

CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

IV PARK CRESCENT

Location and Topography

Park Crescent is located about ½ mile west of Worthing Town Centre. It is set back from the seafront about ½ mile, being directly on the north side of Richmond Road. The land slopes gently down towards the seafront. Richmond Road Conservation Area is about 100 metres to the east and there is a clear visual link between the two Conservation Areas. Shakespeare Road and Winchester Road Conservation Areas are about 100 metres to the west, but Park Crescent is quite distinct from these.

Origins and Development of Area

Worthing's emergence as a seaside resort from the early 19th century is supposed to have been popularised by the visit of Princess Amelia. Park Crescent is a result of attempts to provide Worthing with grand Regency architectural compositions to rival Brighton and Hove. Amon Henry Wilds, a prominent Regency architect is credited with the design for the 14 terraced residences of Park Crescent (listed grade II*) and the Swiss Cottages now known as Beechwood Hall (listed grade II) during the late 1820s.

The Crescent remains incomplete, having been originally conceived as 22 units in a sinuous curve. If it had been completed, its western end would have lined up approximately with the east elevation of Beechwood Hall. One version of the original design drawings indicates that a formal arrangement of substantial classical villas in the parkland setting of the Crescent was being contemplated. This, however, never materialised, and instead Wilds designed a semi-detached pair of houses in a supposed rustic alpine style - the Swiss Cottages. It seems likely that this was intended to be a 'discovery' on walks into the woods where the well manicured parkland close to the Crescent gave way to a less formal wooded landscape at its fringes.

Access to the park and the properties therein, was originally only possible through the entrance gateway. In more recent times, this access has been closed to vehicular traffic and a new access created in Amelia Road. The layout of the park was altered to provide sympathetic parking areas during the 1980s.

Architectural and Landscape Qualities

This area's special architectural or historic interest stems from its composition as a group of buildings set in their own landscaped grounds complete with entrance gateway and lodges.

The properties forming the Crescent are of three-storeys, embellished with classical details and finished in stucco. Most of the residences are expressed in groups of three, the central units encompassing two-storey Corinthian pilasters to express their dominance. The groups of three units are linked by recessed porches with balconies above, supported by caryatid columns.

Beechwood Hall in contrast, is a 'rustic' building in the park with roughcast walls and a sweeping red clay-tiled roof. It is of two-storeys, with attic rooms and a pointed turret. The east front has projecting porches with rustic wooden balconies above. Its hipped gables are finished with scalloped bargeboards.

Situated at the junction between Amelia Road and Clifton Road, there exists a small single-storey garage complex. Careful examination of these buildings, together with the 1852 Ordnance Survey maps, reveals the continued existence of the original stables and coach house buildings which once served numbers 5 - 7 Park Crescent. Although this complex of buildings are presently externally painted, it is still possible to distinguish the stable and coach house blocks by looking at the Clifton Road elevation. Although much altered and disfigured, these buildings represent an historically important element of Park Crescent.

Roads and Surfaces

Park Crescent is set off well by a pavement of traditional red brick. A metalled road following the shape of the Crescent gives access to the front of the property and the parking areas. Beyond the roadway is parkland open space which is managed as a public park. Paths across the park are informal in character.

Greenery and Open Spaces

Park Crescent and the Swiss Cottages enjoy an essential relationship with the landscape in which they are placed. This is an important element in the original design concept and forms part of the special architectural and historic interest. The density of tree planting increases towards the edge of the parkland area. This effect needs enhancement so that the formal grounds have the appearance of receding into wooded surrounds. The Swiss Cottages should nestle discretely in this rustic setting. Other, more recent, development should be screened from view if the illusion is to be complete.

Enhancement Opportunities

- Single householder occupancy or minimum sub-division into high quality apartments is to be encouraged in Park Crescent, and high levels of multiple occupation or bedsit type occupancy discouraged.
- Permit development of original stables and coach house buildings on Amelia Road to more appropriate use relating well or ancillary to Park Crescent itself eg. garaging.

- Plant trees to screen St. Mary's R.C. School from Amelia Park.
- Replace the chain-link fencing on the eastern boundary of the school by extending the black iron railings that mark the southern boundary.
- Widen the road at the vehicular entrance by removing the cobbled patch just east of the school's chain-link fence. This is heavily parked, despite the fact that it is clearly not intended as a parking area.
- Remove the 1 metre high grey poles carrying parking instructions. Introduce a revised parking scheme, perhaps placing more heritage-style bollards along the pavement in front of the Crescent to prevent people from parking on it. Signs to go on plinths or posts of special design.
- Relocate television aerials away from the front roofscape.
- Reinstall the litter bin near the school.
- Clean the graffiti from the rear wall of the Crescent and from the Gate.
- Repair the door of the south lodge.
- Paint the facade of No. 4 white.
- Replace the red pooper-bin with one of special design.
- Resite the lighting unit currently attached to the north-east elevation of the Gate. It could probably be better placed behind the balustrade.
- Replace the modern road name sign with one of special design.
- Re-face the caryatid at No. 10 and repair the windows and stonework of the facade.
- Repair the balcony of Nos. 7 and 8.
- Remove or repaint in a dark colour, the grilles in front of the basement windows of No. 1.
- Remove the (now defunct) telegraph wires hanging from the western corner of No. 2's third-storey.
- Replace the modern metal-framed windows of the third-storey of No. 6 with timber-framed sashes similar to its neighbours.
- Reseed grass opposite No. 4.

- Remove the strip metal flower-trough holder at No. 11 and the rotting trough at No. 10 (replace them with sturdy new plant troughs filled with flowers).

The back of Park Crescent

- Replace the hand-rail of the basement stairs at No. 14 with one of special design.
- Extend the brick paving at the front of the Crescent right around the back, replacing the tarmac. Resurface the tarmac road with block paving.
- Remove the telegraph pole and wires.
- Paint the entire rear elevation, excepting the flint walls, white.
- Remove paint and inappropriate render from all brick and cobble-panelled walls (eg. No. 8). Repoint them where necessary. This includes the walls of Park Crescent Motors (currently painted grey).
- Render and paint the modern stock brick rear wall of No. 9.
- Replace modern casement windows (eg. of the ground floor of No. 11B) with timber sashes similar to the others at the rear of the Crescent.
- Remove or redesign fire escapes where possible.
- Replace the modern tiles of No. 10? Rear roof with slates.
- Remove the east wall of the garage premises or replace the block work infill with brick and repaint it.
- Remove the corrugated iron roofs of the garage premises and replace them with slates.
- Repair the gate posts at the rear of No. 3.

Beechwood Hall

- Repaint the large black chimney on the front elevation.
- Protect from traffic the flint wall in the forecourt.
- Rationalise signing, removing any unnecessary or unauthorised signs.
- Remove overhead line poles.

Setting

- Permit demolition and appropriate redevelopment of Sion Senior School (main building), Wessex Court and Woburn Court.



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