Minster (1914 – Present Day)

### 5.5.1 Historical Summary

For many Dorset towns, the later 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of decline, due to the general agricultural depression in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the population of Wimborne Minster continued to gradually increase. This growth was accommodated largely through the infilling of vacant plots within an already developed town centre and was eclipsed by developments in Colehill. Here the creation of extensive modern housing estates enabled the population to rise from 1,786 in 1951 to 6,710 in 2001.

Wimborne Minster managed to avoid the worst depredations of unemployment and poverty during the depression of the 1920's and 30's. This may be partly explained by its proximity to the ever expanding seaside resort of Bournemouth and the popularity of suburban living during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Parish records for Colehill indicate that there were only minor problems in terms of unemployment and theft during the years of the depression (Divall 1996, 5; 8). Wimborne's industrial base did not grow at the same rate as its population. The town's major industrial site remained on New Borough, close to the station during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Eclipse works on New Borough manufactured machinery for the brewing and bottling industries and was described in 1910 as the most important industry carried on in Wimborne Minster. The brewing industry itself must have continued to run a close second during the early and middle 20<sup>th</sup> century (Willis & Willis 1990, no. 112). The Dorset Modern Dairy was situated next to the station on Station Terrace. Farmers' milk was brought here from a wide area to be sorted into 17 gallon churns and loaded on to trains for dispatch to

London. The firm was eventually taken over by United Dairies and moved to Sturminster Marshall. Other industries also came to the station area during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An egg packing station was established in the middle of the century at the back of the Griffin Hotel on New Borough. Wimborne Minster also had a large number of garden nurseries during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. One in particular, at St Catherine's on the Poole Road, expanded at this time, perhaps in response to demand from the increasing number of suburban gardens in the region. The Leigh Vinery also more than doubled in size during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Wimborne Minster's weekly market continued to thrive during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the local population doubled in size. The commercial cattle markets and auctions next to the station also flourished. In fact, when the railway closed in 1977, the cattle market site actually expanded to include part of the former station and goods yard. It is now the site of Wimborne Minster's weekly market and includes a multi-storey car park for market traffic (Figure 36).

Prior to the closure of the railway, 20<sup>th</sup> century Wimborne Minster remained little changed from that of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Suburban development had stalled following the Victorian period of expansion. A number of small inter-war housing estates had been constructed at Leigh Park (Figure 37) and Colehill and industry had continued to grow slowly in a piecemeal fashion within the Station area. However, the closure of the railway to passenger traffic in 1964 meant that the A31 along Leigh Road, continuing through the centre of town to Julian's Bridge, became an essential trunk route for both domestic and commercial traffic. This led to considerable congestion within the



Figure 36: Riverside Park Industrial Estate and Wimborne Market



Figure 37: View west along Hardy Crescent, Leigh Park

town centre throughout the 1960's and 70's until eventually the Wimborne bypass was opened in 1981. This signalled the start of a new era for the town. Extensive modern industrial estates were developed, extending pre-existing ones at Leigh Park by converting large parts of the former railway and station (Figure 36), as well as extending up to Leigh Road. Another industrial estate took over the former Stone Lane Brickworks Site. The Riverside development, providing extended shopping and commercial facilities for the town centre, was begun in 1979 on former industrial Land at Crown's Mead, south of the Town Brewery.

Suburban expansion has probably led to the largest change affecting Wimborne Minster and particularly Colehill. As early as 1926 parish councillors had remarked that their rural parish was becoming increasingly urban. It was in the 1960's that large modern housing estates were first developed, at the former Leigh Vineries and Highland Road, as well as further a field at Middlehill Road (outside the study area to the east). During the 1970's and 1980's the large areas around Rowlands and the former water works at Allen View Road were developed, completing a broad swathe of modern and Victorian suburban housing east of the River Allen (Figure 38). This expansion to some extent relieved the development pressure within the old town, allowing a more piecemeal development on a scale more in keeping with that of the historic town and along pre-existing streets. The only extensive modern housing estates to the west of the River Allen lie outside the limits of the Saxon and medieval town to the north west. Thus the town centre retains a great deal of historic character. The Minster Church still dominates the skyline Georgian town houses line many of the central streets and extensive green spaces survive along the River's Allen and Stour.



Figure 38: View south east along Lacy Drive, off Allen View Road

### 5.5.2 Town Layout

This period has seen more extensive changes to the layout of Wimborne Minster than any preceding period. The most obvious being the development of near continuous modern suburban housing estates on the east side of the River Allen at Leigh and Colehill, and to the north west of the town on the ridge of land between the Rivers Stour and Allen. Only the flood plains of the two rivers remain undeveloped. The communications pattern has also changed significantly. The railway finally closed in 1977. The area of the former station and goods yard has been so completely redeveloped since then that it is difficult to tell where the station used to be on the ground. Furthermore, only short sections of disused railway embankment have escaped redevelopment for housing. The road network has become a vast web of curvilinear culs de sac linked by minor curving roads. Some earlier estates were laid out with geometric or grid patterns. The major E-W through route, the A31 developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, former major routes tended to lie in a NW-SE direction, linking Wimborne Minster to the coastal ports. The success of this E-W route necessitated the construction of a bypass in 1981. Other features of the modern town include industrial estates, a shopping centre at the Riverside, extensive playing fields along the Allen flood plain and schools within large playing fields to the north and west of the historic town centre.

### 5.5.3 Twentieth century Town Plan Components

The main plan components of the twentieth century town are shown on Figure 39 and are listed below.

1. *Town Plots.* The town centre plots in general retained their post-medieval pattern during the later 19<sup>th</sup> century, although a number of important buildings were demolished during the 1960's. These include Courtnay's almshouses, replaced by modern housing and a small car park; The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel on King Street was taken down in 1966 to be replaced with a modern church on the same site a year later (Figure 40); and 9-10 Corn Market which collapsed during restoration and were not rebuilt (Willis & Willis 1990, numbers 91, 93 & 94).

2. *The College and Minster.* There has been little discernible change to the Minster church during the last 100 years. The iron railings around the churchyard were removed in 1941 and more recently large visitor car parks have

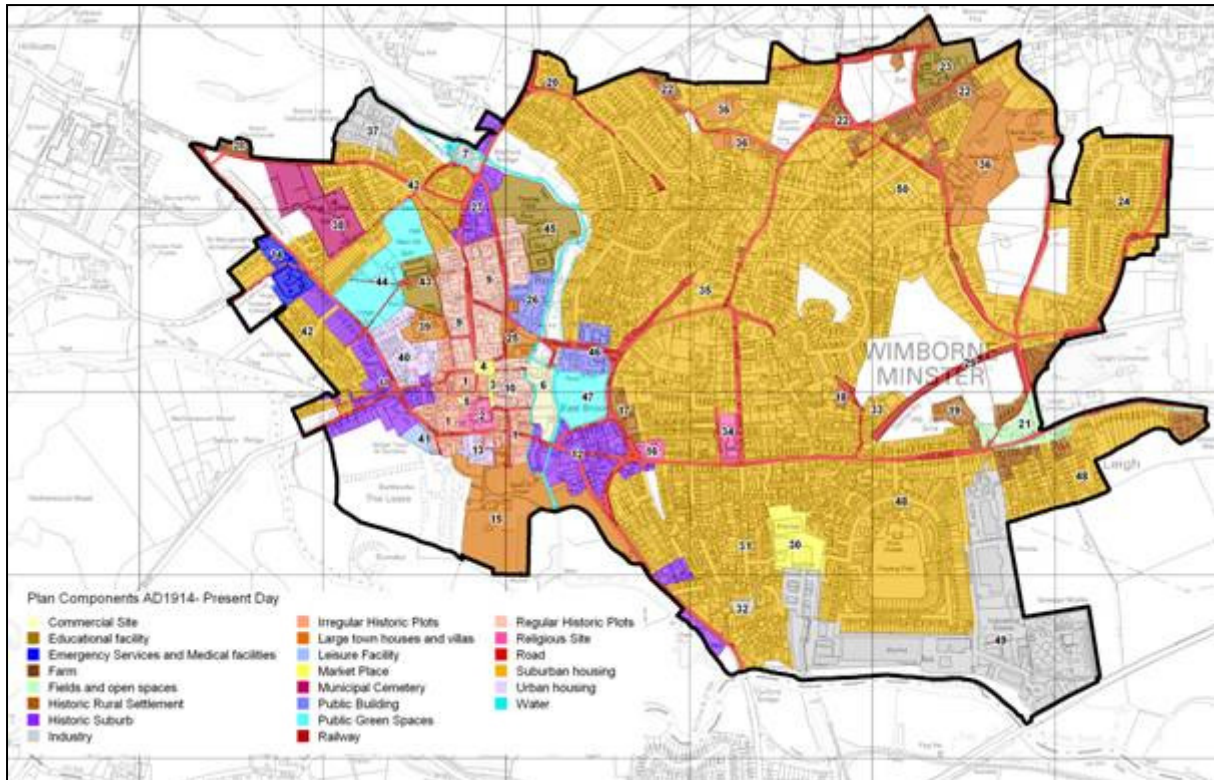


Figure 39: Later 20<sup>th</sup> Century Plan Components

been built on the west side of the church on King Street.

3. *High Street*. High Street became less important as a weekly market site during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The expanded cattle market site now attracts visitors from far afield with its various facilities.

4. *The Square*. The Square has functioned as a short stay car park throughout the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

5. *The Corn Market*. Number 9 and 10 Corn Market collapsed during renovation works. Their site has now been opened up to provide access to Cornmarket Court behind.

6. *Town Mill*. The site of the Town Brewery, including Crown's Mead, was redeveloped in 1979 as part of the Riverside shopping centre. It now has a number of smaller retail units as well as a supermarket and extensive car parks. The former town brewery building was converted into flats in 1986.

7. *Walford Mill*. The Walford Mill buildings have been converted into the Walford Mill Craft Centre, comprising a number of small retail outlets and workshops offering craft courses. The former industrial buildings at the Corner of West Borough and Knobcrook Road have been converted to residential use.

9. *The Borough*. The street frontages of West Borough and the south end of East Borough have changed little during the last 100 years. Although

the Workhouse buildings were demolished in 1958 to be replaced by the Allen Court sheltered housing development (Figure 41). Both sides of the northern part of East Borough are now either fronted by modern housing or have modern infill behind historic street frontages. There is a short row of semi-detached inter-war houses opposite Allen Court. There is also some modern infill at the rear of West Borough plots at the junction of School and Redcotts Lanes. However, perhaps the most sweeping changes comprise the construction of Hanham Road together with the modern Allendale Community Centre and offices at Wessex House.

10. *High Street Burgages*. There has been little change to the High Street frontage, although a new library and a car park have been inserted into the plots behind High Street to the east.

11. *The Historic Western Suburb*. The Urban District Council instigated a series of slum clearances in Wimborne Minster during the 1950's. 93 buildings were condemned, including a large number of small terraced houses along Old Road (Willis & Willis 1990, no.91). Many of these were replaced with modern terraced houses or the vacant plots utilised as car parks. At the west end of Old Road a modern housing estate at Cuthbury Close has filled in the large plot of a surviving cottage.

12. *Eastbrook Suburb*. A number of significant changes have altered the character of this suburb

during the modern era. Road improvements during the 1980's led to the widening of Lewens Lane and the creation of a new road, Rodway. These changes form part of an inner distribution route channelling traffic away from the town centre. Other changes include the development of inter-war semi-detached and modern detached houses in former paddocks on Park Lane, a new doctor's surgery at the junction of Leigh Road and Lewen's Lane whilst the former malthouse by the river Allen has been replaced by modern detached housing.

13. *Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School.* The Grammar School merged with the County Modern school in 1972 and moved to a new site 1km NW of the town centre on the Blandford Road. The old Chantry site was then re-developed for modern housing. The former school building has also been converted into residential apartments.

14. *St Margaret's Hospital.* A few new cottages were added to the almshouses during the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Royal Victoria Hospital was taken over by the NHS following its creation in 1948. Since then there has been significant development on the site.

15. *Deans Court.* The Hanham family retain ownership of the Deans Court estate, the house is a member of the Historic Houses Association and open to the public at certain times of year.

16. *St Catherine's Roman Catholic Church.* The current St Catherine's church was built in 1933 (Figure 42). It replaced an earlier wooden church built in 1926.

17. *Lewens.* A few small outbuildings have been constructed to the rear of the historic buildings here. The former plot behind Lewens House has been developed for modern housing (Lewens Close).

18. *Green Close Farm.* Former paddocks and the old farmyard were developed for modern housing during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

19. *Old Manor Farm.* Former farm out buildings

associated with Old Manor Farm have been converted into a small industrial and commercial estate called Wentworth Yard.

20. *Walford Farm.* The fields to the south of Walford Farm were developed as an inter-war housing estate at Milton, Shakespeare and Tennyson Roads. This comprised largely detached bungalows set back from the street frontage. Former outbuildings in the farmyard of Walford Farm were demolished to make way for a small housing estate (Walford Close) during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

21. *Leigh Common.* Although there has been extensive suburban development around Leigh Common, the historic part of the village has changed little during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cottages on Leigh Road were demolished in the 1960's to make way for modern housing on Welland Road.

22. *Colehill.* Again there has been extensive suburban development around Colehill as well as the infilling of plots between cottages throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All the while the historic part of the village has remained little changed.

23. *Beaucroft Foundation School.* Most of these gravel pits were filled in and developed for modern housing, although one outside the study area was used as Colehill Parish Council's rubbish tip. The only former gravel pit not to be used for housing estates became the site of The Beaucroft Foundation special educational needs school.

24. *Leigh Vinery Housing Estate.* The site of the former Leigh Vineries and Leigh Lane gravel pits was developed for a large housing estate from the 1960's.

25. *East Borough Town Houses.* The town houses at the south end of East Borough were separated from Allendale House through the construction of Hanham Road during the 1980's. Outbuildings and a courtyard on the south side of Allendale House were demolished at this time.

26. *Allendale Community Centre.* The workhouse



Figure 40: Wimborne Methodist Church, King Street



Figure 41: Allen Court, built on the site of the former workhouse

buildings were demolished in 1958 and Sheltered Housing managed by East Dorset Housing Association built in their place. A car park now occupies the rear of the former workhouse site serving the new Allendale Community Centre, which was built within the former grounds of Allendale House (Higginbotham 2006).

27. *Walford Suburb*. There have been a number of small but cumulative changes to the historic character of Walford. A pair of inter-war houses were built on West Borough. A small number of old cottages were demolished during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some were replaced with modern infill whilst other vacant plots incorporated into others as gardens. A modern garage was built beside the old Crown and Anchor pub north of the bridge.

28. *Stone Farm*. There has been no discernible change to Stone Farm and Angel Cottage during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

29. *The Railway*. The railway line closed to passenger traffic in 1964. A short section of the line survived until 1977 as a goods line principally serving the MOD fuel depot at West Moors. Much of the track was lifted and bridges removed very shortly after closure. The station buildings soon became derelict and the site was re-developed as an extension to the cattle market and Leigh Park industrial estate. Various short sections of the track north and east of the former station have been re-developed for housing in recent years. However, two short sections of the former railway embankment survive at Leigh Common.

30. *The Cattle Market*. The Cattle Market site was extended following the demise of the railway, to occupy parts of the former goods yard. The old market buildings were removed and replaced by a larger modern building and multi-story car park.

31. *New Borough Suburb*. The Victorian suburb to the west of the station did not expand significantly again until the inter-war period with the construction of rows of semi-detached houses and short terraces along St Catherine's, Grove Road and Osborne Road. Later 20<sup>th</sup> century housing estates have been built to the north of the Cattle Market at Grenville Road and along the line of the former railway. Other modern development has infilled vacant plots and the rear plots of Victorian suburban villas fronting on to Avenue Road. Modern apartment blocks have replaced former industrial buildings between New Borough and Poole Road.

32 *New Borough Industrial Area*. A Saw Mills on the south side of New Borough Road was demolished during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and replaced with apartment blocks. An egg packing station was established around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century on land behind the Griffin Hotel and is now a tool hire centre (Figure 43).

33. *Green Close Lane Gas Works*. The Gasometers on Green Close Lane had been removed and replaced by a large building prior to the 1980's. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the buildings here, together with a short section of the former track bed, were replaced by a modern housing estate (Old Manor Close). An electrical sub-station occupies the land adjacent to and north of the former gas works site.

34. *St John's Church and School*. The church received an extension during the 1960's and this was improved at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The original, temporary, school buildings were replaced by a red brick Victorian style building during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (EDDC 2006, 7).

35. *Rowland's and St John's Hill*. The character of this Victorian suburb has become largely subsumed within a wider modern housing estate that now occupies all of the south and west facing slopes of Colehill. Nevertheless, each discrete episode of expansion has its own slightly distinctive character discernible on the ground. The earliest 20<sup>th</sup> century developments occurred during the inter-war years and comprised rows of short terraces and detached houses set back from a grid of parallel streets either side of St John's Hill, as well as a small area east of Wimborne Road, south of Walford Farm. At this time a large water pumping station existed on the eastern bank of the River Allen between Rowlands Hill and Wimborne Road. This site, upon its closure, together with the surrounding fields, was developed as a large modern housing estate linking and unifying the disparate Rowlands Hill, Walford Farm and Colehill estates.

36. *Colehill Country Houses*. Formerly extensive landscaped gardens associated with large Victorian villas at Onslow, Highlands and Bells were filled in with modern detached housing during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. The villas themselves survive within plots of reduced extent. Beaucroft has also had some modern houses built around it and has itself been converted into three apartments. The extensive grounds on the other hand remain largely intact, although associated with the modern *Woodlands House*. Northleigh House and grounds remain largely unchanged since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

37. *Stone Lane Brickworks*. It is not known when the Stone Lane Brickworks ceased to function, although there does appear to have been some activity on a reduced scale immediately following WWII. The site was redeveloped as an industrial estate during the 1960's-70's. The Stone Street frontage was progressively filled in with detached

and semi-detached houses throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

38. *Wimborne Cemetery*. The municipal cemetery has expanded in two phases during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Firstly during the inter-war period the site was extended northwards to Stone Lane in a thin strip. During the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century the northern extension was doubled in size with the addition of a further strip to the west.

39. *Westfield*. The larger part of the grounds attached to Westfield House were developed for housing during the 1960's and 70's. Westfield Close comprises detached bungalows arranged around a linear cul de sac. Moray Court is an apartment block built around the same time.

40. *Julian's Brewery*. Julian's Brewery closed during the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, the buildings survived for a while but have recently been demolished and the site given over to modern housing at Three Lion's Close and West Street Court, as well as the car park on Westfield Close. The only trace of the former brewery site is the Pudding and Pie Inn (formerly The Three Lions) on Pye Corner.

41. *Model Town*. Wimborne Model Town is a 1:10 scale model of Wimborne Minster town centre as it was in the 1940's and first opened to the public in 1951 at its original site off Corn Market. This site was redeveloped during the 1980's and the model town re-opened at its present site on King Street in 1991. ([wimborne-modeltown.com](http://wimborne-modeltown.com), 2009).

42. *North West Wimborne Modern Housing Estates*. The development of 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban to the north west of Wimborne Minster town centre began during the inter-war period along Redcott's Road, Culverhayes Road and the south end of Blind Lane. These were either pre-existing lanes or linear culs-de-sac with detached houses set back from the street frontage. Piecemeal development along the same lines continued into the post war period along Blind Lane, Stone Lane, Cemetery Road and Netherwood Place. During the later 20<sup>th</sup> century small housing es-



Figure 42: St Catherine's Roman Catholic Church built in 1933

tates arrange around curvilinear culs-de-sac were built on either side of Knobcrook Road, St Margaret's Close and Cuthbury Gardens.

43. *Wimborne First School and Learning Centre*. The main school building dates from 1911 but has been extended with a new Hall, office, medical room and kitchen (Wimborne First School 2009). Wimborne Learning Centre was established in 1999 on the opposite side of School Lane to Wimborne First School as a referral unit for students aged 11-16.

44. *Redcotts Recreation Ground*. It is likely that Redcotts Recreation Ground was established at approximately the same time as Wimborne First School in 1911. It certainly existed in 1913 when Wimborne Bowls Club moved to a new bowling green on the site. The club constructed a pavilion in 1925 which was extended in 1935 and again in 1961-2. In the late 1980's East Dorset District Council designed and funded the construction of a new sports pavilion and the refurbishment of tennis courts at the recreation ground.

45. *Allenbourn Middle School and Playing Field*. Allenbourn Middle School opened in 1973 as an annexe to Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School. Today it caters for children aged 9-13 and many pupils still transfer to Queen Elizabeth's School at age 13. New buildings were constructed and the playing fields redeveloped in 2003.

46. *Hanham Road Public Services Buildings*. A collection of public buildings have been constructed on either side of Hanham Road, east of the River Allen since the 1970's. These include Wimborne Fire Station, Police Station, Magistrates Court, Ambulance Station and Social Services. A large care home has recently been rebuilt at Streets Meadow.

47. *Town Green*. Wimborne Cricket Club moved to a site on the former Town Green, known as Hanham's after the owners of the site, around 1860. The White Pavilion was built in 1913. Planning permission for a supermarket, covering 60% of the site, was granted in 2008 and development



Figure 43: Brandon Tool Hire, New Borough Road, originally an egg packing station

started in 2009. The Cricket club moved to a new ground at The Leaze in 2010.

48. *Leigh Park Housing Estate.* Leigh Park originated as an inter-war Council Housing estate and its geometric design is typical of the period. It is now managed by East Dorset District Housing Association. It originally comprised rows of semi-detached houses and short terraces lining both sides of Leigh Road and further south along Hardy and Barnes Crescents, east of the Railway. These crescents enclosed a central bell shaped park and playing field. The houses were set back from the roads within long and narrow plots. Development along these lines continued during the post-war period along Churchill Road so that the park was completely enclosed. Following the closure of the railway in 1977, part of the former track bed was developed for modern housing terraced housing and flats within much smaller plots. Some of the original houses have had their large plots truncated in order to fit in more modern terraced housing and in some places the original inter-war houses have been demolished to make way for further modern terraces and flats.

49. *Leigh Park Industrial Estate.* This industrial area originated during the post war period as a single workshop set behind housing on the south side of Leigh Road. This was extended south during the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century and included the Wimborne Sewage Treatment Works. Piecemeal development continued to the south of Leigh Park until the closure of the railway in 1977 when the area of the former station and goods yard was redeveloped as an extension to the industrial estate called Riverside Park.

50. *Colehill Modern Housing Estate.* Modern Housing estates have effectively joined Colehill with the Rowland's Hill estates of Wimborne Minster. However the development of 20<sup>th</sup> century housing estates in Colehill began as a separate entity with discrete inter-war housing estates along Highland Road, Tower Lane and Beaucroft Lane. These estates comprised detached houses set back from pre-existing lanes or linear culs-de-sac within long narrow plots. Development continued along these lines into the post-war era. During the 1960's and 70's the gaps between inter and post-war housing were developed with modern detached housing arranged around curvilinear culs-de-sac.