

# **STEYNE GARDENS CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

## **Location and Topography**

Steyne Gardens is located on the east side of Worthing town centre. The land slopes gently down to the seafront where there is an esplanade, shingle beach, and sea defences. Steyne Gardens Conservation Area is directly adjacent to the Warwick Gardens Conservation Area to the north.

## **Origins and Development of the Area**

The Steyne is on a line with Worthing's High Street, and Steyne Gardens is on the east side of this historically important north-south axis. 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 Road were developed and The Steyne was laid out between Warwick House (circa 1775, demolished in 1896) and the seafront. The Steyne was probably named in emulation of Brighton.

The Georgian terraces on the west side of The Steyne were constructed circa 1806 and Warwick Buildings on the east side of Warwick Road was probably constructed at about the same time and was certainly in place by 1814. York Terrace, the terrace of houses which became the Warnes Hotel (now demolished), was erected circa 1822 on Low Field east of The Steyne, and Warwick Place, a terrace of cottages to the east of Warwick House, was completed by 1841.

Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chapel Road and South Street developed as the main north-south central axis of the town leaving The Steyne and High Street to the east, with Warwick Road on the very eastern edge of the town centre.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Brighton Road became fully developed except for the frontage to the open space of Steyne Gardens. During the second world war, the iron railings which enclosed the gardens were removed for scrap metal and in 1964 a scented formal garden at the south end of the open space was opened by Sir Giles Loder.

More recently in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the seafront at Splash Point has been remodelled with boulder sea defences, and most of Warnes Hotel was demolished following a disastrous fire in 1987, with the remainder demolished in 1998 and 2001 in view of its dangerous condition.

## **Architectural Townscape and Landscape Qualities**

### **The Steyne**

Steyne Gardens forms one of Worthing's most important civic open spaces and it is enclosed by some of the town's most significant buildings. Two fine listed Georgian terraces bound Steyne Gardens to the west whilst the north east corner is marked by the Methodist Church built in a gothic revival style in 1900. To the north is the curiously eclectic architectural style of Broadway Mansions and Kent Mansions.

The elegance and importance of The Steyne is further enhanced by the landscaping; the large grassed area fringed by mature trees. The sense of enclosure, however, is not fully complete, with open views of the sea to the south, and significant gaps in the terraced buildings to the east and west of the area. The Warnes Hotel site is notable as an important site for development. The buildings which face onto the gardens consist of a variety of designs, materials, and detailing reflecting different dates of construction. Each block frontage, however, is unified and ordered which provides a sense of cohesion to this urban space as a whole. A red granite obelisk, being a memorial to the South African War, provides a focal point to the open southern end of Steyne Gardens, along with a formal sunken garden.

This is a predominantly commercial area with hotels, offices, and shops. The open area is bounded on all four sides by heavily trafficked roads which separate the gardens from the adjacent buildings and pedestrian routes. The space is nevertheless well used and an important open area within the town centre.

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

- 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced buildings built at the back of the pavement.
- A sense of enclosure to the central rectangle of open space.
- A cohesive design theme to each block frontage.
- Architectural detailing such as parapets, balconies, railings, and plaster work.
- Slate or plain clay roof tiles.
- Timber sliding sash windows which establish a vertical rhythm in the street scene.
- The open character of Steyne Gardens.

#### Enhancement Opportunities:

- Steyne Gardens: Consider additional soft landscaping to better screen the electricity sub-station in the north east corner.
- Chatsworth Hotel: Reinstate individual wrought iron railings and finials to match the existing at the front of the hotel, where these are missing.
- Redecoration and repair at upper floor level above the excellent shopfront of Whibleys, at the junction with Warwick Street.
- Warnes Hotel Site: Support redevelopment of the site in accordance with the Worthing Local Plan Review Policy H7 and supporting text, to infill the gap in the street scene formerly occupied by the Warnes Hotel.

## **The Seafront (Library Place to Splash Point)**

This eastern section of the seafront features an attractive built frontage, an interesting mix of uses, and a stimulating section of the promenade. Properties generally date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, built to three or four storeys with bays, sliding sash windows, and a light painted stucco finish. Steyne Gardens, with the war memorial as a focus, serves to enhance the sense of elegance in the buildings which is broken only by the busy traffic movement and the gaps in the street scene caused by the demolition of the listed Warnes Hotel and the reduction to one storey of the former Stafford's library building at Library Place.

Tourism related shops, a public house, and a conference centre bring activity to the area. Above all, the promenade encourages seafront walks with the stimulus of the built environment to the north, and the seashore, seafront shelters, seating, and fisherman's regalia to the south. At Splash Point, Worthing Rowing Club (founded 1880) launch boats from their purpose built art deco boathouse, and a stand is reserved for the delivery of sermons and public speeches.

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

- Buildings three or four storeys high on a common building line.
- The historic fragment which remains of the former Staffords library building.
- Light painted stucco elevations.
- Sliding sash windows, many within cant bays.
- Original architectural detailing on many of the buildings such as rustication, quoins, cornices, parapets, string courses, balustrading, plaster mouldings, and balconies.
- The open character of Steyne Gardens.
- The seating shelter on the promenade, opposite Steyne Gardens.
- Decorative lighting columns.

### Enhancement Opportunities

- Warnes Hotel: Redevelop the site in accordance with the Worthing Local Plan Review Policy H7 and supporting text, to infill the gap in the seafront formerly occupied by the Warnes Hotel. Such redevelopment of this site should include works to enhance the character and appearance of Splash Point and this section of the seafront.
- 1 and 2 Marine Parade: Remove the large obtrusive fascias and replace with shopfronts of more appropriate design. Redesign the frontage area to

provide a more attractive outdoor café and trading areas, with removal of car parking from these frontages.

- Seafront shelter opposite York Road: Refurbish or replace to create a shelter of more appropriate design.

## **High Street**

This is a commercial area dominated by the heavy flow of traffic on the main coastal road that links through to The Steyne and Brighton Road. The buildings on the east side of the High Street are an assemblage of different styles dating from different periods. The northern part of the area has lost its sense of enclosure and intimacy due to the multi-storey car park set well back from the original building line with a large barren open area immediately in front of it. Immediately adjacent at the rear of properties on the east side of High Street is the Warwick Gardens Conservation Area which includes Elm Road. At the junction of Elm Road with High Street, 1 and 2 Elm Road, a Funeral Directors, has a shopfront to the High Street frontage. Further south, the road narrows and has an attractive form of enclosure created by Colnade House and Warwick and Broadway Mansions, properties of three or four storeys. Specialist retail uses predominate at ground floor level with residential uses and offices on upper floors.

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

- A sense of enclosure which remains at the south end of High Street.
- Attractive and well maintained shopfronts of appropriate design.
- High Street frontages exhibiting a variety of architectural styles.

### Enhancement Opportunities:

- 4 and 6 High Street Remove existing deep fascia and replace with shopfront and fascia of more appropriate design.
- Consider the scope for improvements to hard and soft landscaping in the context of any future High Street highway improvement works, which would enhance the setting and appearance of the Conservation Area.

## **Brighton Road**

The character of this area is somewhat spoiled by the busy roadway and its constant traffic and noise which divides the north side from the south side. The sense of enclosure is reinforced at the eastern end of the Conservation Area, where the road narrows. Ground floor retailing uses are characterised by specialist retailers and a high proportion of restaurants and take-aways which encourage a degree of pedestrian activity in the area beyond normal shopping hours. Upper floors tend to be occupied by storage or residential uses. The earliest buildings are Regency in style and date but these are overwhelmed by unfortunate alterations. Overall, the buildings date from different periods and they display varied



architectural styles, though many date from the Victorian period. Although the area is in a generally poor state of repair which detracts from the quality of the architectural detailing which is present, a few buildings have been well redecorated and at street level there is an impression of bustling commercial activity.

Architectural, historic and townscape elements which should be preserved:

- A common building line at the back of the pavement.
- Elevations finished in light painted stucco or red brick.
- Timber windows of traditional designs with a vertical emphasis.
- Architectural detailing such as cornices, string courses, and parapets.
- GR(V) pillar box outside the post office of No 28 Brighton Road.

Enhancement Opportunities:

- Stucco repairs and redecoration.
- Removal of inappropriate replacement windows and reinstatement of windows of designs appropriate to the age and architectural style of the building.
- Installation of traditional shopfronts in place of inappropriate shopfronts with deep boxed out fascias.
- Paint or Replace railings at kerb edge of pavement by the pedestrian crossing to improve their appearance.

**York Road, Alfred Place, Warwick Road, Warwick Place, and Park Road**

These streets, which lie either side of Brighton Road, consist mostly of 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced properties largely in residential use. There are, however, several industrial buildings of historic interest surviving in this otherwise predominantly residential area, including the Tower Brewery attached to the Egremont Public House on the west side of Warwick Road, together with associated buildings on the east side of Warwick Road and on Alfred Place, a former banana ripening warehouse on York Road, and workshops, a malthouse and other former industrial buildings on Park Road. There is an intimate sense of enclosure in the streets in this area, particularly in Warwick Road. Given their proximity to the town centre and the seafront and the absence of on-site parking, the streets are heavily parked but receive relatively little through traffic. There are a number of ground floor commercial uses at the northern end of Warwick Road and at the southern end of Warwick Place. The area as a whole contains a large proportion of listed buildings. The listed terrace on the east side of Warwick Road is a particularly important feature in the street scene, and whilst some houses in the terrace are well maintained and in good decorative order, others are in need of repair and some are missing important original features.

Locations in the area were featured in the film "Wish You Were Here", a 1950s period film partly shot in Worthing. Alleys and twittens are essential to the intimate character of the area. Visually, physically and symbolically this area is closely linked to the seafront. Several of the cottage properties in the area have ogee porches and are traditionally held to be fisherman's dwellings, the shape being reminiscent of an upturned boat. A curious Dutch architectural influence is exhibited in York Road by a terrace of four houses, which have elaborate Flemish gables.

Note: All properties in Warwick Place (including their detached gardens on the west side and Nos. 61-63 Brighton Road) are subject to an Article 4 Direction. This designation removes permitted development rights so that the Local Planning Authority can control relatively minor works in the interest of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These works include curtilage buildings, hard surfacing, changes to means of enclosure, roof alterations, porches and external painting of building fabric, where such development would front Warwick Place.

Architectural and historic townscape elements which should be preserved:

- Individually styled or uniform terraced properties.
- A common building line close to the back of the pavement.
- Boundary walls or railings.
- Elevations finished in light coloured painted stucco (early 19<sup>th</sup> century) or red or yellow brick (late 19<sup>th</sup> century).
- Slate roofs.
- Cant bays on late 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces.
- Timber sliding sash windows.
- Ogee porches on early 19<sup>th</sup> century properties.
- Red brick paviers, particularly those in clay, and granite kerbs to pavements.
- In Warwick Place, kerbs in a soft grey ragstone.
- Architectural detailing such as string courses, finials, and dressings to door and window openings.
- In Warwick Place, detached front gardens with enclosing boundary walls.
- Industrial buildings of historic interest and character. Especially important examples are the former malthouse on Park Road, the Tower Brewery on Warwick Road, storage buildings associated with the brewery on Warwick Road and Alfred Place, (now occupied by Ballamy's Garage), and the warehouse on York Road.

- Flemish gable ends on York Road.

Enhancement Opportunities:

- 1 to 15 Warwick Road: Enhance this listed terrace by carrying out all necessary repairs, and by reinstating original features which have been removed including:-
  - timber canopies and balconies;
  - black iron railings;
  - vertical sliding double hung timber sash windows.
- Warwick Place: Reinststate enclosure of detached front gardens where this has been lost, seek to reduce the prominence of hard surfaced areas and increase the prominence of greenery and planting.
- Junction of Warwick Place with Brighton Road: Design and implement a landscaping scheme with planting, seating, and litter bin to enhance this corner.
- Refurbishment of the Tower Brewery by implementation of an existing planning permission to convert it to residential use, or a suitable alternative scheme.



**Notes:**

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