

5.5 Later Twentieth Century Swanage (1945-present day)

5.5.1 Historical Summary

Following the heyday of Swanage as a seaside resort in the first half of the twentieth century, the period after the Second World War saw the emphasis of the town shift towards becoming a popular retirement destination and location for second homes, though it still remained a popular minor seaside holiday destination.

Swanage slowly recovered after the war. Bomb damaged buildings were demolished or rebuilt and new improvements made. A new day centre and library were built. The town gradually expanded with the construction of a number of new large suburban estates and the infilling of areas of earlier housing. The population grew slowly at first with 6866 inhabitants in 1951, only slightly more than in 1931, but by 1961 had increased to 8120 and to 10140 in 2001.

Swanage continued to rely primarily on tourism as its main economic activity with a large proportion of the population working in the service industries. Quarrying was now a negligible economic activity in the town. The Swanage brick works still produced hand-made bricks at Godlingston.

The changing expectations of holidaymakers in the post-war period lead to a reduction in the number of visitors and a number of changes in the town. Two of the large hotels, the Royal Victoria and the Grosvenor, closed. The Royal Victoria Hotel was converted into flats and the Grosvenor Hotel was demolished in 1988. The cinema also closed. On the other hand, there was a large increase in the size and number of caravan parks along the southern and northern fringes of the town. The old Mowlem Institute was demolished and replaced in 1966 by the present building incorporating a theatre, restaurant and shops. There was an abortive at-



Figure 34: The Mowlem.

tempt to create a yachting marina in the 1980s. Only the first part of the scheme, the building of modern 'marina-style' apartments at The Haven on part of the site of the old Grosvenor Hotel, was completed. There has also been an increasing number of apartment blocks constructed, often on the site of an earlier villa or guest house. These are particularly sited for sea views, for example, along De Moulham Road or on Seymer Road and Belle Vue Road.

The railway line was closed in 1972 and the track lifted. However, in 1975 the Swanage Railway Society was started in order to restore the line and station and initially the track was relaid as far as Herston. In 1995 it was extended to Corfe Castle and Norden and in 2007 the line was completed to join with the railway to Wareham. Swanage Railway is now one of the foremost heritage steam railways in the country and runs regular rail services.

Following the 1944 Education Act, the schools of Swanage were reorganised. The former Elementary School at Mount Scar became a First School and a new Middle School was built on a green field site to the north of Herston. The grammar school became the upper school until it closed in 1974. A small proportion of the large number of private schools based in Swanage before the war returned, most notably the Forres School in Northbrook Road, which moved out of the town in 1994 and the school buildings became the present Purbeck View School.

5.5.2 Town Layout

The town centre retained its earlier street pattern and much of its earlier housing, but there are a number of modern developments, many prompted by bomb damage during the war. The High Street was widened at its narrowest



Figure 35: The Haven, a 1980s apartment development.

point after the war following extensive wartime damage of 'The Narrows'. Subsequently, increasing road traffic has seen a number of changes and improvements to enable easier access by car to the centre of the town, primarily by altering the road junction at Herston Cross, bypassing the High Street and directing traffic along Victoria Avenue instead.

The major post-war change to the town was the great increase in suburban housing particularly around Herston and to the north of the town. Many of the gaps in the existing suburban housing south of the town were filled in, often with housing along the existing street pattern. Around Herston, large new suburban housing estates laid out around curvilinear looped networks and culs-de-sac were built, largely obscuring earlier boundaries.

5.5.3 Later 20th century town plan components

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

1. *Church*. There was little change to the church in this period. A new disabled access was added in 2005.
2. *Historic Plots*. Many of the existing properties remained, though significant gaps were created by wartime damage. New houses were built on the site of John Wesley's Cottages and the site of the former 'Narrows' was developed, widening the road at this point. There was also some infilling to the rear of some properties with the construction of a number of house and flat developments. A new library was built in 1965.
3. *Mill*. A number of cottages around the mill pond were renovated after the Second World War.
4. *Royal Victoria Hotel*. The hotel went out of business in the 1970s and was converted into flats.
5. *Magnolia House*. There was little change during this period.
6. *Vicarage*. The old rectory has been divided into two separate houses.
7. *The Parade*. There was little change during this period.
8. *Caravan Parks*. The area of the former quarries have been made into a series of caravan parks. Hoburne Park includes a number of preserved quarry shafts.
9. *Sandpit Field*. This is part of the gardens and recreation field behind the seafront. The Second World War gun emplacement has been converted into a public shelter.
11. *Herston*. The historic core has become completely incorporated into modern suburban development. Some historic buildings have been demolished and the plots between the historic buildings have been developed for housing.
12. *Newton*. Newton Manor house was opened as a girls boarding school after the Second World War and closed in 1980. It is now a private house. Herston House was demolished in 1960 and Newton Farm was also demolished and the area developed for suburban housing.
13. *Court Farm*. All traces of Court Farm had been removed by the 1980s and replaced by housing.
14. *Northbrook Farm*. There was some modern infill housing built in the grounds of Northbrook Farm house. The former farm cottages on the opposite side of the road were demolished and replaced by Gilbert Court flats in the 1970s.
16. *Cauldron Barn Farm*. There was little change during this period.
19. *Congregational Church*. The church was repaired after bomb damage in the Second World War.
20. *Methodist Church*. The church was repaired after bomb damage in the Second World War.
21. *Coastguard Station*. The coastguard station was replaced by a new coastguard lookout on Peveril Point. The lifeboat house was rebuilt to house a new lifeboat, with a new slipway constructed over the earlier one.
23. *Marine Villa*. There was little change during this period. The building now houses a small museum and local studies centre.
24. *Durlston Down Estate*. Most vacant plots in the area have been infilled with modern suburban development of detached bungalows and houses. Several of properties were demolished and replaced by modern apartment buildings.
25. *Shore Villa*. The area has been encroached upon by modern apartment development. Beach Cottage was demolished and replaced by a modern house. Shore Villa has been recently demolished and the site is being redeveloped.
26. *Railway and Railway Station*. The Swanage Branch Line became part of British Rail in 1948. The line was closed in 1972 and the track lifted. However, it was not long until its resurrection as a heritage line. In 1975 The Swanage Railway Society were granted a licence to occupy Swan-

age Station. The line was originally re-laid as far as Herston, then later extended to Harman's Cross and then to Norden and Corfe Castle in 1995. In 2009 the first passenger trains from London travelled direct to Swanage for the first time since 1972. Most of the area of the former sidings and car park to the south of the station have been redeveloped.

27. *Former Stone Yard.* The former industrial buildings along Commercial Road have been converted into a series of small retail and commercial premises. Part of the area has been redeveloped into a small shopping arcade.

28. *Pier and Tramway.* The old pier was never restored after the war, the tramway rails have been lifted but are marked by stone in the paving. The area has been renovated.

29. *Post Office.* The Drill Hall was demolished and a new post office and sorting office built in 1973.

30. *Cemetery.* The cemetery is now closed.

31. *Swanage First School.* After the Second World War the school became a First School feeding into Swanage Middle School. A number of new school buildings have been built.

32. *Swanage Community Hospital.* A new children's ward was set up in 1954. It was extended in the 1980s with a new operating theatre and other facilities.

33. *Water Works.* The works have been converted into housing.

34. *Water Tower.* This was converted into a private dwelling.

35. *Victoria Avenue Industrial Estate.* The gas works became disused and was largely cleared in the 1970s. It has now become the Victoria Avenue Industrial Estate. Some of the gas works buildings survive, converted to other uses.

36. *The Mowlem.* In 1966, the original Mowlem



Figure 36: Apartment complexes along Seymer Road.

Institute building was demolished and replaced by the current building incorporating a theatre, restaurant, and shops.

37. *Purbeck House.* The Convent closed in 1994. The house is now a hotel.

38. *Peveril House Hotel.* There was little change during this period.

39. *De Moulham Road Villas.* Several of the large Edwardian villas have been demolished to make way for new apartment developments. There has also been some infill of gardens with housing.

40. *Kings Road West.* The area was completely infilled with an estate of bungalow development south of the west end of Kings Road West before 1972. The grounds of Newton Manor were infilled with a modern housing estate.

41. *Ballard Down Housing Estates.* A number of small infill housing developments have been built and a number of modern apartment redevelopments have taken place.

42. *Grand Hotel.* The hotel has been extended and remains a hotel.

44. *Belle Vue Restaurant.* The Belle Vue was demolished and replaced by flats in the late 1970s or early 1980s.

45. *Station Road.* The Railway Hotel and cinemas closed and converted to shops.

46. *Pleasure Pier.* The pier was in poor condition and was closed in 1982, but was repaired and re-opened in 1986. It has subsequently been restored.

47. *St Mark's Church, Herston.* New vestries and ancillary rooms were added to the south-west corner of the church in about 1975 (Pitfield 1985).

48. *St Mark's CE VA First School.* The school was completely remodelled in 1961, when a hall and two new classrooms were added. A new



Figure 37: 1960s bungalow development on Prospect Road.

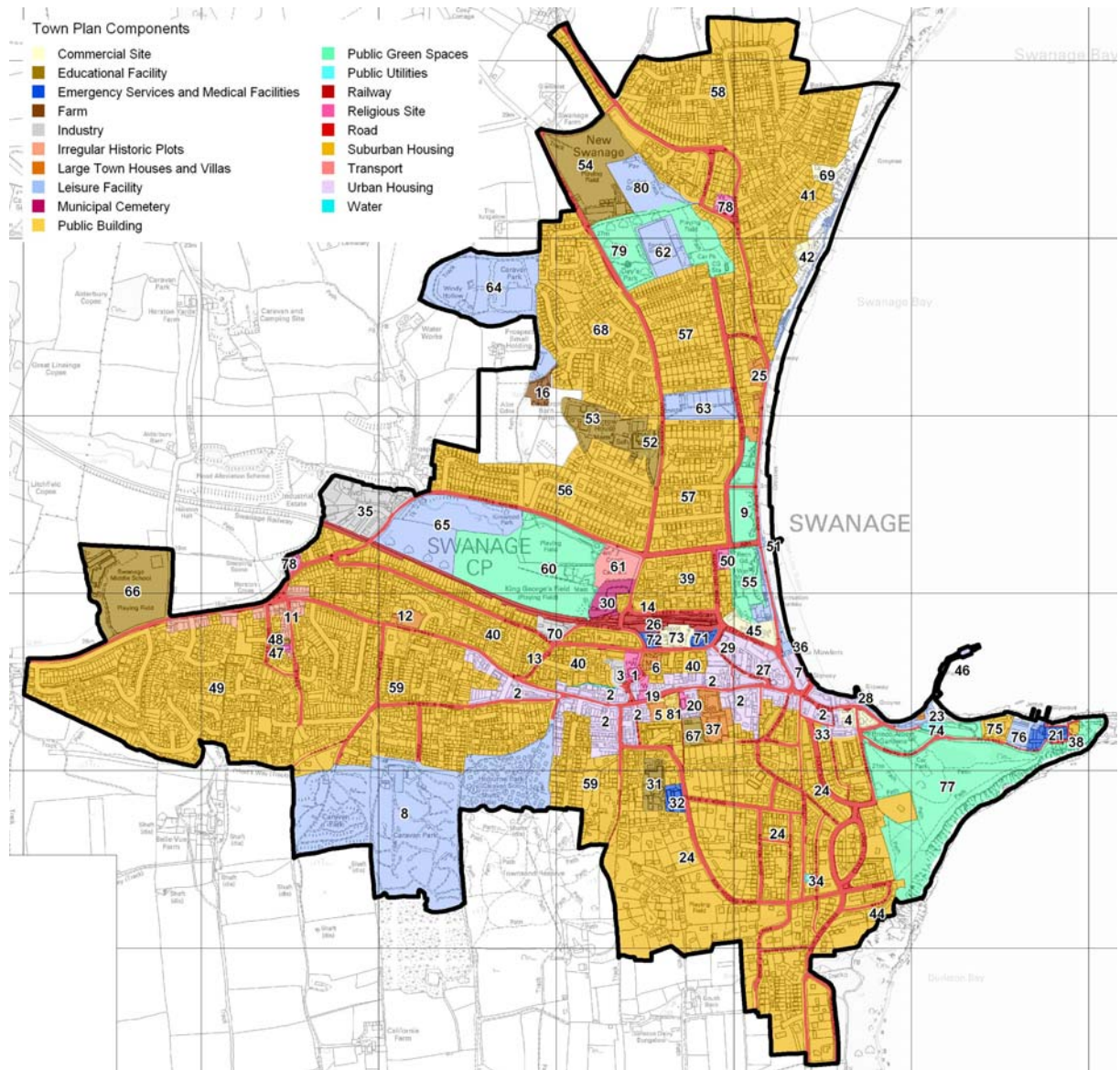


Figure 38: Later 20th century town plan components

resource room was added in 2002.

49. *Herston Suburbs*. The area around Herston was expanded by the construction of several suburban housing estates. The Greyseed Council House estate was built immediately after the Second World War. Further housing estates were built in the 1960s, 1970s and late 1990s.

50. *The Church of the Holy Spirit and St Edward*. There was little change during this period.

51. *Seafront*. A new stone jetty was built opposite Victoria Avenue in 1993, as part of a flood prevention scheme.

52. *Purbeck View School*. The Forres Preparatory School remained in Swanage until 1993. It subsequently became Purbeck View School and is now a specialist residential school for autistic children.

53. *Oldfield School*. In 1948 the former Oldfield School became the boarding house for Swanage

Grammar School, until it closed in 1974. It subsequently became Harrow House International College.

54. *Swanage Grammar School*. The school closed in 1974.

55. *Recreation Ground*. Part of the south-western corner of the recreation ground has been removed to create a car park.

56. *Rabling Road Housing Estate*. A new estate along Prospect Road was built in the 1960s adjacent to the Rabling Road estate, with a small green between.

57. *Housing Estates, De Moulham Road/ Northbrook Road*. A number of new blocks of flats have been built, mainly along De Moulham Road, replacing earlier houses.

58. *Housing Estates, Whitecliff*. A new housing estate was built around Bay Crescent in the late

1940s and 1950s. There has also been some modern infill at Parsons Close.

59. *Townsend Housing Estates*. A number of new housing developments were built in the 1950s and 1960s, both infilling areas within the inter-war housing estates and expanding further up the slopes to the south. These included some award-winning council houses on Priest's Road by Fred Walsh (Lewer and Smale 1994, 167).

60. *King George's Playing Field*. King George's Playing Field was created some time after the Second World War.

61. *Car Park*. There was a small car park here by 1947. It was expanded to include the site of the former nursery by 1972.

62. *Swanage Town Football Ground*. The ground has been provided with permanent stands, changing rooms, etc in the 1980s.

63. *Beach Gardens*. The bowling green and tennis courts were moved to this new site by 1972.

64. *Cauldron Barn Farm Caravan Park*. This camp site was established before 1972. The present extent of the park dates from the early 2000s, when part of the original area was developed for housing.

65. *Kirkwood Park*. This pitch and putt course was established in the late 1990s.

66. *Swanage Middle School*. This school was built after the Second World War.

67. *St Mary's RC First School*. This was established behind the Methodist Church.

68. *Northbrook Road Housing Estates*. A large housing estate of mainly bungalow development was built off the west side of Northbrook Road in the 1960s. Another small housing estate was built on part of the Cauldron Barn Farm Caravan Park in the early 2000s.

69. *Pines Hotel*. This cliff top hotel was established before 1972.

70. *King's Court Business Centre*. A small business centre and council yard were built on the site of a former railway siding and stone yard.

71. *Swanage Medical Centre*. This was opened in 1982 and is on the former site of the brewery.

72. *Swanage Fire Station*. The fire station was built on part of the former railway sidings in the early 1980s.

73. *Supermarket*. A supermarket was built on part of the former station car park in the early 1980s.

74. *Sewage Works*. Following the demolition of the Grosvenor Hotel in 1988, part of the site was eventually developed as a new sewage works in 1994.

75. *The Haven, Peveril Point Road*. This development was part of a larger failed scheme for a marina and was built on part of the former Grosvenor Hotel in 1988.

76. *Boat Park, Peveril Point*. A boat park was established by 1972 behind a series of wooden fishermen's huts.

77. *Prince Albert Gardens*. The Prince Albert Gardens were formed after the demolition of the Grosvenor Hotel. They contain two large columns salvaged from the former hotel, which, in turn, had been salvaged from a building in London.

78. *All Saint's Church*. This church was constructed in 1956-7 and was designed by Potter and Hare of Salisbury. It replaced a temporary church in a former army hut in Cliff Avenue (Pitfield 1985).

79. *Day's Park*. This was created some time after the Second World War.

80. *Cricket Ground*. A new cricket ground and pavilion were built some time after 1947.

81. *Day Centre*. Constructed 1959 to the designs of E J Ricketts (Newman and Pevsner 1972). This was the area of 'the narrows' destroyed by bomb damage in World War II.



Figure 39: Swanage Library.



Figure 40: Swanage Middle School.