

EAST COWES DESIGN STATEMENT

2009

1. AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

1.1 That the design statement shall serve as a guide to the design of buildings in the town of East Cowes with the objective of preserving and enhancing the Victorian / Edwardian character of the town.

1.2 To ensure that all future buildings reflect and complement the character not only of the buildings in that vicinity but also reflect and complement the character and heritage of the town.

2. DESIGN:

2.1 The key to the design of future buildings is that the design both reflects either Victorian or Edwardian design features and complements adjacent buildings and the environment. This requirement does not imply copies of buildings from past eras but does require designs that, with buildings in the vicinity, enhance the street scene and add to the character of the town.

2.2 The town was Queen Victoria's chosen home and Victorian, with later Edwardian, buildings make up a **great** part of the town's architectural heritage and the major proportion of future building should reflect and complement that style to maintain the town's character. This focus should not preclude a lesser proportion of innovative buildings being approved where the style reflects Palladian influences from Osborne House or Regency influences echoing the lost heritage of John Nash.

2.3 Some background:

a) Setting: The town of East Cowes is bounded to the west by the River Medina and to the north by the Solent. To the south the town is separated from the village of Whippingham by arable land: a large portion of this nearest to the town is presently (2009) being developed for housing.

The town's eastern boundary is provided by the private estates of Springhill, Norris, Osborne (English Heritage) and Barton. Much of this land is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Other Conservation areas: The riverside south of Kingston Wharf is an important Site of Special Scientific Interest and this and the Medina estuary are part of the Solent RAMSAR site (an international bird conservation area). There are now two designated Conservation Areas in the town: one along the Esplanade and one around Church Path and the Town Centre.

b) Access to the town is currently provided by one main road (the A3021), which is also heavily used for ferry traffic, and the minor Beatrice Avenue. It can be reached from Cowes by the cross-Medina chain ferry and from the mainland by Red Funnel car ferry, whose terminal is a major presence in the town.

c) Settlement: Records dating from the 14th century show that there was a small fishing port, then known as Shamlord, on the eastern shore of the Medina estuary.

It is widely believed that the settlement received its present name after Henry VIII built two forts, known as "cows" (possibly named after some sandbanks lying across the estuary), on each side of the river mouth to prevent the French invading Newport from the sea. (The East Cowes fort was destroyed within a century by coastal erosion and the robbing out of stone for new construction, whereas that in West Cowes exists to this day as part of the Royal Yacht Squadron). Expansion as a port up to the 16th century is evidenced by the construction of a custom house here in 1575, but its importance declined in the 18th century with the establishment of shipbuilding in West Cowes which also became increasingly popular as a commercial port and seaside resort. Thus it was that in 1795 East Cowes was noted as a modest community of some 300 souls with occupations such as boatbuilding, sailmaking, fishing and sheep farming.

However by the dawn of the 19th century some of those holidaying in West Cowes were crossing the river and finding the views and landscape on the east side pleasant enough to tempt them to stay.

Notably East Cowes Castle, built by renowned architect John Nash as his new residence, was completed in 1802, and James Wyatt had completed Norris Castle in 1805 for Lord Seymour.

Hotels and large houses were built along the Parade while further development spread up the hill. The jewel in the crown was to be Osborne House, built after Queen Victoria bought the estate in 1845, perhaps because of happy childhood memories of staying at Norris Castle. Built by the renowned Thomas Cubitt to Prince Albert's design, the House is now open to the public and is one of the most visited historic sites in the British Isles. The Queen had various other houses built on or near the estate,

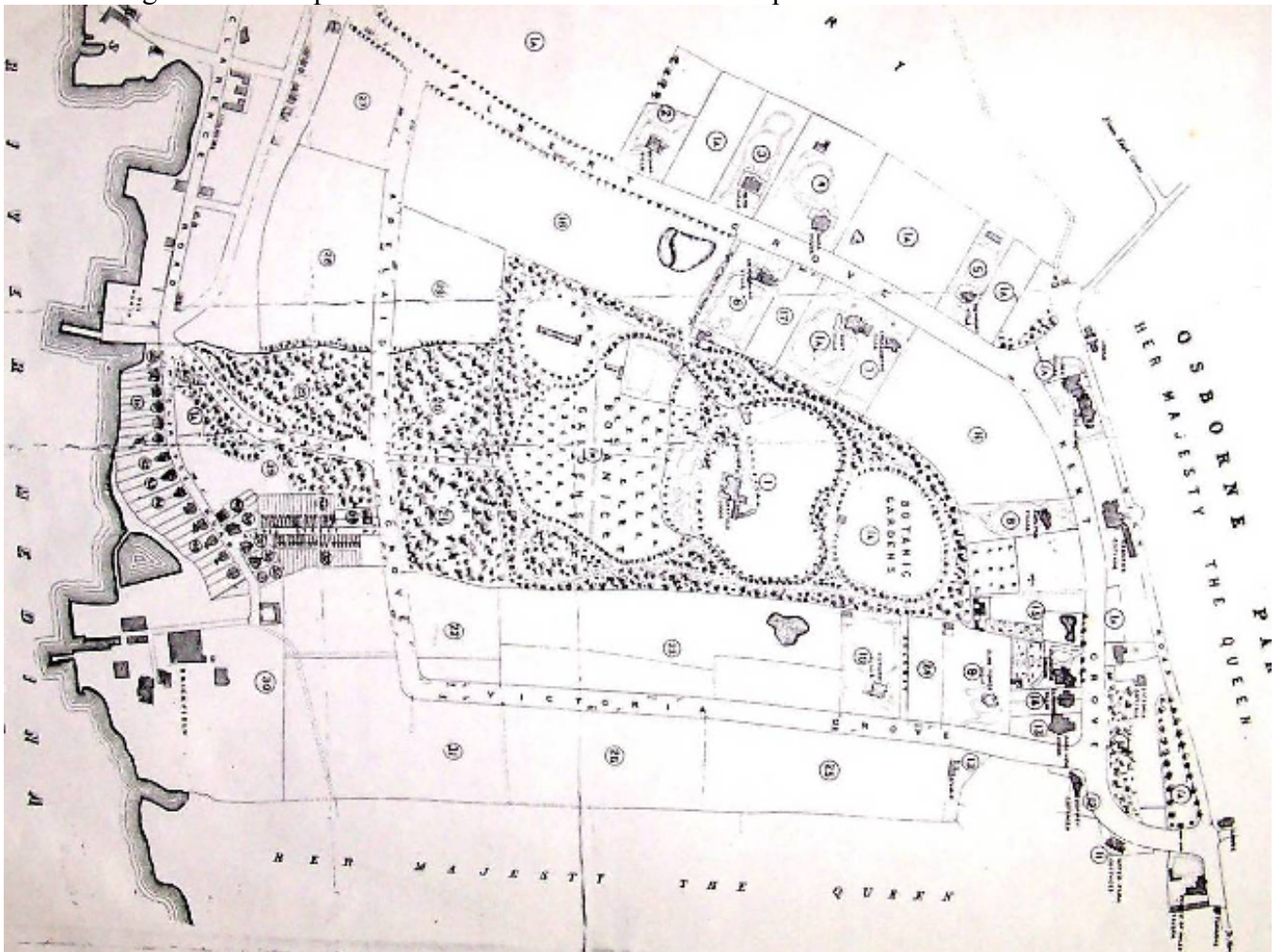
and a few large villas were constructed as part of the ambitious “East Cowes Park” scheme of 1843. Interest in this project waned and land was eventually sold off in smaller parcels for the construction of more modest homes, and some had to be provided for builders working on Osborne House. During the 19th century shipbuilding on the Medina had expanded once again and many dwellings were required to accommodate that workforce. Small marine-related businesses sprang up and the town’s infrastructure developed.

The arrival of engineer Sam Saunders in the early 20th century marked the beginning of East Cowes’ industrial era, and this and the arrival of the Red Funnel ferry terminal brought about the erasure of much of the old town centre. On the housing front, East Cowes Castle was demolished in the 1960’s and the estate given over to residential development. Much of the town’s social housing stock and further private development can be found towards the southern edge.

2.4 Description of the present features, types of building and density

Much of the early Victorian and Edwardian property was of closely built terraces in the narrower streets. Large Victorian properties of the Botanic Gardens Estate were built on York Avenue, and detached or semi-detached properties were built in Adelaide and Victoria Groves. It is these three roads that give the obvious character to the town, together with the Esplanade, lower Cambridge Road and Old Road, the latter being the original entrance to the town.

A) Development of the 1842 Botanic Gardens Scheme laid out the present wide main road system and allowed single houses on plots at least 100ft wide and 300ft deep:



East Cowes Park (Botanic Gardens) map, 1842.

B) Victorian terraces and semi-detached houses were built from that time, gradually extending uphill into the park as the Botanic Gardens plots were sold off for smaller developments in 1875.



1850s terrace, Alfred Street

C) Gradual building of homes for the well-to-do in the Cambridge Road area and accommodation for coastguards.



Cambridge Terrace, Cambridge Road



Coastguard Cottages 1882

D) Edwardian housing, either terraces for shipyard workers or semi-detached properties for the more qualified artisans, gradually spreading up hill. Larger houses built for staff of the Royal Naval College, 1903-1914, at the top of the town.



Corner Old Road/Newbarn Road

E) Development of the Esplanade and amenities during the depression years 1924-25 providing a facility for the public to view the Solent.

F) Expansion of Industrial buildings e.g. Columbine 1935



Columbine buildings, Castle Street

G) Aspects of post World War II development throughout the town:

G1) Infill of bomb sites (some as recent as 2008):

Clarence Road, old and new - proportionate to existing properties.





Adelaide Grove - Poor infill in the 1960s:
out of keeping with surrounding buildings.

G2) Infill of large rear gardens, leaving existing roadside properties. e.g. Lodgeside (below) and Queen's Gate.



G3) Demolition of large Victorian Villas and rebuilding with flats – e.g. Newport Villa





York Avenue – flat roofed- not so easy on the eye / incompatible as not pitched.



Kelsey Court, York Avenue – shallow pitched roof, not flat

G4) Large Council housing estates 1950s to 80s



Southbank Road – well spaced with amenity areas



Vectis Road: 1980s terrace development. Cladding rarely used elsewhere in the town, so these stand out badly.

G5) Major housing estate on East Cowes Castle land 1968-early 1990's.



Bungalows & housing taking advantage of the views towards the sea / river and following the contours of the land.

G6) Further extension into more greenfield sites. e.g. Greenlands & Hawthorn Meadows.



Greenlands Road – spacious.

G7) Reclamation of river tidal mudflats and old industrial sites - e.g. Medina View west of the cemetery.



G8) Demolition of the town centre by Red Funnel and north of it by SEEDA

H) East Cowes has high quality elderly residential accommodation that has not been matched by new building in the Town Centre around the retail sector.



Lower Well Road (subject to flooding)

SUGGESTED POLICY

3. Design

At sites near to Victorian / Edwardian properties that are built of yellow brick:

3.1 **Facing bricks** should be of predominately yellow brick – a match as near as possible to the old ECP brick should be used. String courses or quoins in red brick should be a common feature.



Victorian yellow bricks & red courses in Osborne Road.

3.2 **Roofing** tiles, ridge tiles and finials should reflect adjacent properties. Roofs should be pitched to match the existing character of the town



Osborne Road – ridge tiles /finials

3.3 Existing **Barge boards** are frequently ornate, and these should be reflected in adjacent new property.



Yarborough Road infill (centre) – uses a slightly patterned barge board, matches window design.

3.4 **Concrete** housing has been use in the town since 1852. More was used in 1948 in the post war housing when bricks were unobtainable. Reflections of this would be acceptable in appropriate locations.

Similarly, **stucco**, as per Osborne House and other notable buildings in the town could be used in appropriate locations.



Kent Avenue



Concrete houses by Osborne Prince of Wales gate.



Stucco: Victoria Cottage, York Ave.

3.5 Existing fronting **roadside properties** of architectural value **would be retained** if the **rear gardens were used as infill sites**. This would help to maintain the character of the town, **although the amenity and wildlife value of mature gardens might be lost**.



Access to Queen's Court, Victoria Grove

3.6 **Retail areas. Shop fronts** – the town has a dwindling number of small shop fronts, many of which are framed by decorative **tiles** . This feature could be used in additional shops – those built recently just of brick are bland and not cohesive with the existing shops. New building in the retail area should be of a high architectural standard to match the quality of building in the rest of the Town.



Old shop front (now Heritage Centre)

3.7 Some Island **stone** features in older properties, and this could be incorporated appropriately in new buildings.



Powys House

3.8 New buildings should be a “**good neighbour**” to existing developments. The **height** of new buildings should be no taller than surrounding properties. The character of new buildings should be complementary, rather than in opposition, to existing neighbours.

3.9. Industrial units should complement their surroundings, and the use of suitable brickwork would be beneficial. Bricks are easier to maintain than metal structures. Innovative design has been introduced in East Cowes, but architects need to consider carefully every aspect of new building in relation to existing buildings and adjacent features.



1980s industrial buildings, Clarence Road. Natural brick looks much better than painted brick. The latter needs frequent re-painting. Metal cladding for industrial buildings can be satisfactory if colours are broken up. Other metal work should be maintained:



Rusty ironwork on Clarence Road factory.

4. Proportionality

New buildings should be in proportion to the buildings in the vicinity and not be obtrusive. Domestic dwellings should be limited to two stories except where adjacent buildings rise to three storeys or that they represent no more bulk or height than the building or buildings they replace. **As a general rule, the roof contours of the town should follow the natural contours of the land.**



East Cowes roovescape from Milton Road, Cowes.

5. Environmental Impact

5.1 East Cowes has a fair number of valuable trees and all development should strive to retain existing trees and replace two of any removed with planning permission.



Mature holm oak trees in Victoria Grove

5.2 All new buildings should reach high environmental standards with regard to insulation and energy efficiency. **This should be higher than the national guidelines.**

5.3 New buildings will include adequate foul water and surface water drainage to be constructed prior to construction of the building. **Rain water collection facilities should be encouraged to be built into the system for grey water use.**

Development in areas at risk of flooding should include adequate flood defences.

5.4 The use of Alternative energy for combined heat and power should be considered in every new development.

5.5 All new buildings should include sufficient off-road parking for the predicted demand of that building where practicable.

5.6 These design guidelines are set to ensure that the development of the town retains the town's intrinsic character and ambience to carry it successfully on for generations to come.

5.7 Views of the sea and River Medina should be retained or even improved.

6. Land Usage Designation

6.1. Density of housing in East Cowes off the main roads is often high. Future developments should allow for adequate open space (not designated as parking) to provide a high quality of living.

6.2 Existing water frontage available to the public should be retained and expanded where possible as a civic amenity for social activities and not used for buildings with restricted public access.

6.3 Any marina development in East Cowes should have sufficient visitor berths to meet demand and be open to expansion in the future. Public access to amenities should be encouraged.

6.4 The future economic growth of the town will be based on the southern industrial estate, the provision of hi-tech developments, and tourism. The history of the town can provide scope for more tourism attractions.

6.5 There should be no enlargement of the footprint of the ferry port in its present location. Ro-ro facilities and car marshalling must be screened from the town centre, not form a major impact on the character as at present. The ferry company should be encouraged to identify future areas for the relocation of the ferry port and /or Planning and Development agencies should be required to identify areas for the development of wharfage facilities for the delivery of bulk goods.

6.6 Car parking – Future development should include provision of sufficient car parking facilities for all users of the centre of East Cowes – commuters, shoppers, health centre, leisure activities, tourists

