

# **CHAPEL ROAD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

## **Location and Topography**

Chapel Road with South Street to the south is the central north-south axis of Worthing town centre. Chapel Road is set back from the seafront by the length of South Street, some 300 metres. The land generally has a slight slope falling from north-west to south-east giving Chapel Road a gentle gradient down towards the seafront.

## **Origins and Development of Area**

The line of Worthing's early high street lies to the east of the present day centre. Rapid expansion took place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Worthing gained a reputation as a fashionable, genteel, seaside resort. In this period, buildings on Warwick Street, South Street and Montague Street were developed and The Steyne was laid out. Most development in Worthing was piecemeal and small scale due to the fragmented nature of the land ownership. In 1812, St. Paul's Church was built as a Chapel of Ease to Broadwater parish. A road linking through to South Street had been laid out by 1814 and was completed and named Chapel Road after St. Paul's in 1815. Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as development took place on the west side of the town, South Street became fully developed and Chapel Road to the north eventually superseded High Street as the main thoroughfare.

From 1814 through to circa 1826 Ambrose Place was developed piecemeal westwards from St. Paul's Church by the builder Ambrose Cartwright. The houses have detached front gardens and although varied in their designs form one of the most attractive Regency terraces in Worthing. At the west end of Ambrose Place on Grafton Road, Christ Church opened as a second Chapel of Ease in 1843. The two churches, only 150 metres apart, present an extraordinary contrast of architectural styles. St. Paul's being of yellow brick in a classical style with a bold Doric portico in stucco whereas Christ Church is in an early English gothic revival style executed in galleted flint work with stone dressings. The grade II\* Listed St Paul's Church ceased being used for worship in 1999 and proposals have been submitted to declare the church redundant and convert it for community uses.

Portland Road (formerly Chapel Street and Belle Vue), a narrow street linking Richmond Road through to Montague Street and passing between Christ Church and the west end of Ambrose Place, developed from the southern end during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the rear of properties on the east side of Portland Road, the ancient twitten Field Row links Ambrose Place to Montague Street. To the south of Ambrose Place between Field Row and Chapel Road were gardens which would have formed an impressive large central open space. The gardens were not built upon until the 1870s when a group of Victorian villas were constructed. Several typical examples survive in the area of Liverpool Road and Liverpool Gardens. This area west of Chapel Road has become dominated by offices and administrative uses including new buildings.

By 1900, Chapel Road had become the main thoroughfare and the area was largely developed. Significant changes, however, were made to the town centre around the turn of the century with Chapel Road and Richmond Road being widened.

Several detached villas in spacious grounds located alongside Chapel Road were gradually demolished to be replaced by shops and at the north end civic buildings. The museum and art gallery and original library (now Tourist Information Centre) building opened on the corner of Richmond Road with Chapel Road in 1908. The Picturedrome cinema opened in 1914 and was altered and extended in the mid 1930s to form the present Connaught Theatre with its fine art deco frontage to Union Place. Opposite on the north side of Union Place with a large imposing frontage to Chapel Road facing the end of Richmond Road, the post office building opened in 1930.

The present Town Hall and Assembly Hall by C Cowles Voysey opened in 1933 and confirmed this area of Chapel Road with its several important public buildings as the civic area of Worthing. More recently, the new modern library (1975) by the borough architect Frank Morris contributes to the character and appearance of this area, as do the nearby law courts (1967, also by Frank Morris), and also Portland House, although just outside the Conservation Area.

### **Architectural Townscape and Landscape Qualities**

#### **Chapel Road (South of Ambrose Place)**

Although the main north-south thoroughfare to and from the town centre, Chapel Road is no longer heavily trafficked by motor vehicles since the South Street pedestrian enhancement scheme precluded its use as a through route except for buses. Indeed, south of Chatsworth Road, Chapel Road is prohibited to motor vehicles except for access and buses and taxis. It is a straight road lined with buildings generally of three storeys which create a strong sense of enclosure. Within this uniformity of scale, there is much of interest in the street scene and the buildings exhibit a variety of age and styles; especially on the east side. As a main retail street with a particular emphasis on building societies and estate agents and, more recently, restaurants and wine bars, this part of Chapel Road is markedly different in character and appearance from the civic area to the north. Upper floors are mainly in use as small office suites rather than residential use. The character and range of activity in the area has changed since the introduction of various new wine bars, public houses and restaurants.

#### **Architectural historic and townscape elements which should be preserved:**

- Two to four storey properties built at the back of the pavement.
- Three storey Victorian terraced properties on the west side which feature distinctive period detailing:-
  - cant bays with sliding timber sash windows;
  - light painted stucco elevations;
  - string and dentil courses;
  - parapets;
  - pitched slate roofs.

### Enhancement Opportunities:

- Replacement of existing inappropriate shopfronts and advertisements with shopfronts and advertisements designed to respect the style and character of the individual buildings to which they are attached, to contribute positively to the quality of the street scene, and to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Encourage owners and occupiers to implement schemes of external decoration which complement their individual buildings and contribute positively to an attractive and harmonious street scene.
- Permit appropriate refurbishment or redevelopment of Nos 7, 9/11 and 22/26 Chapel Road, should opportunity arise, so as to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Liaise with West Sussex County Council over the possibility of designing and implementing a pedestrian enhancement scheme which would involve reducing the carriageway width where possible and using small unit paving materials and replacement street lighting all similar to that provided in the South Street scheme.

### **Chapel Road (North of Ambrose Place) – The Civic Area**

This major focus of administrative social and religious public buildings and activities is situated in the northern part of Worthing town centre. Several of the landmark buildings in this area were built in the inter-war period and are of a scale and design which befits the function they perform. Several of the major buildings are listed. There are also a number of public amenity spaces in the area, some of which have soft landscaping which helps to relieve the hard urban environment. Busy roads bisect this area, bus stops are located outside the town hall and there is a high level of pedestrian activity. This civic area forms a distinctive element of the Conservation Area.

### Architectural historic and townscape elements which should be preserved:

- The distinctive architectural character which each of the large buildings possesses.
- Elevational treatments of brick (red-brown and yellow), stucco, stone and roofs of Westmorland and slate, Welsh slate or plain tiles.
- Architectural detailing such as dressings to window and door openings, rustication, balconies, string courses, cornices, quoins, pilasters, friezes, and columns.
- Forms of fenestration which provide a vertical emphasis but in a horizontal rhythm.
- Spaces around the larger buildings.



- Yorkstone paved areas.

#### Enhancement Opportunities:

- Improve the appearance of the triangular area of land immediately north of Connaught Buildings by designing and implementing a new landscaping scheme.
- Redevelop the single storey building with a corrugated roof, to the north of Worthing Homes' offices, with a building which would be in keeping with and enhance the appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.
- Implement a scheme of repair, maintenance and decoration for St. Paul's Church.
- Rationalise the clutter of railings, signals and posts for signs CCTV camera etc, at the junctions of Richmond Road and Union Place with Chapel Road.
- Ensure that any redevelopment proposals for Union Place car park and the Police Station have regard to enhancing the setting of the Conservation Area.
- Ensure that any redevelopment of the Church Hall adjoining St. Paul's has regard to the setting of this Grade II\* listed building and also enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by contributing positively to the townscape and street scene.

#### **Ambrose Place**

No other street in Worthing has the elegant character of Ambrose Place. It is a residential street in the town centre with Nos. 1-15 on the north side comprising a listed group. Front gardens are separated from the houses by a road which is heavily parked. Constructed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the terrace exhibits common features throughout with a strong sense of verticality, although the architectural detailing of each building or pair of buildings is distinct. Ambrose Place relates more closely to the areas to the west, which largely retain their residential community character, than to the commercial and civic uses which exist in other directions.

Note: The Ambrose Place terraced properties, together with their detached, south side gardens, are subject to an Article 4 Direction. This designation means a planning application must be made for certain, relatively minor works, in the interest of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These works include curtilage buildings, hard surfacing and changes to means of enclosure, where such development would front Ambrose Place.

#### Architectural historic and townscape elements which should be preserved:

- The following features evident in the listed largely three storey terrace on the north side of the road:-

- a common building line set back behind railings at the back of the pavement;
  - first floor balconies with slim vertical supports at ground and first floor level;
  - timber sliding sash windows with slender glazing bars;
  - string courses and parapets;
  - pitched slate roofs;
  - white painted stucco elevations to Ambrose Place;
  - original architectural detailing to each property, such as tiled paths, valances to windows and balcony details.
- Open garden areas on the south side of Ambrose Place.
  - Small scale intimate cottages finished in stucco and slate on the south side of the road.
  - Red clay brick pavements with granite kerbs.

#### Enhancement Opportunities:

- Enhance the listed group 1 to 15 Ambrose Place by reinstating original features or details where these are missing to the detriment of the building's special interest, for example, iron railings, and remove any features which detract from the buildings' special interest.
- Encourage the enhancement of the detached, south side gardens by reducing the amount and prominence of hard surfacing and increasing the prominence of greenery and planting. Where existing car parking must be retained, gravel, slab strips, or grass-through-concrete surfaces would be preferable. Reintroducing a suitable low means of boundary enclosure, with gates, would also bring enhancements in some cases.

### **Liverpool Gardens and Liverpool Road**

The built environment is characterised by two main forms of development; detached Victorian villas and large blocks constructed since 1960 mainly used for offices. Office uses predominate in this location which abuts the northern fringe of the central shopping area. Vehicular presence and activity is a marked feature of the area, partly due to the large surface public car park, private parking and servicing at the office buildings and at the rear of Chapel Road properties, and the availability of on-street car parking. In townscape terms, the area features two partly enclosed squares, one based on the Montague Centre car park and the second defined by the villas about the junction between Liverpool Road and Liverpool Gardens. It is an area on the fringes of the town centre which is shabby in places with a number

of unattractive service areas. The rear of buildings fronting the west side of Chapel Road present a varied townscape scene, with certain buildings, unsympathetic extensions, servicing and car parking areas accessed from Liverpool Road detracting from the townscape. Sensitive redevelopment fronting Liverpool Road could considerably enhance the character and appearance of this area. At the Montague Centre end, development should provide a strong sense of enclosure of the Montague Centre car park open space. Mature trees are an important element along Liverpool Gardens and Liverpool Road, will be increasingly so as those in the Montague Centre car park develop. The combination of the attractive detached Victorian villas and of certain recent and potential further new development means that there is significant scope for further environmental enhancement in this area in the future.

#### Architectural historic and townscape elements which should be preserved:

- Elevations faced in stucco or brick.
- Victorian villas which feature central entrances with columnated porticos, cant bays, timber sliding sash windows, string courses, dentils, quoins, and slate roofs.
- Boundary walls of flint with red brick dressings.
- Trees.

#### Enhancement Opportunities:

- Implement an office development on the site of 12/14 Liverpool Gardens. (Outline planning consent has already been granted for a 3/4 storey development which would add to the enclosure/formation of a square in the southern part of this area).
- Maintain in good repair and external appearance the Victorian villas in the area.
- Encourage the removal of unsightly buildings or land uses at the rear of premises fronting Chapel Road.
- Encourage in principle the creation of a cohesive and characteristic built frontage on the east side of Liverpool Road (at the rear of properties which front onto Chapel Road). Alongside the Montague Centre car park, redevelopment should provide a sense of enclosure to the open space with an elegant built frontage. Further north, however, development should reflect the character and style of certain existing attractive outbuildings, for example, Addiscombe Cottage. The new development at the rear of 35 Chapel Road epitomises the style and quality required.

## **Portland Road and Grafton Road north of Grafton Place**

Within the rectangles formed by the road pattern there lies a diverse collection of building types, a mixture of institutional and residential properties largely dating from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which have few common characteristics. Many properties, however, are physically, visually or symbolically linked to the listed Christ Church which sits within an extensive open quadrangle. The church dominates the area which otherwise is characterised by small scale buildings. Historic remnants of the greater church authority and community are reflected in the adjacent collection of flint buildings: the Almshouses, school tower and classrooms, school outbuildings and play ground walls. The double gabled soup kitchen with its tiny figure of Mercy is both spiritually and visually linked to the church. The homogeneity of this church based community has, however, been eroded by more recent developments in the area. Curiously, churches of non-conformist denominations have also congregated in this area; a former chapel on Grosvenor Road, the Ebenezer Chapel set back from Portland Road against Field Row and the Spiritualist Church on Grafton Road. Both the Ebenezer Chapel and also the Spiritualist Church are notable for their individuality of architectural expression. Although the area is located on the fringe of the town centre and there is a stimulating variety of uses, residential use prevails. A terrace of three stucco fronted houses of three storeys, on the east side of Portland Road, has ogee (boat shaped) porches. Other houses on this section of Portland Road exhibit bold flint work. Due to its location, there is a high level of on-street parking and regular vehicle and pedestrian movement through the area.

### Architectural historic and townscape elements which should be preserved:

- Buildings faced with flint or stucco.
- Slate roofs.
- Timber sliding sash windows.
- Architectural detailing such as statuettes, dressings around window and door openings, finials, tracery bargeboards, ogee porches and string courses.
- Boundary walls, many of which are flint.
- The enclosed church yard setting of Christ Church.

### Enhancement Opportunities:

- Improve the car park site at the junction of Grafton Road and Richmond Road by implementing the planning consent to redevelop for a 3 storey block of flats, or just by improving landscaping.
- Encourage owners and occupiers to implement schemes of repair, maintenance and external decoration appropriate to their individual buildings and which enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and contribute positively to achieving a harmonious street scene.



## **Portland Road South of Grafton Place**

This short section of open ended thoroughfare creates one of the strongest enclosures in the Conservation Area, although this is eroded by the insensitive forecourt to the garage on the south-east corner with Shelley Road. The domestic properties which line the street date from different periods of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Consequential variations in design are significant features of the area. The quality of this built environment is reflected in the fact that many of the properties are listed and all others, except the garage premises at 58/60 Portland Road are considered to have local historic or architectural interest. Within the area, there are important twittens (alleyways) which must be protected. The twitten on the western limits of the area is bounded by one of the town's earliest and tallest flint walls. The east wall of the eastern twitten (Field Row) is one of Worthing's listed flint work walls and the twitten itself, one the town's most used. The area is located on the fringe of the town centre and when it is heavily trafficked and parked, the area appears cramped. Nevertheless, the street retains its essentially residential character given the limited number and relatively unobtrusive nature of the non-residential uses.

### Architectural historic and townscape elements which should be preserved:

- Buildings built at the back of the pavement to a common building line.
- Timber sliding sash windows.
- Slate roofs.
- Elevations in painted stucco, brick or flint. Especially notable is the prevalence of header bond in vitrified grey brick.
- Twittens and alleys sometimes lined with flint walls.
- Architectural detailing such as brickwork details oriel bays and raised bands.

### Enhancement Opportunities

- 58/60 Portland Road: Encourage redevelopment, should opportunity arise, of this garage site so as to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Implement a landscaping scheme or permit appropriate redevelopment to the south side of Christ Church Hall, so as to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- Refurbish and bring into appropriate use, the first floor above the Newsagents to the rear of 61 Portland Road, on the corner of Shelley Road and a twitten to the west, in order to enhance the appearance and architectural interest of this building.



## **Grafton Road south of Grafton Place**

A section of Grafton Road where it crosses Shelley Road is characterised by detached and semi-detached villas predominantly in yellow brick with stucco detailing. Although Nos. 32, 34 and 36, a terrace of three houses on the east side, are later and do not employ these materials, nevertheless, overall this short stretch of Grafton Road has a very elegant character and appearance. This is especially so at the cross roads with Shelley Road where a villa is located on each of the four corners, strongly defining the space of this junction.

### Architectural historic and townscape elements which should be preserved:

- Imposing villas of yellow brick and stucco with stucco detailing.
- Vertical sliding timber sash windows.
- Boundary walls generally in stucco.

### Enhancement Opportunities:

- Reinstate boundary walls where these have been lost and replace fences or boundary walls constructed in inappropriate materials with new boundary walls in stucco.
- Reinstate timber sliding sash windows where these have been replaced by inappropriate windows of other materials or types.



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