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Seaview Conservation Area

Appraisal

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Contents

Introduction	1
Seaview Conservation Area Revision Appraisal	
Area 1 'The Historic Core'	2 - 6
Area 2 'The Outskirts'	7 - 9
Area 3 'Residential'	10 - 12

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.

The Character 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 legislation 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 to insist upon the best possible standards of design within a Conservation Area, and allows them to refuse the poor and mediocre with confidence.

Seaview Conservation Area

Seaview is a popular seaside village located some 3km east of Ryde on the Island's north east coast. The earliest reference to Seaview is during the 16th century when the French landed near what is now the Old Fort Café on the esplanade. Initially, settlement was very dispersed. In the 18th century, only a saltern existed on the northern edge of the reclaimed coastal marsh. Much of the surrounding area (particularly Woodlands Vale and Seagrove Bay) has remained very sylvan in character.

Like other Isle of Wight coastal towns (e.g. Bembridge and Gurnard) Seaview became important as a coastal resort in the Victorian period, and was popular with the upper and middle classes. The village core lies opposite the naval anchorage of Spithead and the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour, amongst a picturesque, gently undulating landscape. To the north is Springvale, which although not covered by this Conservation Area is worthy of designation and protection itself. Seaview is an area which we think has three different characters in terms of its built environment: the historic core (Area 1), Victorian residential infill (Area 2) and the village outskirts (Area 3).

SEAVIEW CONSERVATION AREA– APPRAISAL

AREA 1 - THE HISTORIC CORE



Character

This is a sparkling, popular area which spills uphill from the rocky coastline where water based activities create a feeling of excitement. Bunting, brightly painted boats and family groups in beachside café's contribute to the holiday bustle. The small sunny core of narrow streets exudes tradition and is punctuated by decorative, customary shops.

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

History of development

The earliest reference to Seaview is during the 16th century when the French landed near what is now the Old Fort Café on the esplanade. Initially, settlement was very dispersed. A small hamlet of workers cottages had grown up around the salt making industry to the north of the High Street and early coastal houses, probably built for sea captains, concentrated near the Fort. The core of the village was also along the High Street where today 18th century houses survive fronting the west side. The Tithe map of 1837 illustrates the beginning of residential infill; long narrow plots have been set out fronting the High Street by the time of the Tithe survey.

The salt industry was revived in the early 1800's by the owner of Seafield House. Many houses along the Esplanade, Circular Road and West Street were constructed in the early-middle 19th century, including Seaview House (d.1843). From about the 1850's, railway connections and steamboat services increased the popularity of Seaview with visitors and this is reflected in enlargements to houses, the numerous sea-side accommodations (including the Hotel) and the construction of the Pier all of which occurred during the late 19th century. Much of Seaview village dates from this time and its development can be traced in part to the local Caws family who purchased housing land from the Nunwell estate in 1800 (and again in 1906), constructed the Sea Wall, laid out Rope Walk in the town center and were responsible for the building of the unique suspension pier in 1880.

The location of the village on the edge of the Solent has characterized its development and its beach, promenade and associations with sailing remain a draw for incoming populations to this day. Now the village center settlement is close-knit. Recent growth has expanded out and uphill to Nettlestone in the south and in the west along the promenade to the edges of Puckpool Park.

Setting

The Historic Core Character Area encompasses the area uphill from the Esplanade at Nettlestone Point and, as a satellite area, the group of Salterns Cottages in the west. These historic Salterns cottages are bordered by Flamingo Park which occupies a broad low-lying expanse of reclaimed marshland. The central Historic Core is bounded by residential development on all sides, but historically this was a rural area and part of the Nunwell Estate. Now late 19th and 20th century infill development including Bluett Avenue and Fairy Road fills the area between the Historic Core and its satellite area, The Salterns, in the west. The Historic Core was initially surrounded on the east by the wooded cliff edge of Seagrove Bay, which restricted development of the village until the 1940's when it expanded south west to meet with Nettlestone.

Materials

White painted brick is dominant on the High Street, Pier Road, Salterns Road and the Esplanade and its reflective characteristics are particularly noticeable on bright days. In general there is a mix of materials including local limestone, probably Bembridge limestone, which is common on the east Esplanade and Circular Road and sand brick in Madeira Road. Slate now dominates as the roofing material in the Historic Core, but earlier plain clay tiles are retained at the Salterns and occasionally in the High Street. There is no thatch roofing in this Area.

Painted wood cladding in West Street, the impressive and unique Watsons Brothers shopfront, the Gallery and the "Wild Silk" buildings employ elaborate wrought iron, embossed terracotta, stained glass and other materials in an enhanced decorative style not seen elsewhere but these add to the diversity and link back to the historic development of the village core.

Height, mass & form

Windows dominate the Area either because they project or because they are dressed with coloured or painted stone. Three storey splayed bays and bow windows are common in the Historic Core and contribute to the Victorian feel.

Narrow regular streets, small infill plots and tall buildings give the impression of a compact small town, although several High Street properties are more spacious and set back from the road. Many buildings have narrow flat roofed extensions to the rear and have occupied loft space with dormer windows. Commercial properties follow this general pattern but incorporate accommodation on the upper one or two storeys.

The High Street and West Street are noticeably dense, with the broader streets of the Esplanade and lower High Street near the Slipway being more open but simultaneously cluttered with car parking and boat storage.

The satellite area, The Salterns, consists of a mixture of low and heavy forms with catslide roofs to the first floor and squat narrow terraces.

Typical details

Large timber framed 12 pane sash windows are common on the High Street. Where the building line is set back, fences, pillars, railings and garden areas are important elements in the streetscene. Historic shopfronts are important to the area in general and some exhibit decorative and unique detailing e.g. Watsons in terracotta and the coloured glass and ironmongery of the Gallery, both of which are distinctive. Elsewhere traces of previous commercial use are represented by wooden applied pilasters and stall risers in Madeira Road and West Street. Colourful dutch canopies shade the shop frontages along West Street/Pier Road. Decoration includes string lines in sand brick with moulded projections and dog tooth denticulation in the later Victorian properties. The scallop bands of the old tile roof on Salterns Cottage are not typical of the Area but add to the character. Stone walling, including that around Circular Road and Seaview House, is very important in giving an enclosed, traditional feel.

The condition of many properties is good, perhaps due to the early designation as a Conservation Area and the Article 4(2) direction which deters insensitive alterations and ensures the retention of distinctive features and important quality detailing.

Paving

There are various treatments in the Historic Core including broken paving slabs of various colours in West Street. Warm buff setts form a newer surface on the High Street pavement and act as a traffic calming measure on the esplanade. Here, the pavement is occupied by picnic tables and benches on the seaward side. On the land side, a single white line demarcates the edge of the tarmac road for walking and Victorian iron bollards protect pedestrians from cars. The surface treatments in the majority of the Historic Core are showing wear and damage from alterations to public realm furniture and utility works. In Circular Road, recent repairs have damaged the traditional flagstone pavement. There

are no other traces of historic surfaces elsewhere.

Trees and open space

The main area of open space is provided by the Beach which forms the terminus of the High Street and the sea-side esplanade. The public realm of this open space is inharmonious in terms of furniture provision and styles; some benches on the High Street face the beach whilst some face west. The short esplanade is fronted by a dwarf wall which often doubles up as a seat and formal seating is provided via the picnic tables of the Fort Café.

In this area, small gardens and modest borders in front of properties form important colourful perimeters to the streets. A prominent coniferous tree outside Northbank Hotel draws the eye down the esplanade eastwards. Planting becomes more concentrated in the vicinity of Shoreside with traditional mature trees including ash and holm oak providing a cool, green feel. The broader setting in this area is provided by a verdant backdrop of the wooded hillside at Seaview Bay and views of the woodland are very important.

Sound and smell

The sea breeze carries the smell of the sea and noise of people on the beach up the High Street. The passing of the Catamaran and Hovercraft are audible on the beach. The lack of opportunities for these activities during the off season offers a harsh contrast with the noise of Summer. On the edges of the area, the clatter of rigging on masts is a key background noise.

Day and Night

During the day, there is activity from the shops, summer residents, sight-seeing tourists and people on the beach. At night time, the Area becomes more restive. In winter periods the area is generally unpopulated and suffers from a lack of activity and the closure of shops and galleries.

Positive Elements

- The retention of wooden window frames and sensitivity with which the historic buildings have been treated
- The rhythm of the gabled rooflines along Pier Road
- Traditional iron bollards and street name signs
- The contribution of the historic shop frontages and decorative detailing in Wild Silk, the Gallery, Watsons Bros and others and their links to the history and identity of the village
- Low wooden fences of the High Street allowing a feeling of open space and letting gardens spill onto the streets
- Narrowness of streets, density of settlement and regular layout
- General lack of clutter
- Flagstone pavement in Circular Road
- Survival of local stone walls including those in Circular Road and that to Seafield

House

- Uninterrupted view down the High Street from Pier Road to the gleaming sea

Negative Elements

- Rope Walk including toilets, garages, substations, rear yards of properties and many fences, all of which detract from the street scene
- The public realm furniture on the esplanade, including oversized refuse bins, poorly designed war memorial, and various styles of benches, all inappropriately sited
- Lack of quality detailing on UPVC glazing and false timberframe details
- On-street parking
- Inappropriate split timber cladding and asbestos roofs
- Prevalence of bright render and paint over softer traditional finish
- The closure of commercial properties which reduces the vitality of the settlement

AREA 2 – THE OUTSKIRTS



Character

The open and rural setting of this Character Area on the edge of the village is a strong influence. It feels spacious, separate and affluent. Tall, decorative houses in sizeable plots look out towards the sea, distant from the village center.

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

History of development

This area relates to various periods of the village development going back as far as the 17th century for Rose Cottage on Steyne Road. In the 18th century, more significant properties became established on the village outskirts, including the larger Redcross Cottage on Pond Lane and Fairy Hill (itself outside of the conservation area but a prominent building when viewed from down the hill in this area). These decorative developments contrast markedly to 18th century buildings in the Historic Core such as West Cottage, West Street. By the early 19th century, there were more substantial properties in the wider area, many of which had parklands (namely Seaview, Seafield and Seagrove, the original lodge of which remains on the corner of Seagrove Manor Road amongst modern chalet bungalows). Woodland around Seagrove restricted development of the village until at least the 1940's. Only some of the estate parkland has been retained to this day. The significance of this area is that it is testimony to the success of Seaview and its increased attraction to the wealthier gentry class.

Materials

Many buildings have historic references in their design or are built in the local vernacular with traditional materials such as the stone Redcross Cottage. Brick is often used to stress quoins, windows and for garden walls. In itself this varies from dense bright red at

Sandlands to soft, locally made brick of Sandlands Cottage. There is no thatch roofing in this Area, plain clay tiles are common, as are wooden frame casement windows and porches. Painted timber is also important as a decorative element to gables, balconies etc.

Height, mass & form

In this Character Area, the streets are noticeably wider, there are more open spaces and larger plots. Large three story properties are common (including modern flats in Steyne Road and 1960's properties off Old Seaview Lane both of which border this Area). In this Area, in contrast to the historic core there is a strong vertical emphasis sustained by tall Victorian chimneys, pierced ridge tiles and rectangular windows. In some areas there is also the ladder effect of houses built on the slope.

Typical details

Typical Victorian/Edwardian details in timber are prevalent including pierced decoration on bargeboards, mock Tudor framing, decorated gables, timber and balustrade balconies. There is a combination of window styles from three light sidehung casements with small square leaded lights over or vertical sliding sashes, to gabled dormers and splayed bays. Decorative chimneys incorporate oversailing brickwork and roofs and dormer windows are hung with fishscale tiles and alternate courses of plain and shaped tiles. There is some influence of classical motifs and Art Deco styling in later buildings. There are few details on the 17th/18th century buildings confirming their vernacular character.

Paving

The paving in this area is generally neat and in good condition. It is broader, higher and less interrupted by public realm furniture (benches, bins etc) in these quieter sections of the village. There is no evidence of surviving historic surfaces, although Steyne Road is a historic route to the town; it is only the partial survival of some kerb and gutter sections in stone which indicate this. The concrete esplanade and sea wall on the eastern outskirts is in poor condition and a variety of materials (including concrete render and rusting metal) are unharmonious.

Trees and open space

There are several key open spaces which enforce the distinction between Seaview and Nettlestone and which provide character for this area. The existing green off Steyne Road is depicted as a wooded open area on the Tithe maps of the early 19th century. This small green now holds only a few mature willow trees but feels woody. The open field downhill to the immediate west of Steyne Road and south of Fairy Hill has also been retained from this period. This is an important backdrop to properties such as Sandlands and provides, along with the Green, a rural, open feel and secures uninterrupted views across to the Sea.

19th century maps show that the rural nature of this area is historical, particularly to the south east at Sea Grove (a semi-mature broadleaved woodland around the Priory) and west towards Ryde (called Woodlands Vale). This association probably led to the

establishment of select houses with parklands and views to the sea across open countryside. Many of the Area's individual properties have established gardens and mature trees. Seagrove's mature trees provide crucial character to the southern part of the village, act as a contrasting verdant backdrop to the modern apartments and built up feeling near Seaview Bay. They also operate a crucial buffer to the rapid expansion of Nettlestone immediately south of the open space.

Sound and smell

The passing of the Catamaran and Hovercraft Passenger Services are audible on the beach. The singing of garden birds is very noticeable in this part of Seaview.

Positive Elements

- Retention of mature trees and green, rural setting
- Open space and wide vistas
- Pattern of secluded large houses in large plots
- Lack of clutter in the public realm
- Provision of discreet off road parking
- High quality, well maintained built form
- Harmony with modern architect designed buildings fronting Old Seaview Lane

Negative Elements

- Impact on the historic integrity of the large buildings when converted to flats
- UPVC windows on the seafront and out of character window treatments
- Variety of treatments of the sea wall along the east esplanade which includes rusting metal revetments and stained concrete render

AREA 3 - RESIDENTIAL



Character

This area has a strong homely character. The roads feel safe and friendly. Distinct from the dense and busy village core, the character is simple, quiet and familiar.

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

History of development

This character area relates to the semi detached properties in stock brick south of the Historic Core Area in Somerset Road and Church Street, to the red brick development in Ryde Road and the pebbledash terrace in Seafield Road. Ryde Road was one of the first areas to be established in the 1890's connecting Steyne Road with Pond Lane on the western edge of the village. This lane ran to the pond and marsh area which still forms the western boundary of the village.

By 1909 Ryde Road incorporated a chapel and assembly rooms. The chapel survives today but is in use as a residential property. The road does not run west to Ryde, but instead is a dead end. The following year, Seafield Road's terrace of white pebbledash houses were built by James Ball of Cowes having been designed in the Arts and Craft tradition by local architect Edward Caws as a summer residence for visitors.

Outside of the Conservation Area, Bluett Avenue and Fairy Road exhibit less regular, later 20th century infill which began when the Seafield Estate was split up in 1907.

Materials

Yellow and red brick predominates for walling and also for decorative elements with alternate colour brick being used to stress windows and quoins or the same colour is used in relief. Occasionally encaustic tiles are used. Brick is also commonly used for low garden walls and gate piers. Some red brick properties exhibit rendered and mock Tudor decorated gables. Stone window surrounds are common. Larger stock brick properties show rubbed arch sash windows and slate roofs; red brick properties are typically roofed with clay tiles. The white terrace on Seafield Road has a painted pebbledash render finish. Balconies are enclosed with timber balustrades. Here, the use of stained glass in fanlights and doors, original door furniture, wooden window frames and the use of horizontal

terracotta tiles to cap garden walling is particularly important to the character of these properties.

Height, mass & form

In general this character area consists of two storey properties in straight rows. There are two main plot sizes of semi detached and detached with medium to large gardens. Seafield Road, although a terrace, is in accord with this pattern. Small gardens are provided at the front and plots are enclosed, with properties set back from the road. There is more variety of form and plan in Somerset Rd than Ryde Rd which has a regular rhythm and which lacks detached properties. However the rhythm is affected in Ryde Road by the use of some front gardens for car parking.

Typical details

Detailing is concentrated on the front of the properties, with the most elaborate being found on the larger detached properties. Brick denticulation, pierced bargeboards, sash windows, low garden walls and gables over bow windows are prevalent detailing. Projecting string courses, dressed stone window surrounds, keystones to windows, hipped roof under gable, semi-circular fanlight above doorways are common elements of the brick residences. The detailing on Seafield Road terrace and the extreme west of Ryde Road includes Arts and Crafts/Art Nouveau styles, incorporating Queen Anne doors and door furniture, extended porches over doorways and a rusticated pebbledash finish.

Paving

The paving is in general in average condition in the residential area, and much appears to have been recently re-surfaced. The kerbstones are irregular, loose and scuffed. On-street parking is common.

Trees and open space

A few mature garden trees and shrubs are important to this residential area, particularly those at the west end of Ryde Road and those near the church. There are no open spaces within the residential area and no views out to the ocean. There is a feeling of enclosure because of the groups of terraces and semi-detached houses, although the rear gardens of Ryde Road are bordered by the Allotment Gardens and open fields.

Day and Night

The pattern of activity and noise in this Area reflects the occupants' use. It is generally quiet during the day, represented by not only in the smaller number of vehicles parked on the road, but also there is a noticeable lack of noise from the gardens.

Positive Elements

- Retention of timber framed windows
- Retention of finials, bargeboards and other decorative details
- Established front gardens
- Harmony of brick finishes
- Regularity of pattern and form

Negative Elements

- Painting / rendering over harmonious brick
- Off street parking altering the rhythm of the street and removing front gardens
- Unsympathetic use of UPVC both for windows and guttering
- Installation of rooflights
- Interruption of rhythm by alterations to regular pattern of windows