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East Cowes (Centre) Conservation Area

Appraisal Document

Adopted 11 January 2008

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Introduction

Local Planning Authorities have a duty under The Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate as conservation areas any areas considered to be of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to protect or enhance. Recent Government guidance directs conservation area appraisal documents to identify local distinctiveness and the qualities that make an area unique.

Conservation area boundaries are inevitably subjective in complex environments, and are based not only on architectural, land-use or historic attributes, but on the dynamic experience of walking or driving through an area. Map based boundaries are taken into consideration, but sensational qualities such as the awareness of enclosure or openness and degrees of noise and activity are also important in defining edges to character areas and the conservation area.

In coastal areas, the boundaries may follow the line of the mean low water mark which is the extent of the jurisdiction of the Council and so is used for consistency.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also makes provision for schemes to enhance the area, so the inclusion of areas of potential allows for schemes to be put forward which will improve the area in keeping with its own individual character, and to the same high standard.

Designation does not mean that development cannot take place within the proposed conservation area or within its setting. Designation means that special consideration is required for applications in the conservation area to ensure that any demolition is justified and that schemes (which are acceptable on all other planning grounds) are of a suitable design and of a high enough standard. This additional level of consideration allows members of the Council to insist upon the best possible standards of design for new developments within a conservation area, and allows them to refuse the poor and mediocre with confidence.

East Cowes (Centre) Conservation Area

East Cowes lies on the eastern bank of the river Medina which cuts through from the south of the Island northwards to the Solent. In the north, the Medina estuary cuts across heavy clay soils and land rises only gently from the river, over gravel terraces and plateau deposits, to a maximum height of 45m OD. The town looks over the muddy estuary to its sister, (west) Cowes, a larger town which successfully combines a historic core and flourishing modern, marina-led development.

East Cowes has a history of shipbuilding dating back to the 1620's if not before and also of cross-Atlantic trade from the 17th century during which period it has been suggested it was the more important of the two towns. East Cowes remained a smaller settlement than Cowes; historical records from the later 17th and 18th centuries note some reclamation, a few port facilities and a small population in comparison to its sister settlement. After 1750, with the establishment of a customs house on the High Street and increased demand for warships in this period of warfare, shipbuilding yards and associated features such as mast ponds and blacksmiths spread out along the waterfront.

The town did not expand very far inland until after the 1840's. In 1841 the Tithe Map illustrates a few buildings occupying the south end of the town and dispersed large houses occupying the surrounding higher ground including Slatwoods to the north (and shortly to be subsumed into the town) and Spring Hill and Shannon Castle in the east. These were not rural, poor farms; the settlement pattern in this area was formed by the establishment of parklands and large estates in the late 18th century, three of which Norris, Barton and Osborne are the subject of the proposed East Cowes Parkland Conservation Area. Lord Seymour bought a small farm called Norris in 1795 north of the town and had constructed upon the summit of a hill there, a medieval fort with castellated walls and a round tower which overlooked the northern approaches to the Island. This was designed by Wyatt, the then Royal Surveyor General. The successor to his post, John Nash, had constructed the Gothic fancy East Cowes Castle and its lodge in 1798 a few hundred metres east of the town and later called Shannon Castle. Whilst at East Cowes, Nash played a key role in the public and social life of the Island and built many public buildings including the Guildhall, Newport, the Church of St Mary in Cowes, the Holy Trinity in Bembridge and St James in East Cowes. Nash, like many visitors to the Island at this time was well connected and is thought to have commissioned the landscape architect Humphrey Repton to design the grounds of East Cowes Castle. Repton may also have been involved in the landscaping at Norris Castle (Basford, 1989. p54).

By 1830 East Cowes had established itself as a rural retreat for the upper classes, well connected persons and for visiting Royalty. Queen Victoria (at that time, a princess) stayed as a guest of Nash in Norris Castle and laid the foundation stone of his St James' Church whilst there in 1831. Two Yacht Clubs were stationed at East Cowes, one of which later became the Royal Squadron Yacht Club. Two main events happened in the 1840's that were to incite considerable changes in the character of East Cowes. The first was the establishment of a speculative development scheme including a pier, promenade, terraces and villas capitalising on the proposed conversion of Norris Castle into a first class hotel and the establishment of the London-Southampton railway. This speculative scheme was abandoned but a new proposal was rapidly put together which included terrace housing and was centered around a botanical garden on the southern edge of the town. By 1843 the project had changed direction again but retained the horseshoe shape of wide tree lined avenues (Albert Grove, Kent Grove, Victoria Grove and Medina Esplanade) and incorporated a wide choice of individual properties in 300 foot long plots including classical villas, pseudo medieval houses and picturesque cottages, many of which backed onto the private Botanical Garden. Although this venture failed (twenty villas were constructed, of which only six survive at the time of writing), the growth, form and character of East Cowes remains very much linked to these aspirations. For instance, the majority of the town is constructed from a medium-dark stock brick made from the Park's brickworks. The second key development was the purchase by Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort of the Osborne estate on the edge of the town in 1845 and their adding to this large areas south of Barton Manor from which they carved out their popular royal residence and family home. Much of the landscaping in and around the town (East Cowes has the highest concentration of street trees on the Island) was influenced heavily by Queen Victoria and can still be seen today. The Queen became regularly and directly involved in East Cowes and in Whippingham village and provided a major source of employment, charity, and education. Prince Albert also strongly influenced the wider region through his (and Cubitt's) Osborne Style of architecture, and the woods and formal planting on the Osborne Estate, erecting planned farms at Barton, Alverstone and elsewhere and re-organising road and field patterns.

The town itself began to flourish in the 1860's. A growth area on the western side of the town can be illustrated by the 1862 Ordnance Survey map, in particular how the canalisation and diversion underground of the spring from St James' Church by 1862 facilitated southward expansion beginning with the laying out of Clarence Road along which were placed short terraces of artisans houses, a school, tavern and a chapel. At this time east of Osborne Road was part of the Park scheme but this had failed to take off. By 1874, reduced plots on the East Cowes Park estate were up for sale and by 1876 the groves were made public highways and rows of Victorian terraces and semi detached infilled the former Botanic Gardens.

In recent history the town became the focus for industry whilst the draw for tourists, sailors and the wealthy was over the water in Cowes. Sam Saunders had a base in Cowes in 1906 constructing plush launches for the upper classes. He also established works over on the east side of the River south of the Folly Inn and there participated in the latest technological advances in "aero-navigation" including a hydrofoil, the Sopwith Bat boat, Singer seaplanes and Consuta plywood. During WWII Saunders churned out canoes, folding assault boats, and aircraft spars and the War Office valued its plywood so much that it oversaw the installation of Saunders own power supply. These factories were a major employer, particularly of women, until their decline from 1960 onwards. Saunders Roe established a separate site during the war which is still active today. The Osborne Works (on the site of the former Naval College hospital opposite Barton Manor) were where the company erected indoor test tanks and wind tunnels. In general however the industrial areas of East Cowes suffered with the decline of shipping and shipbuilding and the character of the town and the condition of its buildings and public realm reflected that decline. It is now the subject of a regional development agency funded regeneration project.

The proposed East Cowes (Centre) Conservation Area concentrates on a small area of the town north and south of the main route through to Cowes, the A3021. During the 20th century, the A3021 through the town became, and still is, a dominant feature to the detriment of any coherence or integrity to the town centre. The character of a broad tree lined avenue has completely eroded from York Avenue which is now a key part of the Island's infrastructure, giving access to the ferry marshalling yard and floating bridge to Cowes. The character of the conservation area changes around this main access route and so the conservation area is split into two distinct character areas either side of York Avenue; the urban Town Centre and the more rural Church Path. A further conservation area designation, the East Cowes (Residential) Conservation Area, will be brought forward shortly to include areas around Grange Road and the terrace on Alfred Street. There is much of special interest and historical value in the wider area and this is also covered by the existing East Cowes Esplanade Conservation Area (adopted April 2006) which incorporates the undeveloped esplanade and green from the breakwater to Castle Point along the water's edge and south of the town. In the next village along, south of the town, the Whippingham Conservation Area (adopted November 2004) delineates a cluster of buildings around Queen Victoria's former church. A further conservation area (in progress) will cover the former Royal Estate and Historic Park at Osborne to the immediate east of the town, to include the adjacent estates of, respectively, Norris Castle to the north-west and Barton Manor to the south-east. Undeveloped undulating pasture, ancient woodland, planned farms, natural coastline and the remains of magnificent houses, landscaped parks and estates of wealthy incomers are particularly significant in forming the wider setting of the town of East Cowes and providing a lush green backdrop.

Further Information

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O S 6" to 1 mile:1st edition, published 1863, 2nd edition, published 1898, 3rd edition, revised 1907
Revision of 1907 with additions of 1938
The Isle of Wight Unitary Development Plan
The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
Planning policy guidance 15 – Planning and the historic environment.
The Character Appraisal documents and maps of the adopted Conservation Areas are available from www.iwight.com/conservation.

Article 4(2) Directions

Under the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, the Council has the opportunity to consider the use of legislation to protect the character and appearance of conservation areas by requiring applications for certain specified changes to properties which, outside designated areas, would be permitted development. This extra planning control, called an Article 4(2), is already active in the existing Seaview and Newport Conservation Areas. Where applied, this direction can bring the removal, erection and alteration to chimneys, roofs, gates, walls, doors and windows under the control of the planning process and the installation of satellite antennae where these are proposed on the frontage of a property. An Article 4(2) direction only applies to residential properties however and so has not been applied in the Town Centre character area which is in the main, in commercial use. In the Church Path character area, it is felt that gradual change and small extensions could result in the erosion of traditional details on properties and the loss of boundary features and that this would have an adverse impact on the conservation area. It is considered appropriate to provide this added protection for Church Path (see Annex A).

AREA 1 - CHURCH PATH CHARACTER STATEMENT



Character

A green belt through East Cowes, the prominent impression is of strong; tall buildings with simple, elegant detailing scattered along a leafy lane. This linear grouping of spacious villas and the town's first stone church follows a historic route into the town and is bounded by trees, hedges and a stream. It is the combination of the natural elements that provide a distinctive rural feel to the area. The area incorporates important visual and historical links back to the plush East Cowes Garden Village scheme.

NB this expression of 'character' is derived from the study below.

Setting

The proposed conservation area includes the course of a small spring and adjacent footpath immediately north east of the town centre. The character area takes in St James' Church and its original parsonage (Bucklands) and a scattering of residential properties. A public car park abuts the western boundary. On the eastern boundary is St James' Close, a post war estate built in the former grounds of Nash's East Cowes Castle. The northern boundary follows a historic field boundary which abutted East Cowes Castle parkland that became developed from the late 1940's onwards but yet still retains a sprinkling of mature specimen trees. Recently a church hall was built to the east of the church and this is included in the character area for ease of management since there is no longer any physical division between the church and the hall on the ground, it would not be possible to run the boundary between them. To the immediate south is the busy York Avenue (A3021), once called Albert Grove and laid out as part of the proposed East Cowes Park Garden Village.

The treed character of this area and its wider setting links back to the time that Albert Grove (later renamed York Avenue) was a tree lined avenue running south of the parkland of East Cowes Castle which was designed and occupied by John Nash the Regency architect and incorporated gardens thought to have been laid out by Repton. The gothic Norris Castle designed by James Wyatt, Nash's predecessor as Royal Surveyor General, was sited to the north of the character area. The Royal residence and expansive estate of Osborne was located to the east, south of the town.

History of development

In the first half of the 19th century, East Cowes came to establish itself as a fashionable coastal retreat. In the 1840's plans were proposed for a speculative garden village style development of individual and impressive villas, London style clubs, a lush botanic garden and wide tree lined groves. The land on which the parsonage and the church were built was gifted as a parcel (possibly by Nash as recorded by Fanny Oglander in 1831). This established some of the essential infrastructure for East Cowes – a church and associated parochial building – though the town still fell within the chapelry of Whippingham at that time. The church was a prominent feature, probably the town's first, and was sited on one of the main access routes into East Cowes. The line of Church Path is a relict of an early footpath which is illustrated on the Tithe map (d.1841) and which continued past the church along what is now Dover Road and spilled out onto the High Street (Trinity Rd). The southern boundary of church property seems to have been laid out in respect of the pathway. The high stone wall which borders the pathway is therefore significant. The very weathered and worked appearance of some of the large blocks of natural stone may indicate that the stone had been reused from Henry VIII's "lost" castle of East Cowes. Changes in construction and repair are visible and in the 1840's it is known to have formed the southern edge to an orchard of a large property called the Lodge, belonging to a rich merchant Mr Auldjo. This may explain the high stone wall that borders Church Path, the well built church wall and the elegantly finished pillars; their detail and grandeur are significant as a testimony to their importance in the town's history, as highly visible buildings on a busy route. The stone from which the properties are constructed and their style is in keeping with the naturalness of the botanic garden and the gothic theme of Nash's church.

Princess Victoria laid the foundation stone for the church, probably when staying at Norris Castle in 1831. The Royal Surveyor General John Nash designed the original church, although only the West Tower now remains as he intended. Nash also designed East Cowes Castle which was his retreat for nearly 40 years until his death in 1835 upon which time he was buried in a tomb at the base of St James' tower. His church was later extended and remodeled and is now a listed building.

Bucklands, the parsonage, was a later addition to the church facilities and was built in 1846 in the Italianate style which Prince Albert had brought to East Cowes in 1845. Stylistically, Bucklands has similarities with the Osborne Style villas along York Avenue, which are linked to Cubitt, the Prince's builder. Like these villas and others of the speculative Park development, the parsonage was an expensive build set in extensive grounds. The build cost half the total cost of the stone church, a testament to the high quality design and particular detailing which remains evident in the building today.

The Stream in this character area is also a significant feature in the development of the town. Map research proves that the spring fed stream ran south west to Falcon Shipbuilding yard where it may have formed marshy areas used as mast ponds in the early shipbuilding industry. By 1862, the lower section has been diverted underground in order that the marsh can be drained and occupied by Clarence and Osborne Roads.

Materials

Local stone walls are capped with knapped flint. Dark yellow bricks are the basis of the terrace with brownish red bricks highlighting features. Timber windows are most common although there has been some replacement with uPVC. There is a simple iron railing atop a dwarf brick garden wall outside the terrace. Pillars are constructed in both yellow brick and dressed limestone. Render is used as relief around the windows on the villas and on Bucklands (which is presumably brick built). Stone kerbing and guttering has been retained opposite the churchyard.

Height, mass & form

All the buildings are in small clumps; there has been no infill between/amongst them since they were first laid out in their plots. Interestingly, the terrace and the villas all face northwards, rather than turn their back on the church. The terrace has more of a horizontal emphasis, whereas the villas and Bucklands are just short of three storeys. The villas are larger in plan form and may have been built with some first storey additions to the sides/rear. They look northwards to the spring, facing the pathway and the landscaped gardens of the former East Cowes Castle. The low pitch roof and broad eaves of the villa and Bucklands are strong stylistic details. The single wall along the side of the road and the footpath provide a directional emphasis to the character area and encourage views along the path to Bucklands. Bucklands is sited on higher ground and the church wall leads the eye round to view it; its location together with its mass renders it more significant. The form is interrupted by the car park immediately west of the terraces and this space in its lack of enclosure and size does not sit comfortably with the narrowness of the path and the scale of the small terraces. At the western end of the character area, the high wall and narrow path combines with the row of terraces to affect a sense of enclosure and progression.

Typical details

St James' Church was originally plain gothic, built by Nash in keeping with the 18th century penchant for gothic as exhibited locally by Nash's East Cowes Castle (now lost) and Wyatt's Norris Castle. The church was later remodeled and the sharpness of the dressed stone detailing, the chamfered edging to the wall pillars and the decorative circular window follow the simple elegance exhibited elsewhere in the character area. The terrace grouping exhibits very strong uniformity and more detailing including soldier courses of brownish red bricks over windows and doors and a string course of a single course of header, wooden gates, 6 panel doors with rectangular fanlights over. The whole is harmonious Victorian detailing and quite reserved. The detailing on the villas and Bucklands is more simplistic, there is no decoration to the eaves or ridges and the chimneys are diminutive. All windows are set back in deep reveals and all are sash style from 4 pane to 12 pane.

The qualities of the building and their contribution to the area

All the buildings are important to this area, each making a contribution through qualities such as the quality of the precise architectural detailing, the condition of features or their relationship with each other. It is a small sensitive grouping that retains its physical links and its early form; as yet none of the character area has suffered from infill developments. The villas and Bucklands are all in large plots and so potentially would be targeted for redevelopment. Bucklands is linked to the church not only through close physical association but in terms of original purpose and function. The villas and the terrace are linked to the church through their facing it,

and sharing the linear boundary. Only the church is listed, this for its links to the architect John Nash. The Victorian Terrace and the wall combine to give a sense of enclosure.

Public Realm and paving

Historic limestone kerbing and guttering has been retained opposite the churchyard along the southern edge of the roadway. There is no pedestrian pavement outside the terraces and villas, giving a village feel. Church Path is currently a quiet, dead end road exhibiting a “rural lane” character, though it is noted that the current levels of traffic are a temporary phenomenon. The surface is tarmac with faded yellow lines. The path through the trees is newly laid smooth tarmac. In this environment natural materials such as light pea gravel or stone would be more appropriate than concrete based products.

Trees, open space and views

The group of sycamore, alder, hornbeam and horse chesnut trees along the stream form an important rural adjunct to the urban town centre of East Cowes and their greenness is a particularly strong element of the character of the area.

The small roadside triangle at the junction with York Avenue allows the church and in particular the elaborate wrought iron gateway and the circular window to be viewed from the road. This is important particularly now that the historic route to the town has been diverted away from the church. This triangle of grass is undisturbed and incorporates some semi-mature trees which provide a green setting to the church.

Sound and smell

The area is generally quiet and the influence of the church makes it evocative although the footpath bustles with activity at the beginning and end of the working day. There is little noise through the trees other than the rustle of leaves which is a welcome respite from the sound of traffic on nearby York Avenue.

Positive Elements

- Lack of traffic along Church Path, although it is noted that this is a temporary situation, and its “rural lane” character with a narrow carriageway and little signage.
- Retention of plot sizes without being compromised by infill development.
- Traditional brick/stone finish of properties bordering Church Path.
- The retention of small gardens, walls and pillars and the colour and pattern they provide.
- Rural feel along Church Path due to lack of kerb and lack of clutter e.g. bins, signage.
- Retention of stone walls as boundaries.
- Complimentary, muted styles of the buildings.
- Small green area at the junction with York Avenue affording an open aspect and views to the church.
- Integrity and originality of the architecture of the terrace, lack of modern accretions e.g. satellite dishes.
- Survival of treed area dating from at least 1862 (now a Tree Preservation Order).

Negative Elements

- Redundant dwarf brick walls outside Bucklands.
- Two tone pavement colour and central drain on Church Path.
- uPVC replacement window units.
- Poor condition of coursed rubble wall opposite the terrace.
- Industrial feeling of the canalisation of the stream and the overmechanised harshness of the weir.
- Potential for development pressure to erode the setting and/or key features of the conservation area
- The traffic queues and noise on York Avenue.
- The open car park and its standard highway safety oriented materials (tarmac, chain link fence, concrete kerb stones, signage etc) all of which clash with the naturalness of the area and uncomplex but well detailed structures.

Condition and the capacity for change

The condition of the features of the area at the time of writing is on the whole good. The properties appear to be well maintained and so the crucial detailing, which is all important to the designation, has survived. Given that there is little capacity for change to the buildings without eroding the character of the conservation area, preservation can be secured through an Article 4(2) direction to ensure that the uniformity of the Victorian terrace, the repetition of the materials is not lost and that original features e.g. boundary railings are retained.

It is acknowledged that the rural nature and quietness benefits from an unoccupied, closed site and that this will be affected by the development which will bring the adjacent land back into use.

The stone wall should be retained, although this will be very vulnerable given the rate of surface erosion of some of the stones and the proposed development scheme. It may be that a certain amount of change can be accommodated for permeability and that this can be balanced against the part restoration or preservation of this perhaps ancient characteristic feature.

The condition of the church is good and this building is statutorily protected and unthreatened. However its setting may be at risk through the new regeneration housing scheme north of the stone wall, but also through the need to provide access to the new development along the church boundary. Given both the church and the boundary wall are listed, their setting is protected from alterations which would adversely affect them. The setting is also under threat from proposals to develop the former parsonage (Bucklands) to its immediate south. Demolition would mean the loss of an important building associated with the church and would have a significant negative impact on the church and the character of the conservation area.

The setting of the conservation area is to be affected in the north where coloured hoarding and currently empty land demarcate the edge of the regeneration site. There will be tremendous change in this area and across East Cowes within the next few years as the development site becomes active. The development will offer many opportunities to improve the setting of the conservation area and the features which contribute to the character can be identified as positive influences on the project design process and design cues.

AREA 2 - TOWN CENTRE CHARACTER STATEMENT



Character

The imposing style and refined orderliness of this group provides a strong contrast to the form of later development and the hectic bustle of the nearby port off York Avenue, opposite. This well-defined group would not look out of place in a city, reflecting as they do confident planning, affluence and commerce. However they are quite separate and the general feel of Clarence Road is quiet, not at all urban, despite the warehouses of the Falcon Yard and the injection of energy into the town from freight and ferry passengers.

NB this expression of 'character' is derived from the study below.

Setting

This character area is roughly rectangular and is sited west of the main road on the edge of the modern commercial area, to encompass the historic core of the town centre formed by the Town Hall and a pair of three storey Georgian style terraces. The character area is sited on the southern edge of the town, just north of the many terraces of workers cottages that typify East Cowes. The northern boundary of the character area picks up the centerline of the busy York Avenue (A3021). This was once called Albert Grove and laid out as part of the proposed East Cowes Park scheme, but is now a main access to the ferry port and Esplanade. To the south east of the area, the rivers edge has been gradually reclaimed by shipbuilding yards, including the famous Falcon Yard established by Joseph White in 1825 producing cutters for the Royal Navy.

History of development

The town saw rapid growth in the 19th century due in part to its close relationship with one of the nation's foremost shipbuilders. It is thought that J S Whites purchased the active Nye shipbuilding yard in 1803 just south of the floating bridge and continued the production of naval warships. In 1834 the town gained more recognition for its skilled workforce and marine tradition through the success of the brigantine *Waterwitch* for which Joseph White was mentioned in Parliament. Probably following reclamation for Whites, former marshy areas (perhaps monopolised by Falcon Shipbuilding yard as mast ponds) were drained and Clarence Road and Osborne Road were laid out sometime after 1841. Clarence Road was initially a ropewalk and remained on the edge of the river until more land was reclaimed as White's shipbuilding yard expanded later in the 19th century.

By 1862 only the terrace of shops had been built in the character area and these remained separated from the town's residential and industrial growth by empty plots. They were built as accommodation for the Queen's Guard and were used until new barracks were built in Albany Road in 1882. The Officer's Mess then became the town's first library called the Albert Reading Room which included books donated from the Queen. The site of the former Stable block for the Guard's horses is now occupied by the Liberal Club. The ensuing years saw the encroachment of the Falcon yard east to Clarence Road, with only a few residential properties constructed immediately south of the character area. The establishment of the Town Hall in 1897 east of the shops was driven in part by Mrs Amy White, the wife of J S White who raised much of the needed funds for the building.

By the first half of the 19th century, away from the shipbuilding yards, East Cowes was also a fashionable coastal retreat. The influence of these links with aristocracy and London based gentry on the built form is visible not only in the Queen's Guard terrace but also in expansive mansions across East Cowes. The Royal Surveyor General John Nash begun East Cowes Castle in 1795 and spent much time socialising with high society; in 1817 the Prince Regent came to dinner at the castle. The Prince frequently invited the Island's high society to dine on his yacht in the Solent. He also visited Lord Henry Seymour in Norris Castle north of the town which had been designed by the Royal Surveyor General James Wyatt. Princess Victoria was also a regular visitor and laid the foundation stone for the nearby Church of St James when staying at Norris Castle in 1831.

Materials

The local materials are distinctive stock bricks, probably from the brickworks just off Minerva Road at the end of Victoria Grove. There is little or no variation and the selective use of these bricks (apparently frogged ECP) above all others is a dominant feature and one of the reasons for the tightly defined boundary around this grouping, although it is acknowledged that local stone was used for foundations and hidden, party walls. The mouldings, ashlar and architraves are probably roman cement. In the terraces, the windows are timber as are the shopfronts although metal was employed for shop window mullions.

Height, mass & form

The mass of the two opposing stock brick terraces is dominant in this character area. These are purpose built three storey commercial properties with residential over. There is a strong pattern in the form and the vertical emphasis is heightened by the parapet which raises the roof height and by the symmetry of the windows. The mass contrasts markedly with the two storey buildings which now adjoin the terrace to the south.

The Town Hall is also a dominant, tall building with vertical emphasis given by a balustraded parapet and projecting clock face. Away from the front elevation, the scale of this building is slightly reduced.

On the junction of Ferry Road and Clarence Road, Numbers 16 and 14 which abut the east terrace, exhibit a reduction in height to two storeys. The form is specific to its location, following the road as it turns the corner. Notably, the scale of the

shopfront elements e.g. the height of the stallrisers and depth of the fascia replicates and reflects those of the terraces.

Typical details

The terrace has a parapet with stone coping and moulded cornice at eaves level. The windows of the upper floors are set in deep reveals in moulded surrounds. The second floor windows are 9 pane sash with moulded architrave surrounds with steps underneath. The first floor are taller 15 pane sashes with heavy moulded architrave surrounds and a cornice on a flat hood. No 1 has a rounded corner. No 1 abuts a stock brick property with ashlar stucco at ground floor and uPVC windows. The terrace shopfronts are beneath a cornice and are typical of the 19th century. Narrow fascias with plain pilasters and stallrisers surround a pair of large windows with segmented panes along the top and above the central doorways.

Number 16 and 14 Ferry Road retain some elements of the historic shopfronts including narrow fascias with moulded cornice above, fluted pilasters and ionic capitals on iron mullions, but the segmented glazing has been removed from the corner property and this has affected its character. Upper floor windows are set in reveals and are roundheaded sliding sash. The roof is a shallow pitched hipped slate roof with red ridge tiles. The round headed windows are dressed with a rubbed brick arch at the terminus of which there is a black brick band string course.

The Town Hall has a series of cornices and heavy moulded architrave detailing around the windows. The door is flanked by stuccoed columns with a name panel above the key stone. The clock face is surmounted by a triangular pediment with an elaborate floral motif disguising the buttresses. The balustraded pediment is topped with four conical finials. The retention of these details is particularly important to its character and its contribution to the conservation area.

The qualities of the building and their contribution to the area

The height and dominance of the terrace and town hall are a key feature of the area and provide the scale. The smaller scale detailing on the terrace and its architectural style is very significant in imparting a sense of quality and affluence. The use of the local yellow brick throughout provides cohesion and is a locally distinctive colour that ties this character area in with the residential streets across the Town.

Public Realm, trees and paving

Adjacent to the end of the terrace is a wide area of block pavements. Iron framed wood seating encircles the trunk of a weeping ash, locally called The Umbrella Tree and reputed to have been planted in wartime. A bus shelter is provided on the pavement edge and bins and a lamppost are also sited in this area.

Views

The views of the area are channeled along roads and across building frontages with no one dominant building acting as a landmark or drawing the eye. The eastern boundary, down York Avenue, is a broad view along what was once a tree lined avenue but is now the main thoroughfare downhill and the main direction of travel. The view along the centre of Clarence Road is visually striking because of the contrast between the terrace and the industrial sheds; this is an oblique view of a unique streetscene rather than one that terminates at a particular focal point.

Sound and smell

This character area is rather quiet apart from the regular injection of traffic heading down York Avenue for the ferry terminal.

Positive Elements

- Good condition of the listed terrace; retention of Georgian style windows and historic shopfrontages
- The curvature of the two storey property as it turns the corner into Ferry Road
- The variety in the shops; their colour schemes, traditional window displays and sympathetic non-corporate signage
- The individuality of the commercial enterprises consisting mostly of small, local businesses which add to local distinctiveness
- The retention of the Umbrella Tree (weeping ash) for over 100 years,
- The broad area of paving, the round seat and the café's seating which combine to give a friendly, lively feel.
- The retention and good condition of the traditional advert (for batteries) on the front elevation above "Bruces"
- The number of buildings of high quality and local importance surrounding the conservation area including the locally listed Gridiron Shed, Victoria Barracks, Medina View, and Laurel and Rose Villas (which will be put forward for local listing). Such buildings are being added to the local list, which recognises an individual building or structure's contribution to local distinctiveness.
- The residential properties opposite the Town Hall, which compliment the hall and whose condition and integrity (in terms of repetition of forms and quality detailing) provide a high quality setting for the area.
- The oblique angled on street parking on York Avenue which provides a market town feel
- Street lighting in a design which is inspired by historic lamps

Negative Elements

- Harsh transition on southern boundary at the end of the Georgian terrace
- Lack of detailing and respect given to context in the design of commercial properties on the north side of York Avenue and the larger warehouses throughout the town
- Incoherence of the broader Town Centre and loss of locally significant buildings during recent years
- Loss of pattern and rhythm between two terraces particularly where conversion to residential has involved the removal of historic detailing and shopfrontage features
- The closure of commercial units in the western terrace encouraging conversion to residential and reducing the vibrancy and commercial character of the area
- The traffic queues and noise on York Avenue
- Poorly designed toilet block outside Town Hall
- Visually intrusive ramp, bright flower boxes and loss of decorative windows degrade the Town Hall frontage
- Plastic windows in the western terrace and opposite the Town Hall

Condition and the capacity for change

The non listed terrace is particularly vulnerable to change out of keeping with its character as elements of the historic shopfronts are removed. This area could be greatly enhanced by returning these ground floor units back into commercial premises.

The Town Hall has retained many of its important features but as with all community buildings it is necessary for it to be in good repair and under pressure to meet necessary regulations for public spaces. There is sometimes seen to be a conflict between this and the need to retain locally distinctive characteristics, but a balance can be reached.

East Cowes is not really a destination in itself unlike other Island coastal towns and the integrity and legibility of the town centre has been eroded as a result of pressure to provide mainland ferry links and a route across to Cowes at this particular point on the Medina. The drive for regeneration may offer some resolution in this respect by encouraging the improvement of infrastructure and the establishment of attractive facilities in East Cowes.

ANNEXE A

Article 4(2) Direction, East Cowes (Centre) Conservation Area

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT) ORDER 1995

Schedule 1

Definition of "The Land"

(NB These Permitted Development Rights only apply to single dwellinghouses, thus flats and commercial premises are excluded from the Article 4(2) Direction.

- All dwellinghouses in Church Path from 1 Church Path to St James' Villa (westside) and including Bucklands (eastside).

Schedule 2

Definition of "Development"

- The enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwellinghouse or dwellinghouse roof where any part of the enlargement, improvement or other alteration would front a highway, open space or public footpath, being development comprised within Class A and Class C of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the said Order.
- The construction, alteration or removal of a porch where the external door fronts a highway, open space, waterway or public footpath, being development comprised within Class D of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the said Order.
- The provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a building, enclosure, swimming pool etc where the building fronts a highway, open space or public footpath, being development comprised within Class E of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the said Order.
- The provision, removal or alteration of a hard surface where the hard surface fronts a highway, open space or public footpath, being development comprised within Class F of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the said Order.
- The erection, demolition, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse where the enclosure would front a highway, open space or public footpath, being development comprised within Class A of Part 2 and Class B of Part 31 of the said Order.
- The painting of the exterior of any building or work, including the application of coloured paint on a building or enclosure within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse where the building or enclosure would front a highway, open space or public footpath, being development comprised within Class C of Part 2 of the said Order.