



East Cowes Esplanade Conservation Area

Appraisal

Adopted 13 April 2006

Conservation & Design
Planning Services

01983 823552
conservation@iow.gov.uk

EAST COWES ESPLANADE

Adopted 13 April 2006



Character

This conservation area is a quiet and unspoiled esplanade that has not been commercialised as most have - it retains an air of the 1950s. It is more of a local attraction than one for tourists, and is valued as such. It is the 'local' beach and promenade, refreshingly lacking the trappings of the bucket and spade areas. The buildings and structures are similarly low key and lead gently into the conservation area, becoming less and less evident the further one goes.

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

The legal background

Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas any 'areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Section 69 also requires authorities to review their areas from time to time to see if further designation or alteration to existing designations is necessary.

Planning Policy Guidance: Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15) deals in some detail with the assessment and designation of conservation areas in section 4, and the adopted planning policy documents for the Island contain sections relating to development within such areas.

History of development

The 1862 edition of the Ordnance Survey shows none of the seafront development as we see it today, with the road stopping at the junction of what is now Cambridge Road. By the 1939 edition many of the buildings in existence today were in place with the most significant being the Regency style terrace at the bottom of Cambridge Road, and the coastguard cottages and barracks buildings towards the town.

Setting

To the north and west the beach, Cowes Roads and the mouth of the harbour form the immediate setting, with the dense riverside development of West Cowes forming the backdrop. The developed frontage opposite provides a stark contrast to the openness on East Cowes side.

To the south as far inland as the breakwater, the setting is green and predominantly treed with the effects of the westerly winds having polished and shaped the trees at the edge of the belt. Closer to the town the setting becomes more urban, running from domestic gardens to unkempt space and then the commercial sheds of the early 20th century.

Materials

The Victorian buildings, and those which have copied them, make use of the sand coloured brick so popular locally. Some red brick banding is used as elsewhere in the town. Roofs are either slate or red clay tile. Means

of enclosure are varied, with the stone wall and railings surrounding the barracks block being significant. The sea wall and the retaining wall to the landward side of the road against the woodland are each important but are very different. They oppose each other, the one a 'normal' brick wall with rounded coping, good for sitting on, the other very quirky.

Height, mass & form

The predominant form here is of terraces, with even the barracks having a regular rhythm. Most buildings are of 2 stories with some rising to 3 but no higher. Pitched roofs are the norm, with vertical proportions to windows and detailing.

Typical details

The detailing on the Victorian buildings is typical of the period and provides for 'interesting' chimneys, lintols, dormers and the like. Where more recent buildings have tried to copy the Victorian style, the level of detail seems to have been watered down. The Regency style terrace is true to its period for the most part, with good ironwork.

The seafront structures are 'of their age' with the shelters and huts going back perhaps to the 1950's.

Paving

There is evidence of stone gutters along the esplanade, with some stone kerbs remaining. Some of the footway along the seafront is of concrete using fine pebbles as aggregate, again relating with the period of the beach huts and shelters.

Trees and open space

The main characteristic of this area is its openness. The beach and water to the north and west, and the green strip along the seafront define the area. The structures are set within this space, with a background of trees on the inland side.

Sound and smell

The sounds and smells of the area are largely dependant on the weather and the state of the tide and the combination of the two. In calm weather the area can be quiet, but in stormy weather the sound of the wind and the halliards of moored boats can be very loud. In a storm the seaward end of the Esplanade can be quite wild.

Smells are those associated with the sea, but not of a developed seafront. The 'ozone' smell of seaweed can be very strong.

Positive elements

- The continuity of materials / colour palette
- The space
- The quietness
- Being close to the water / beach – and accessible
- The contrast with West Cowes opposite
- The lack of commercialisation
- The mature trees
- The various walls
- Barracks railings

Negative elements

- The accretions at the coastguard cottages
- The accretions at the barracks
- The boundary 'hedge' to the west of the coastguard cottages
- An excess of signs at the bottom of Cambridge Road

For detailed information on policies, legal background and national advice, please refer to

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

For further information contact the Conservation & Design Team.