



Directorate of Environment and Neighbourhoods
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Freshwater Bay Conservation Area

Appraisal

Adopted 23.12.09

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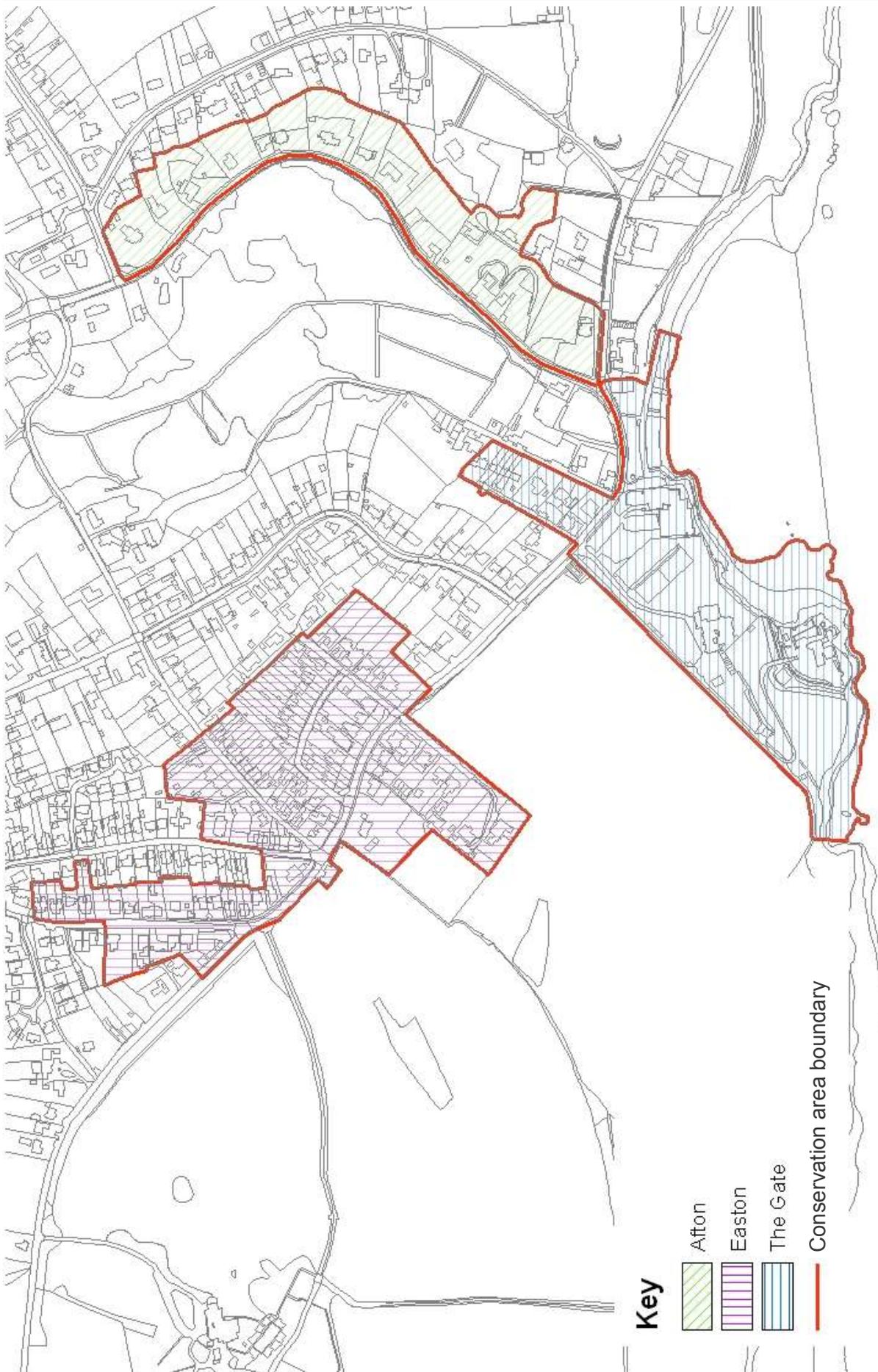
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Freshwater Bay Conservation Area Appraisal



Key

- Afton
- Easton
- The Gate
- Conservation area boundary



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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.

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 within 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.

Freshwater Bay Conservation Area (proposed)

The area under review falls within the parish of Freshwater and does not contain any previously designated conservation areas. The proposed conservation area has been divided into three character areas: The Gate (Area 1), Easton (Area 2), and Afton (Area 3). In The Gate Character Area the boundary follows the line of the mean low water mark, which is the extent of the jurisdiction of the Council, which is therefore used for consistency.

The proposed conservation area is situated adjacent to the coast in the south west region of the Island: almost all of the area lies within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is also part of the Tennyson Heritage Coast. The economy is mainly based on agriculture and tourism, with a small number of manufacturing and service companies.

The area is linked to other settlements in the area by the A3055 and the B3399. The downs, Tennyson and Afton, rise steeply to the north and are linked to the coast by a number of ancient track ways. Afton Marsh, an area of wetland, extends down to the head of the river Yar. The area is surrounded by farmland and land owned by the National Trust.

Historic development of the settlement

By the Late Anglo-Saxon period, Freshwater was a royal estate with its centre at Kings Manor. The bounds of this estate became the mother parish of Freshwater before the Norman Conquest of 1066. In Medieval times the parish had a polyfocal settlement pattern of five hamlets called Norton, Sutton, Easton, Weston, and Middleton; these names are still in use, except Sutton which is now known as

Freshwater Bay or 'The Gate'. There is a small valley or 'Gate' in the chalk ridge which runs from east to west across the island. This 'Gate' is a narrow low bank of land which separates the sea from the springhead of the River Yar, which is the origin of the name of Freshwater.

Although a planned medieval settlement was laid out after the Norman Conquest in the area known as School Green, the settlement pattern of the Freshwater area remained one of polyfocal hamlets around greens (as seen on the 1793 OS map) until the mid 19th century. The 1793 OS map shows a watermill on the Afton side of the Freshwater Causeway and a millpond on the south west side of the causeway but the mill disappeared in the 19th century and the millpond was drained, turning the area into marshland.

Isolated larger houses were built from the late 18th century onwards at Norton, Westhill, and Farringford; at that date the only buildings at Freshwater Bay were two public houses. In 1853 Farringford became the home of Alfred Lord Tennyson, the Victorian Poet Laureate, for nearly 40 years. An artistic community of wealthy Victorians grew up around this location and its popularity grew.

By the 1860's the Royal Albion Hotel had been built beside Freshwater Bay and the 1862 OS map shows that a small row of villas and a coastguard station were built to the north. Nelson's "Handbook to the Isle of Wight", published in 1884, described Freshwater as a picturesque watering place with several well built, convenient and handsome villas. By 1908 a row of Victorian houses, said to be commissioned by Queen Victoria for returning sea captains, formed a street opposite Baker's Farm. The land on which these properties were built was part of the Farringford estate. By 1908 the settlement at Easton had developed into The Square, Guyers Road, and Victoria

Road. A group of fine Edwardian houses had also been built along the new Afton Road. Orchard Brothers, a purpose built grocery store, was built in 1865 and is still in existence on the corner of Victoria Road. The area has always been important in the history of the defence of the Solent; there are beacons, watch towers, and forts, some of which were modified and used during both World Wars.

Post 1920s bungalows and bungalow settlements spread around Freshwater Bay and became the building of choice for people who were retiring to the seaside.

Archaeology

Most settlements contain archaeological evidence which helps to explain their origins and the way of life of former inhabitants. However, the historically diverse nature of settlement within the proposed conservation area makes it difficult to define specific areas of archaeological potential. The likelihood of the occurrence of archaeological material is related specifically to previous land usage.

Prehistoric remains of all periods, including Bronze Age arrowheads from Burial mounds and important Iron Age finds, and Roman pottery have been recorded from the Freshwater area. Archaeological remains of the Anglo-Saxon Royal estate, the Anglo-Saxon hamlet settlements and the late Norman planned settlement could survive beneath the modern ground surface, including the watermill and millponds near Freshwater Causeway. Important later military remains also survive including the Palmerston coastal defences of the mid 19th century, and sea and coastal defences from World Wars I and II, such as beach defences, artillery batteries and observation posts. The mid 19th century Coastguard Stations are also of high archaeological importance.

Archaeological remains of any period could

be found within the proposed conservation area and any proposals to carry out works which include ground disturbance are likely to require an archaeological evaluation and assessment. The results of this archaeological work may show that impact of proposed development on archaeological remains is inappropriate or needs to be modified.

Freshwater Bay character areas

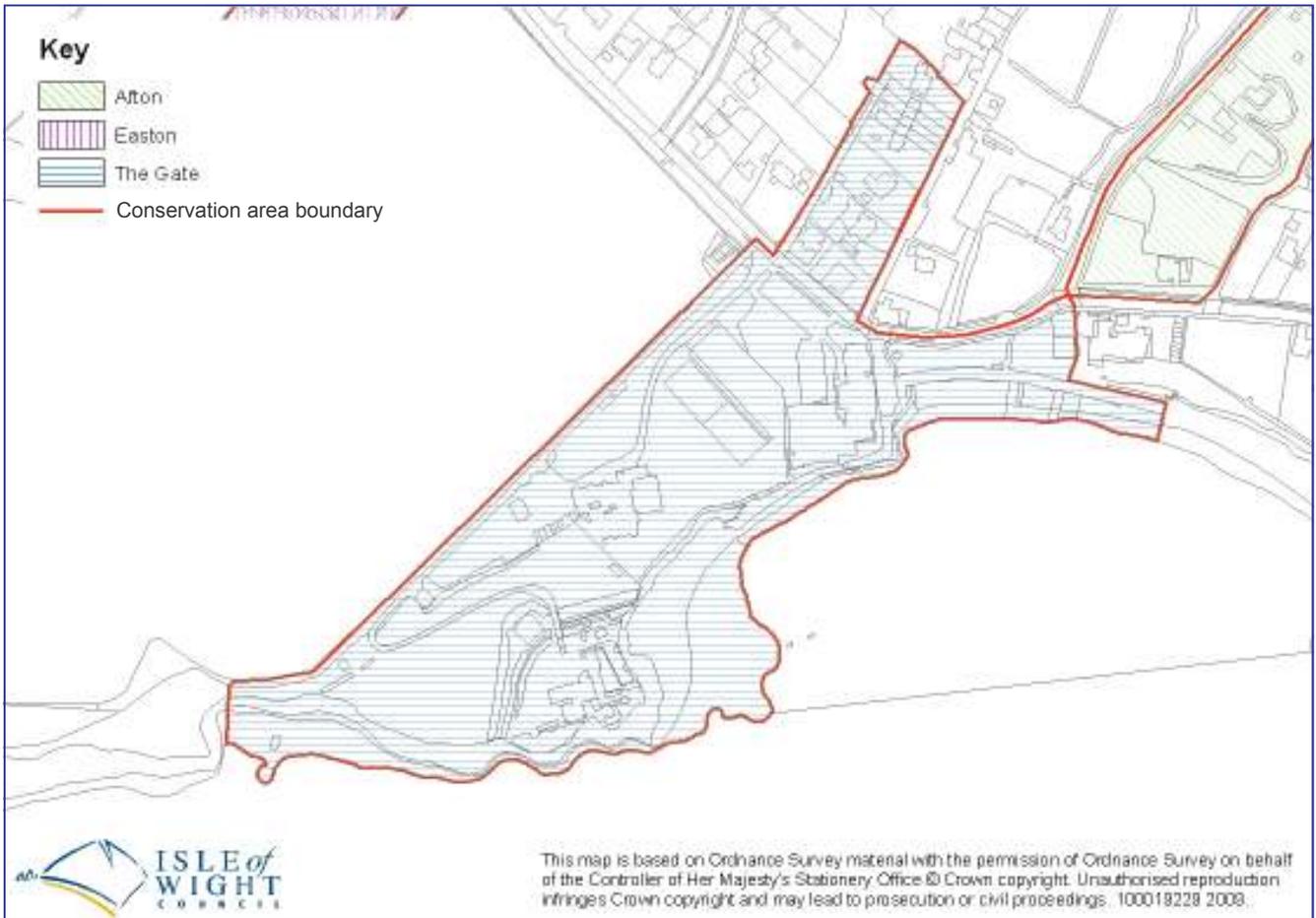
The proposed Freshwater Bay Conservation Area is divided into three character areas:

Area 1: The Gate

Area 2: Easton

Area 3: Afton

Area 1: The Gate



Character

A beautiful and sublime landscape provides the backdrop to this picturesque watering place, a popular destination for walkers and tourists alike. The area is characterised by its Victorian buildings and its strong coastal and military historical links. Open to the elements; the area can dramatically transform from a still and tranquil bay to a dramatic stormy seaside scene. The promenade lines the seafront and provides access to the beach, a popular spot for sun-seekers.



History

By the late 18th century the only buildings in existence at Freshwater Bay were two public houses, The Mermaid and The Cabin. Both were frequented by the artist George Morland (1763-1804), who moved to the island in 1799.

The Albion Hotel now stands on the former site of The Cabin. The Mermaid is no longer in existence. Plumleys Hotel appears on the 1862 OS map and is now called HF Holidays. It stands a few hundred yards up the hill, above the Albion and overlooking Freshwater Bay.

Fort Redout was built in 1857 under the direction of Lord Palmerston to prevent the landing of French troops in Freshwater Bay. Manned until the end of World War I, it was sold into private hands after 1925. The Coastguard Station, which comprises a block of cottages, were built in the mid 19th century and are shown on the 1862 OS map.

Setting

From Freshwater Gate the land rises to the lofty down; the chalky cliffs rear up in a gradual rise to 147m above sea level and form a magnificent range with near vertical cliff faces. The River Yar springs from the marsh behind the main carpark and runs

north to the Solent at Yarmouth, across low lying land.

In a tremendous storm it is not improbable for waves to crash over the sea wall with relentless fury. When the sea is calmer the fishing boats and their brightly coloured floats bob up and down in the bay. Standing on Fort Redout there are wonderful views as the chalk cliff turns to red sands towards Compton and Brook beyond.

Materials

The coastguard cottages are red brick with yellow brick dressings. Many of the larger properties have painted brickwork or render, with raised render quoins. Some houses have random Island stone walls on their side and rear elevations. Roofs are predominately slate.

Height, mass and form

Small coastguard cottages are of two storeys and terraced. Larger hotels and villas are detached and of two or three storeys. Roofs are generally steeply pitched although some modern bungalows and extensions have shallow pitched or flat roofs. The form of the military defences can clearly be seen in Fort Redout.

Typical details

The Coastguard Cottages have decorative yellow brick dressings and small pane windows. The Victorian villas have decorative timber finials to gables and sash windows with large panes.

Public realm, hard landscaping and paving

At the centre of the bay a large open space of tarmac serves as the public carpark. There are blacktop pavements and an unmade gravel road along Coastguard Lane. There is further hard landscaping along the seafront where the concrete sea walls and steps provide access to the beach. Additionally there are cast guard rails to the sea wall. Along the tarmac esplanade there are timber seats, and concrete paving slabs have been used around the 'wishing well' and on the seafront by the Albion Hotel (in limited areas). Some old original lamp posts survive in front of the Albion.

Trees and open spaces

The beach, sea wall, and small green in front of the sea wall provide public open space. Pebbles set in concrete make a hard standing for small fishing boats. The Rotary Wishing Well has a small landscaped garden beside it and there is also some coastal planting around the edges of the carpark. Along the lane leading to Fort Redout, over native hedgerows, views open up to the coastal footpath leading across the surrounding fields and up to Tennyson Down.

Sounds and smells

There is a constant sound of waves and whether lashing at the sea wall or gently splashing over the shingle. The light is forever changing as weather fronts roll in from the Atlantic; thick sea mist is a common occurrence. When the tide is low there is a pungent smell of seaweed throughout the area surrounding the bay.

Day and night

In season, by day children play on the beach, visitors eat ice-cream on the promenade and frequent the local tea shop. Fishermen come and go from the bay. Occasionally the inshore lifeboat is launched, creating a sense of drama. By night the hotels have bars and restaurants that bring visitors to the area. Freshwater Bay is a quiet retreat free from the usual seaside entertainments and attractions.

Positive elements

- Beach and promenade
- Victorian villas
- Coastguard Cottages
- Military history
- Magnificent chalk cliffs and downs
- Bars and hotels
- Lifeboat station

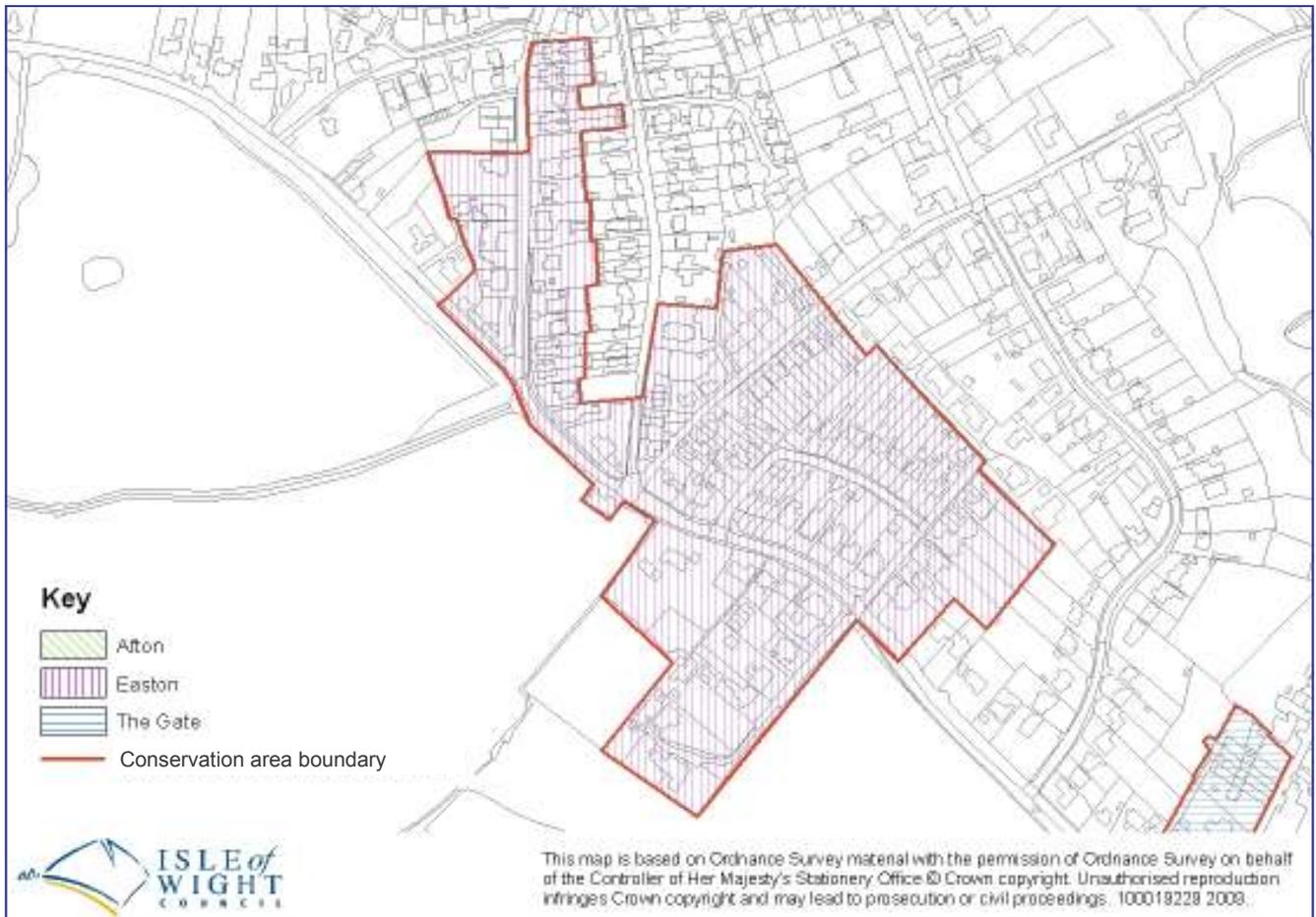
Negative elements

- Carpark and associated clutter
- Bins and kitchen extracts from hotels
- Modern replacement windows
- Unsympathetic extensions
- Poorly maintained exterior decoration on some properties

Potential for enhancement

- The beach shelter
- Paving on the promenade in front of the Albion Hotel
- Entrance and landscaping to the carpark

Area 2: Easton



Character

A peaceful residential area, complete with thatched church and shops. There is a strong sense of place amidst this tightly knit community, which exudes proud historical links to Victorian artists and poets, most notably in Dimbola Lodge, the former residence of Julia Margaret Cameron.



History

Easton was one of the five hamlets that made up the pre 19th century Parish of Freshwater and some of the original farm cottages are still in existence. By 1908 a row of Victorian houses, said to be commissioned by Queen Victoria for returning sea captains, formed a street opposite Baker's Farm. The land on which these properties were built was part of the Farringford estate. By 1908 the settlement at Easton had developed into The Square, Guyers Road and Victoria Road. Orchard Brothers, a grocery store built in 1865, is still in existence on the corner of Victoria Road.

Dimbola Lodge, originally two detached cottages, was once the home of the celebrated Victorian photographer Julia Margaret Cameron from 1860 to 1875. The two cottages were joined to form one building. The setting of the building is dominant on the skyline from the surrounding character areas, most notably on the approach from Freshwater Bay.

Setting

Gate Lane rises as it heads west towards Farringford Park. Past St Agnes' Church the open fields to the south side of the lane give way to hedgerows and woods.

Materials

Some original cottages are built of Isle of Wight stone rubble walls with red brick dressings, and slate roofs with red brick chimney stacks. Some cottages still have thatched roofs and some have been lime washed. Later grand Victorian properties are of yellow brick with red brick dressings and slate roofs. The more modest houses are of plain red brick, though some properties have been painted or rendered.

Height, mass and form

Predominately two and three storey detached and semi-detached houses, with some small terraces. Plot sizes are varied and there are a variety of boundary treatments, some natural and others more formal. An old gateway dated 1881, the entrance to Recluse House, still stands in The Square. Properties typically have front and rear gardens of varying sizes.

Typical details

Gable buildings with decorative fascias and bargeboards with finials are a distinctive feature of the area. Red brick dressings to window and door openings are also a common feature within this area. Some original sliding sash windows still remain but unfortunately many have been replaced with modern alternatives.

Public realm, hard landscaping and paving

The roads follow the old farm track ways and paths. Where pavements exist, they are blacktop with concrete curbs or rough grass verges.

Trees and open spaces

Beyond the bay, a public footpath leads up to the Tennyson Down. From here there are magnificent sights and sounds of the sea and long distance views of the settlement are to be enjoyed. There are few trees on the south side of the downs due to the severe exposure and poor soil. In the lea of the hill there are woodlands and arable fields.

Sounds and smells

On rough days it is possible to hear the waves crashing in the bay, seagulls circling above calling, and the occasional car passing through. On the back roads domestic sounds of garden birds, pet dogs, and lawn mowers are common place in what is a predominantly residential area.

Positive elements

- Victorian villas
- Thatched church
- Original farm cottages
- Original shop fronts that remain
- Established front gardens

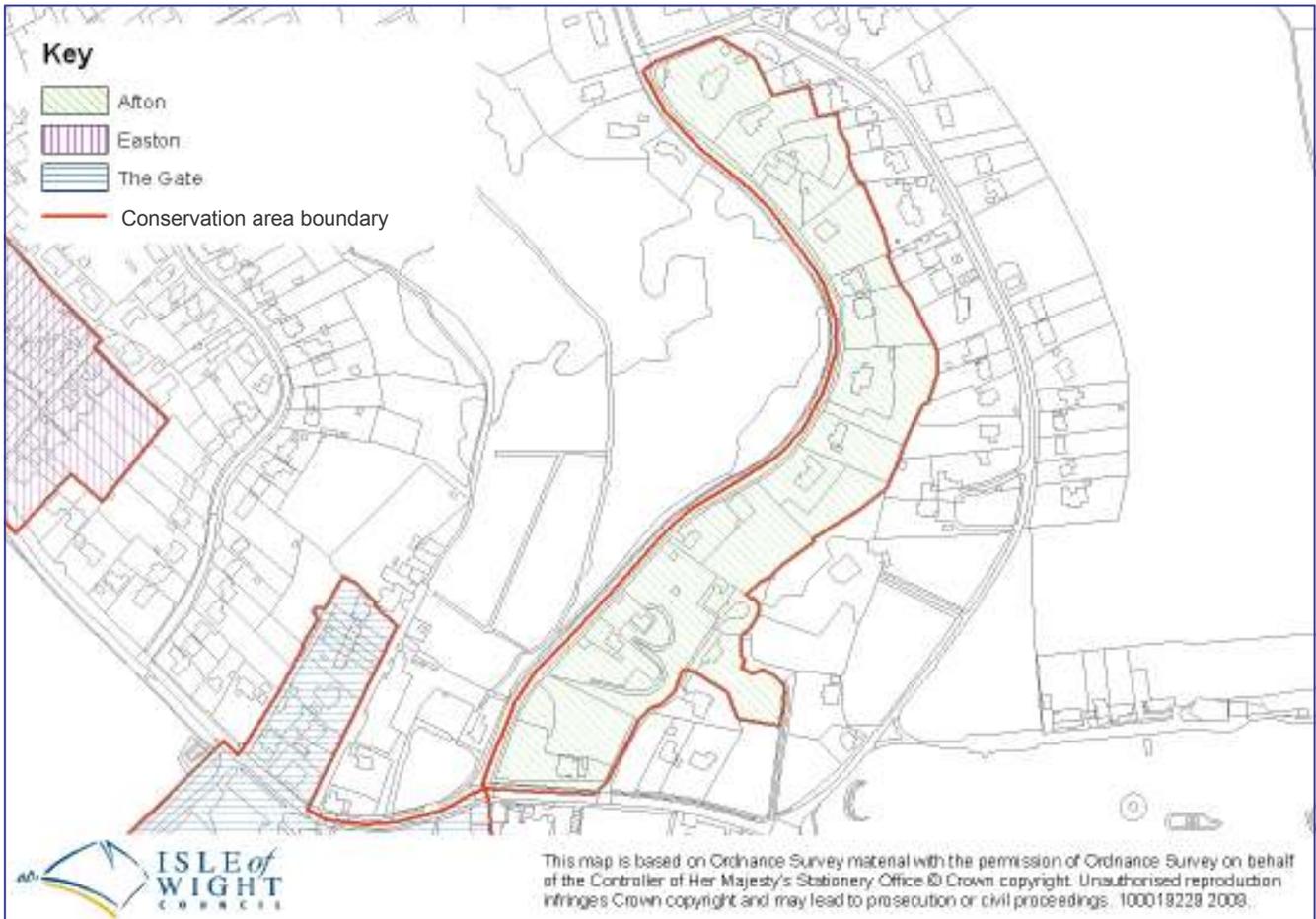
Negative elements

- Modern replacement windows

Potential for enhancement

- Encourage the retention of original windows
- Restoration of redundant shop fronts

Area 3: Afton



Character

Afton is characterised by large elegant Edwardian properties, mostly of 'Tudorbethan' design, set within large plots and dominated by mature trees and landscaping. The overriding character is openness: many of these properties are set on elevated positions, looking out above the road. Views across the central marshland are notable and contribute to the more rural nature of this area.



History

Edwardian architecture is characterised by eclectic architectural features influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, with attention to timber detailing. Afton Road was built in 1885, on the east side of the River Yar, providing a new route between Freshwater and Freshwater Bay. The majority of the houses along Afton Road were constructed in the late Edwardian period as a group.

Setting

The properties in the Afton Character Area are situated on the east side of Afton Road in an elevated position, adjacent to Afton Marsh. The road connects the A3055 with Freshwater and follows the marsh round in a gentle sweeping curve to the east.

Materials

This well preserved cluster of large homes make use of plain clay red tiles, rough cast render and mock timber framing. There are also distinctly bright red bricks in use.

Height, mass and form

The houses along Afton Road are later Edwardian properties with a variety of windows, some projecting and some with turrets of 'Tudorbethan' design. They are set within large plots and dominated by mature trees and landscaping.

Typical details

Gable buildings with decorative fascias and bargeboards with finials are a distinctive feature of this area. There are also decorative ridge tiles. Many houses retain their original windows, predominantly wood framed casements and sash style, together with porches and large conservatories.

Public realm, hard landscaping and paving

The roads follow the old farm tracks and paths. The paving materials are varied and predominantly modern. Where pavements exist, they are blacktop; there are rough grass verges that contribute to the rural feel of the area.

Trees and open space

The low lying marshland behind the main carpark is rich in flora and fauna. Trees line Afton Road and give a green background to the substantial houses that dominate this road. The disused chalk pits, now overgrown with trees and vegetation, provide open rural separation from the bay.

Sound and smell

Marsh reeds swaying in the wind, wildlife inhabiting the marshland, and cars passing along Afton Road.

Positive elements

- Edwardian villas in large plots
- The marshland
- Substantial gardens
- Established planted boundaries
- Mature trees
- Painted timber

Negative elements

- Unsympathetic infill development
- Disused chalk pits
- Water works

Potential for enhancement

- Encourage the retention of original windows
- Retention of planted boundaries

Further Information

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Maps

Ordnance Survey:

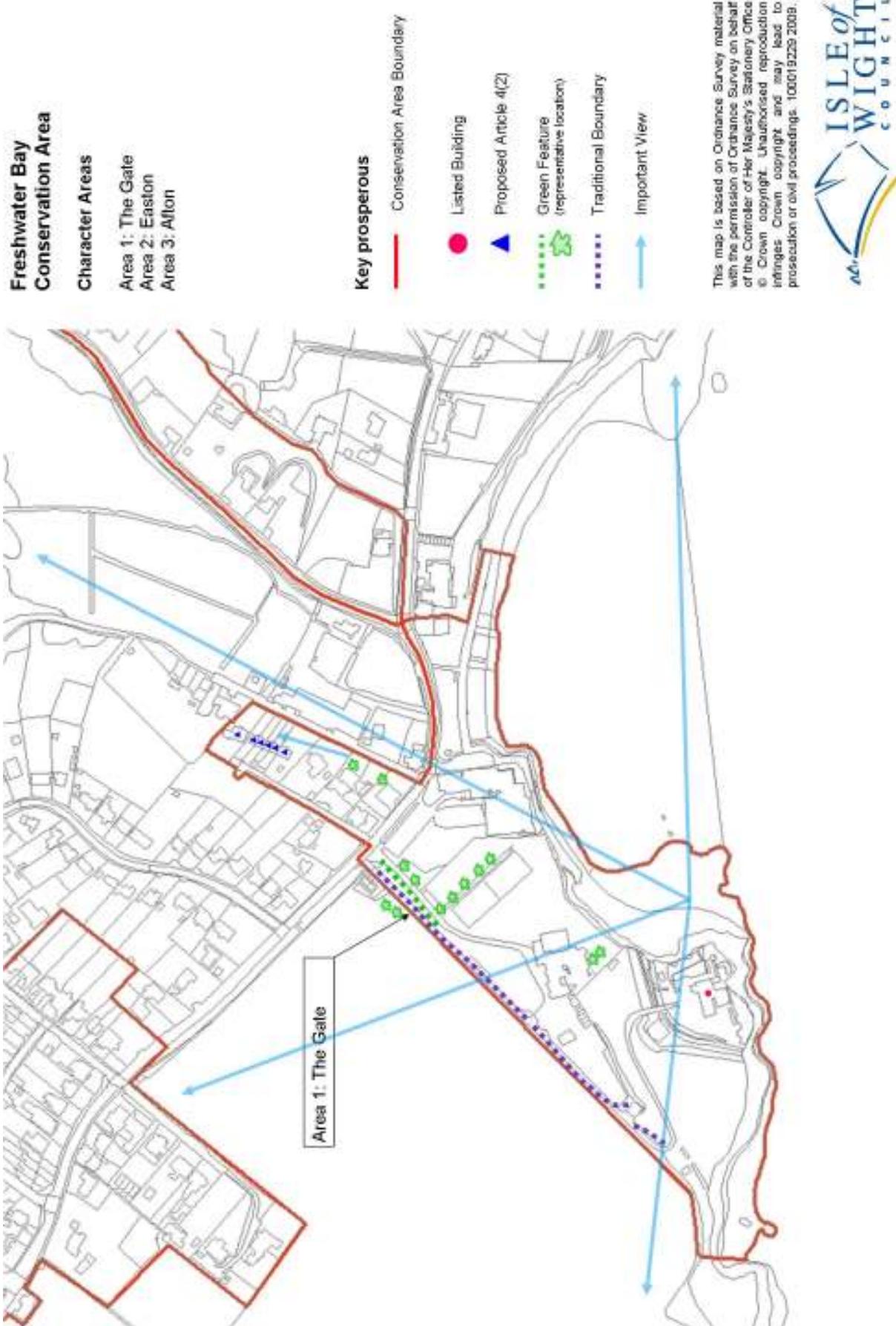
1862 25 inch edition

1898 25 inch edition

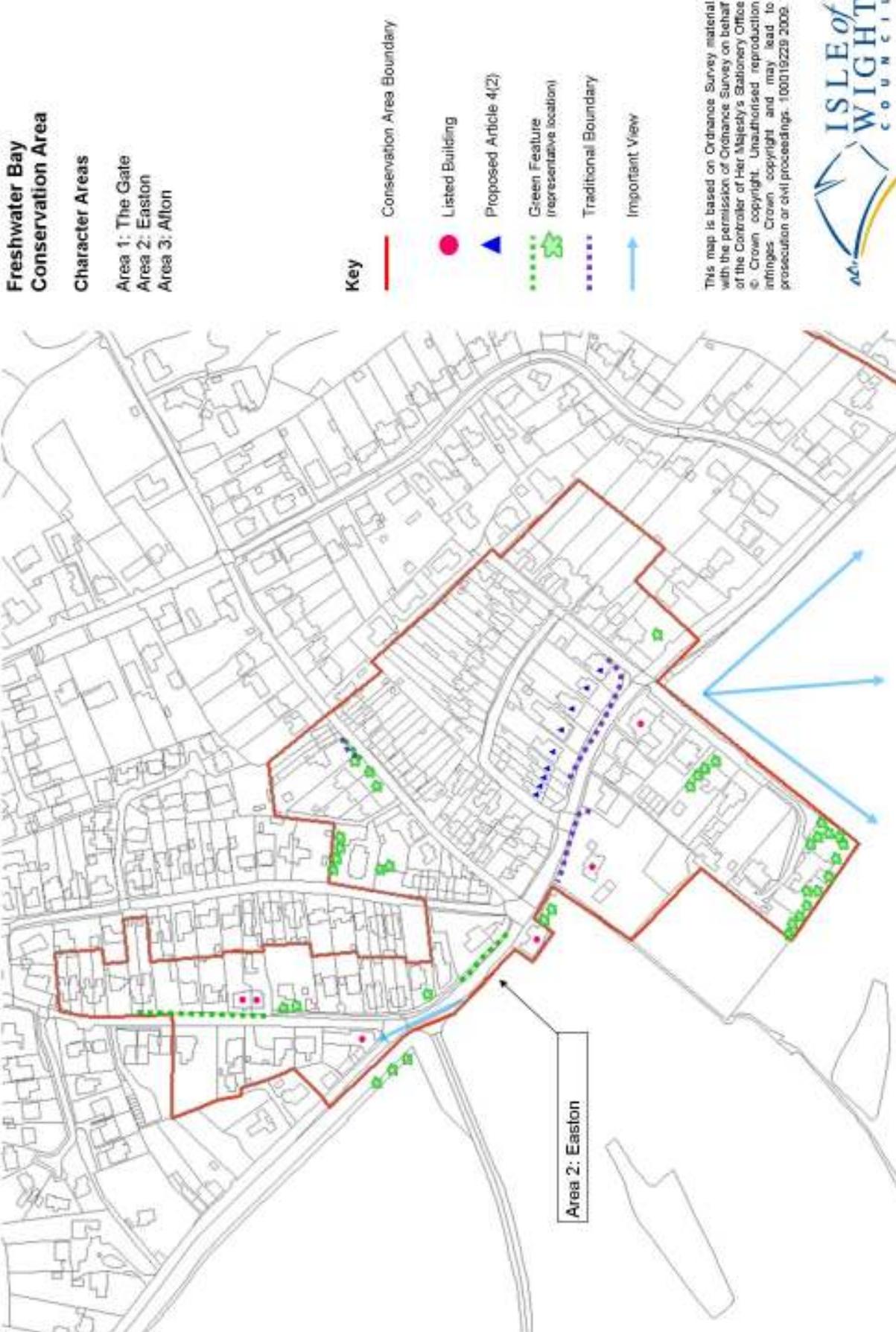
1908 25 inch edition

1939 25 inch edition

Appendix A - Detailed Map



Appendix A - Detailed Map



Appendix A - Detailed Map

Freshwater Bay Conservation Area

Character Areas

- Area 1: The Gate
- Area 2: Easton
- Area 3: Afion

- Key**
- Conservation Area Boundary
 - Listed Building
 - ▲ Proposed Article 4(2)
 - Green Feature (representative location)
 - Traditional Boundary
 - ↑ Important View

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Appendix B - Freshwater Bay Boundary Description

Detailed Boundary Description

Due to the partly non-contiguous nature of the proposed Brook Conservation Area boundary, the below detailed boundary description is separated into three sections: Section One (including The Gate and Afton Character Areas), Section Two (including Easton Character Area).

Section One

(Including The Gate and Afton Character Areas)

Starting at the junction between the A3055 and Afton Road, heading south along the eastern boundary of the lifeboat station, east along the northern boundary of the promenade, and then south to meet the Mean Low Water Mark. Continuing around the bay to the west, passing Picturesque Rock and turning north on reaching the cave in the cliff. Continuing north until reaching the track and following it east until reaching the junction with Gate Lane, and crossing the road and continuing down the western boundary of the small parcel of land situated between Lisarda and White Lodge. Continuing northeast until reaching the boundary of The Officer's House and continuing round to the southeast and then south, until reaching Coastguard Lane. Meeting the junction with Gate Lane and turning east and continuing along the road until the junction with Afton Road. Continuing along Afton Road, curving round to the north, until reaching the eastern corner of Mayfair House, following the boundary round, and continuing over the boundaries of Long Close, the land to the rear of Pine Trees and Bodowen, Pentwyn, the land to the rear of Little Bowland, The Deyne, and Wight Haven, Brantwood House, Marsh Holt and Tree Tops, continuing around the boundaries of Pen-y-Bryn and Greystones, continuing along the boundary of Greystone Lane until meeting the junction with the A3055 and turning west to along the road to rejoin with the start point.

Section Two

(Including Easton Character Area)

Starting at the junction where Terrace Lane meets Gate Lane, heading southwest along Terrace Lane, encompassing the green verges to the southern side of the lane, following round the boundary of Terrace House. Continuing around this boundary, northwest, then northeast, continuing over the western boundaries of Sea Walls and Southlands, and following the boundary of Baker's Farmhouse until rejoining Gate Lane. Turning southwest, along Gate Lane, encompassing the boundary of St Agnes' Church, and rejoining Gate Lane, continuing along the southern boundary of the road until adjacent with the northwest boundary of Whitecliffe Cottage. Continuing northwest following the rear west boundaries of Whitecliffe, Tower House, Tower Cottage, and Monksfield, then following the southern boundary of Monksfield, before reaching Victoria Road and heading north along the road, until reaching the southern boundary of Arnewood. Following the boundary round and continuing along the eastern boundaries of Red Butt House, Maistone, The Warren, Bank Top, Broomhill, Sunnicholme, St Margaret's, Japonica, Holly Tree Cottage, Herons Reach, Studio Cottage, Stepping Stones, The Haven, Homleigh, Woodside, Lamberts, Coniston, and Beech Tree. On reaching the boundary of Martha's Cottage, turning east along the southern boundary until reaching Guyers Road. Continuing along Guyers turn east along the northern boundary of the church, continuing north along the rear boundaries of The

Maltings, The Farthings, Hazeldene, Rose Cottage, Highbury, Cranleigh and Selbourne. Continuing along the northeast boundary of Selbourne, crossing Blackbridge Road and continuing along the northeast boundary of Bristol, meeting up with the rear boundaries of Cornerways, Little Oak, Rockstone and Rose Cottage. Meeting up with Brooklyn Gardens. continue southeast along the northeast boundary of Nook Cottage then turn southwest along the rear boundaries of Nook Cottage, Ivy Lodge, Ancona and Bay View, turn northwest and continuing until meeting the northeast boundary of Nampara. Turn southwest and continue along the rear boundary of Nampara and Penlan and the southeast boundary of Hazelhurst meeting up with Gate Lane. Turn and continue to the junction of Gate Lane and Terrace Lane.