

Montpelier and Cliftonhill Conservation Area Character Statement



Designated: 1973 extended 1977

Area: 30.51 hectares, 75.4 acres

**Character Statement adopted
20 October 2005**

Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to describe the history and character of this conservation area in order to provide a context for policies contained in the Development Plan, which will guide future development and enhancements in the area. Policies and design guidance are given in other documents, a list of which is included at the end of this statement.

General Description:

The Montpelier and Clifton Hill Conservation Area is situated on gently undulating downland to the north-west of the original settlement of Brighthelmston between Western Road to the south and Seven Dials to the north. It contains a high concentration of listed buildings (320 in 1981), some pleasant open spaces, and a varied and highly attractive townscape, and within it lies one of the earliest buildings of Brighton - the medieval church of St. Nicholas.

This favoured location on the mainly south-west facing slopes; close to but on the smoke free side of the railway and adjacent to a spring, St Ann's Well, resulted in the early development of the area, between 1820 and 1860. Clifton Hill represents the summit of the hill and Montpelier is the surrounding area to the south-west, west and north-west. Dr Richard Russell had developed St Ann's Well (the 'Chalybeate') into a famous spa in the 1760s, visited by the Prince of Wales, and the area next to the spring was known as Montpelier, shown on Sicklemores map of 1842. It was the first Montpelier in England, being named after the French spa town, and became the most fashionable area of the town in which to live. There are some outstanding examples of late Regency and Victorian architecture particularly Clifton Terrace, Montpelier Villas, Montpelier Crescent and Powis Square. Of special note are the two substantial red brick churches - St. Michael and All Angels of 1862 (extended 1892-1900) and the Roman Catholic Church of St. Mary Magdalen (1861-4). St Michael and All Angels is listed Grade 1 and considered to be of outstanding importance. Pevsner, in his book describes the church's exterior as bleak, but the interior as splendid and cathedral-like. It has many individual features of interest including stained glass by Burne-Jones, Morris and Webb.

Historical Development of the Area:

Until the early 19th century life in Brighton revolved around the Old Town and The Steyne, and the land now lying within and to the west of the Conservation Area was mainly fields and market gardens apart from St. Nicholas's Church, associated graveyard and the spring. A map of c.1804 in East Sussex County Council Record Office reveals the fact that most of the fields to the west of Dyke Road was in the ownership of the Duke of Dorset and used as "sheep down" with land to the north and south being owned by Thomas Read Kemp.

Church Street is shown with an animal pound on the corner of the graveyard to the north of the church, and opposite the church, on the west side of Dyke Road, is a chalk pit and a plot of land marked "Chalkpit Furlongs" with a small terrace of buildings along the road. Upper North Street is shown although there are no buildings and the road appears to deteriorate into a narrow farm track within 100 yards of the junction with Dyke Road.

Apart from the building of Vine's Windmill in 1810 between what is now Clifton Hill and Powis Grove, the earliest development of the area appears to start with the construction in 1819 of a house for Thomas Read Kemp called "The Temple". This occupies a site north of present-day Temple Gardens but in those days this would have been a rather isolated position, well away from other buildings.

"The Temple" was probably designed by Amon and Amon Henry Wilds his son, and Kemp lived in the house until 1827, after which it became a boys' school. It is now occupied by Brighton and Hove High School for Girls. Associated development soon followed with terraces being built in the 1820's in the area immediately to the north of Western Road - Norfolk Road, Temple Street, Hampton Place, Crown Street and Montpelier Road, which then stretched from the seafront right over to Lewes Road. Two villas in Montpelier Terrace (south side) were built in 1823; Arnold House and Montpellier Lodge with over an acre of ground each and coach houses. A small pocket of new houses was also built in the 1820's in Clifton Road, (a route to the Chalybeate originally known as Clifton Place) possibly designed by Amon Wilds and Charles Augustin Busby. This development carried on from associated building in the Regency Square area to the south, where construction started in 1818, and in Russell Square (1820) and Norfolk Square (1825).

Following Thomas Read Kemp's bankruptcy his land was sold off in blocks and developed separately resulting in Montpelier Crescent, Villas and Terrace and Powis Square. During the 1830s and early 40s more terraced houses were built on land to the north of Western Road in Borough Street, Montpelier Terrace, and Upper North Street. In 1830 Wykeham Terrace, with its notable Regency Gothic façade, was built close to St. Nicholas's Church and in 1834 a Mr Mew designed a new house for the Reverend Henry Wagner on the southern side of Temple Gardens, now called the Old Vicarage. His sister, Mary Wagner, had a house built in c.1840 on the plot in between The Temple and Montpelier Place called Belvedere House, and she was responsible for further development to the south of her house along Montpelier Place.

After the opening of the railway line to Shoreham in 1840, and London in 1841 Brighton expanded rapidly and the architectural "set pieces" for which the Montpelier and Clifton Hill Conservation Area is rightly renowned date from this period - Montpelier Villas (1845), Montpelier Street (c.1845), Clifton Terrace (built between 1845-1850), and Montpelier Crescent (mainly 1847). Terraces were also built in Montpelier Road and further properties along Upper North Street constructed in 1842.

Powis Square and Powis Villas were added in c.1850 and several substantial terraces in the area also date from the early 1850's including Norfolk Terrace, Vernon Terrace, Clifton Terrace, and Montpelier Place. Further houses were added in the 1860's and early 1870's so by the time of the Ordnance Survey map of 1876, most of the present-day conservation area was developed although to the north and north-west beyond Vernon Terrace and Goldsmid Road the map shows open fields and nurseries.

Since the 1870s change has been slow, including the demolition of the original Church Road School in Dyke Road and its replacement with a new Children's' Hospital in 1881. Slightly further to the north along Dyke Road, small late 19th century shops have been built, and to the west of the conservation area a group of Edwardian houses (Vernon Gardens) were built in c.1890, similar to other houses of the same period which went up in neighbouring Temple Gardens.

Belvedere House was demolished in the 1970s then known as Park Royal Hotel and a modern block of flats (Park Royal) built on the site although the original flint boundary wall to the west and cobble wall to the east remain. Heather Court, a block of 1970s flats, has been built in Montpelier Terrace and a similar block (The Garden House) in Clifton Terrace. In Dyke Road the Congregational Chapel (1871) on the corner with Clifton Road was demolished in 1972 and has been replaced with a block of flats called Homeless House. These were built between 1985 and 1986 by McCarthy and Stone as housing for the elderly. In 2002 a glass clad sports hall was added to Brighton & Hove High School for Girls.

Definition of the Special Character of the Area:

The Conservation Area contains a variety of buildings with perhaps 20% of the buildings being in a non-residential use. Most of the larger terraced houses have been sub-divided into flats but the two storey houses, in roads like Borough Street and Temple Street, are still mainly family houses. To the west, Brighton and Hove High School for Girls now occupies a large site, which includes The Temple and the Old Vicarage, with modern buildings in between. There are groups of small shops, particularly around Seven Dials, Clifton Hill and along Upper North Street, many of which sell antiques. Additionally, there are also a number of back-street commercial premises, like the motor repairers at 88B Montpelier Road, and a few private clinics and dentists. Notably, the area also boasts a number of public houses and restaurants, most of which are in the southern part of the conservation area closest to Western Road.

These varied uses give the conservation area vitality throughout the day with a constant movement of pedestrians through the streets. The closeness of the conservation area to the main shopping centre of Brighton also generates a certain amount of traffic, and Montpelier Place and Upper North Street are always busy, forming as they do part of an important east-west route across Brighton. Similarly, there is fairly constant traffic along the north-south route between Seven Dials and Western Road, along Montpelier Road and Denmark Terrace. These main roads have seen a recent increase in traffic levels, this contrasts with the relative peace of the private and public open spaces on the east side of the conservation area around Clifton Terrace and Dyke Road.

Spaces and Vistas:

The Clifton Hill Conservation Area is notable for its hilly siting with long terraces of houses dropping down the hill towards Western Road and westwards towards Hove. Long vistas can be obtained towards the sea and views down Norfolk Road and tree lined Montpelier Road are especially important. Also notable is the view from Powis Road down Montpelier Street, Hampton Place and Little Preston Street, to the sea. Additionally, the roads within the conservation area rise and fall, particularly those running east-west such as Victoria Road and Clifton Hill.

The conservation area has some notable public open spaces. Rather under-used by the public and hidden by a high wall, the former graveyard off Dyke Road contains some valuable trees and provides a quiet sitting area, in contrast to the more heavily used former graveyard on the east side of Dyke Road, where playground equipment has been installed and which is therefore much frequented by children and their parents after the nearby schools close at the end of the day. Immediately above the quieter graveyard are the private gardens to Clifton Terrace, accessed only by a locked gate, which also contains some good trees and hedges.

The green in front of Montpelier Crescent is another important public open space although somewhat blighted by the busy traffic and by Council recycling bins. The green also has some valuable street trees and the public seats do provide an opportunity for pedestrians to sit and enjoy the architecture. The gardens in the centre of Powis Square provide open space of a much smaller and more intimate scale.

Materials:

There is some variety in the materials used in Montpelier & Clifton Hill although like most of the other buildings in central Brighton, roman cement, stucco and painted render predominate. These are generally painted a pastel shade with less variation than in the West Hill Conservation Area, perhaps because a very high proportion of the buildings are listed. There is some use of the light brown Kent gault brick (e.g. nos. 36-41 Montpelier Road), flint walls (eg rear of nos 49-52 Norfolk Square), and knapped flint (e.g. Former St. Stephen's School, Borough Street) with the few Edwardian buildings being constructed in a bright red brick with stone or render dressings. Many of the roofs in the conservation area, even on the listed buildings, have been renewed in concrete tiles, replacing the original Welsh slate and lead on the ridges and hips. Prior to 1840 materials were sourced locally; from the beach, the fields, or carted from Shoreham harbour. With the arrival of the railway new materials appeared including plate glass, which had been developed by Pilkington in 1813. Good examples of curved plate glass can be seen in Montpelier Villas and flat plate glass in very large sheets in 8-13 Montpelier Terrace and Montpelier Hall.

Few original cast iron and ceramic tile street signs exist, but three early ones can be seen in Clifton Terrace, Montpelier Terrace (east end), 89 Montpelier Road and a later version in Vernon Gardens. Early boundary walls were flint, cobble or bungaroosh (a mix of flints, smaller aggregate and other bulk material found easily to hand, bonded with lime mortar), and many examples remain within the conservation area today, notably the listed flint wall around The Temple and the smaller more domestic walls in Powis Grove and boundary passage, also the walls around the Royal Alexandra Hospital fronting Clifton Hill and Powis Grove. Later walls were rendered and painted, and many of them have cast iron railings. Cast iron is also used for balconies (e.g. Clifton Road). No. 90 Montpelier Road has a unique cast-iron porch with elaborate decoration and in the entrances of nos 1 and 2 Clifton Hill are cast iron posts designed to simulate rendered piers.

Original path and pavement surfaces can be seen, such as at St Nicholas's Church and Clifton Terrace west. There is York stone on the steps of Clifton Terrace and the gutters and kerbs of Clifton Hill, in particular outside the Clifton Hill coach house. There are BLEECO lamp standards and gas lamp brackets such as the one to the rear of number 50 Norfolk Square. There is one remaining gas lamp standard in St Nicholas churchyard. There is a wealth of coal plates of different designs such as those in St Michael's Place and Norfolk Road. Original door furniture and bell pulls exist such as at no.1 Montpelier Villas and Montpellier Hall. When the terraces were built substantial earthworks were needed to incorporate basements and cellars, which often stretch underneath pavements and roads.

The conservation area has a large number of trees, in particular Park Royal and Temple Gardens, Montpelier Crescent, Powis Square, Montpelier Road, and St Nicholas's Churchyards.

There are many good examples of decorative ironwork, although railings were lost from open spaces such as Clifton Terrace Gardens, Powis Square, St. Nicholas's churchyard during the Second World War.

Description of the Buildings:

The conservation area divides into six different areas according to building age and type. The first area coincides with the early development close to Western Road, and the second to the more open grounds around Brighton and Hove High School for Girls. Area three covers the "set pieces" of really grand architecture and area four includes just St. Nicholas's Church, Wykeham Terrace and Crown Gardens, which do seem quite separate from the rest of the conservation area. The fifth area includes Clifton Hill and Clifton Road, and the sixth, Vernon Terrace and Montpelier Crescent, which merit an area of their own.

(1) Montpelier Place, Montpelier Terrace, Upper North Street and the streets to the south including parts of Western Road

This area lies to the north of Western Road and its development continued the expansion of new housing which had already started in the early 19th century in Regency Square. Montpelier Place, Montpelier Terrace and Upper North Street form one road which runs westwards towards Hove and is the most important street in this part of the conservation area with many houses of the 1830's on the south side. Linking this street to Western Road are a number of more minor roads, and as would be expected these contain earlier properties some of which date to the 1820's. The area is mainly residential although there are small shops and public houses in Upper North Street and Montpelier Place and continuous terraces of larger shops along Western Road.

The streets lie on a south-facing slope and there are many glimpses between the buildings in the adjoining Regency Square Conservation Area to the sea. However, there are no public open spaces and no visual appreciation of the small private gardens which are largely hidden from public view, although the street trees along Upper North Street are notable in views along the road, and the small front gardens which lie along the north side of this road, with their white-painted boundary walls and gates, provide a pleasant ambience to the street. Montpelier Road also has small front gardens, and some street trees, although the slightly neglected condition of some of the gardens is regrettable. The gentle undulation of Upper North Street, Montpelier Place and Montpelier Terrace along the side of the hill is important in views along the roads, marked by the pointed spire of St. Mary Magdalen Church which acts as an important local landmark.

The area contains a high proportion of listed buildings and high quality unlisted properties, mainly terraced which together form a cohesive and attractive street scene. The continuous terracing gives a strong vertical emphasis to the street frontages, enhanced by the architectural detailing to the front elevations and the tall trees planted outside in the street. Most of the buildings are two or three storeys high, rendered, with curved or canted bays and sash windows.

Along Upper North Street the most notable listed buildings are nos. 77-89. These were built in 1841, are three storeys high, rendered, with Ionic pilasters dividing each building and very pretty cast iron balconies to the single sash window on each first floor. St. Mary Magdalen Church is also grade II and built from red brick. With its adjoining presbytery it provides a break in the street where white or cream-painted classically-inspired buildings predominate. Some of the small shops still have their early shopfronts (e.g. nos. 31 and 32) and many of them sell antiques. The Windmill Public House, on the corner of Clifton Place, is an unlisted building of the 19th century which is a popular venue but somewhat cluttered with signs and lights. Until recently a K6 telephone box was sited outside the pub.

In Montpelier Terrace nos. 1-5 and 6-13 are all listed and date to c.1830 and 1840 respectively, with small front gardens which provide some softening to the setting of the buildings, assisted by a row of trees planted along the pavement. Nos. 6-13 have bracketed eaves and medallions, with important ground floor verandas with curved mainly zinc roofs. They were part of the same building scheme and land ownership as Montpellier Hall (1846) and Montpelier Villas (1845), probably designed by A H Wilds. On the southern side of the road is Heather Court, a modern flat roofed block of flats totally alien in character to the conservation area, which replaced one of two identical red brick villas. The remaining one, No. 16, is called Montpellier Lodge and dates to c.1830. It is five windows wide with a shallow pitched slate roof and overhanging eaves. Fortunately modern extensions have not spoilt its symmetry, and next to it, no. 17, Montpellier Hall is listed with a 200 foot walled garden. It was built for Henry Smithers, brewery owner and 6th Mayor, is two storeys over basement, also five windows wide with bracketed eaves supporting the pitched slated roof with original dormers. Outside is a post box set into the wall.

Montpelier Place contains continuous three storey terraced houses along the south side, with many of them having ground floor shops, some with attractive cast iron friezes above the shop fronts. The Montpelier Inn of c. 1830 forms the western end of this group and may have been built in part as a public house. It is also made up of segmental bays with three bays facing Montpelier Terrace and one bay turning the corner into Borough Street. On the north side of the terrace are some further shops, in late 19th century single storey buildings, with a single pair of very tall four storey houses set well behind them (nos. 18 and 19). These are not listed and date from c.1860 with channelled stucco to the ground floor and large tripartite sash windows to the first and second floors. Next to this building is a large rendered building with a vast second floor pediment sitting over a totally blank first floor with only two windows to a ground floor extension. This was once St. Stephen's Church but is now a day centre for the homeless and is listed grade II*. Parts of the interior of this building were originally constructed in 1766 in Castle Square as a ballroom. This room became a chapel to the Royal Pavilion in 1822 and some of its furniture and fixtures were moved to Montpelier Place in 1852 when the church was opened. Arthur Blomfield remodelled this building in 1889 and its very fine interior was restored after a fire in 1988.

Turning southwards towards Western Road is the symmetrical terrace of shops, no's 119 - 122, dating from the 1830s. Of particular interest are the segmental and canted bays to the upper floors. In Norfolk Road, which used to be called Chalybeate Street, the buildings are both two and three storey, many with first floor balconies. Of note are the shallow segmental bays of the listed buildings (nos. 1-3), and at the northern end of the street, a group of unlisted houses with particularly fine first floor balconies contribute to the liveliness of the street with their cast iron railings. Views across Western Road to the sea are framed by trees and the buildings in the Regency Square Conservation Area, which continue the line of building right down to the seafront. A 1960s block of flats (Braemar House) intrudes rudely between listed buildings on the west side with its bland red brick façade.

Borough Street is all two storey rendered houses, and those with the earlier segmental bays are listed. The elevations are painted and together they form a cohesive, interesting streetscape which is only interrupted by the unusual flint façade of the former St. Stephen's School, built for George Wagner in 1855. Also on the east side there are some unusually tall chimney pots. Montpelier Road contains almost continuous terraces of listed buildings including some possibly designed by Amon Wilds and Charles Augustin Busby (nos. 91-96). These are on the east side of the street and date to 1824.

Unusually for this early date they are arranged in semi-detached pairs, with simple Classical decoration. Above these no. 90, which sits on the corner with Montpelier Terrace, has an impressive cast iron porch of great complexity with coloured glass insets which stylistically dates to the late 19th century although the segmental arch over the entrance is probably earlier. Further down the hill towards Western Road is the First Church of Christ Scientist, a notable but unlisted 1850s building converted into a church in 1921. On the western side of the road are four houses designed by Amon Henry Wilds and built in c.1830 (nos. 53-56). Two of these houses display some of the detailing for which Wilds is so well known with fluted pilasters with "ammonite" capitals and shell motifs in the arched window.

Towards the southern end of the road is a long terrace of Kent gault brick houses, nos 36-42 also designed by AH Wilds and Busby with segmental bays and some original first floor balconies which stretch across the whole façade. These elegant houses have small front gardens with low boundary walls made of brick with cobbles and some examples of original cast iron railings. Hampton Place is almost all listed and the three storey houses, with their segmental bays, cascade most attractively down the hill towards the sea. These also have first floor balconies to the buildings on the east side of the road and all of the houses retain their front area railings, with fat spearhead finials.

Along Western Road are unlisted buildings, three or four storeys high, with ground floor shops, none of which are listed. Most of them are three storeys high and date from the early 19th century with canted bays apart from the segmental bays to the "Lighting" shop at nos. 117-118. The modern shopfronts do at least have a common fascia height and are generally made of timber. The unit at the end of Norfolk Road, is notable for its deep string courses which link the rendered bays together and which delineate the floor heights. The buildings in Western Road opposite Norfolk Square reflect the history of their development, retaining their Norfolk Square addresses. After that is Boundary Passage, which as its name suggests, marks the boundary between the former boroughs of Brighton and Hove. It has original paviers running its whole length, interrupted by an ancient parish boundary stone at the top marked "BP" and another half way down. At the south end another boundary stone marked "HP/BP" is set in the pavement of Western Road.

Spring Street, Dean Street, Crown Street and Marlborough Street all contain examples of smaller, unlisted artisan housing of the early-19th century although some have their original segmental bays with paired sash windows. Of note is the way in which the buildings step down the hill with roofs generally concealed behind parapets. Crown Street unusually retains some 19th century red brick paving. In the 1840s Dean Street was still a cul-de-sac from Western Road.

The only modern building of any size is Heather Court in Montpelier Terrace, a block of flats built in 1971 which sits down a slight slope from the pavement on an open site, well back from the historic building line. It is the only incongruous element within an otherwise uninterrupted historic street scene.

(2) Norfolk Terrace, Temple Gardens, Montpelier Road (north) and Denmark Terrace

This area lies to the north of Montpelier Terrace and contains the first house to be built in Clifton Hill, The Temple, of 1819. Close by, the Revd. Henry Wagner built The Vicarage in 1834 and his sister her own property, Belvedere House, in c.1845. Houses along Montpelier Road followed in the 1850s, in Norfolk Terrace in the 1850s, and in Denmark Terrace in the 1860s. However, the 1876 map shows that for a time, no further development occurred with the land to the west and north of The Temple remaining in agricultural use until the late 19th century when Edwardian houses were built in Temple Gardens and Vernon Terrace. Belvedere House was demolished in 1965 and two blocks of flats built on the site. Brighton and Hove High School for Girls now occupy The Temple and The Vicarage and this use has had a major impact on the area in terms of activity and the need for more extensive modern buildings. In Temple Gardens and Montpelier Terrace two Victorian wall letter boxes remain.

This area lies on a south-facing slope with busy traffic along Montpelier Road to and from Seven Dials. By contrast, there is little traffic in Norfolk Terrace which is overshadowed by the tall, rather forbidding block of listed buildings along its western side. On its eastern side, the long cobble wall around Park Royal and the Old Vicarage is a very important feature, along with the many mature trees and shrubs in the garden and on a low mound which lies to the west of the site. On the other side of Temple Gardens, the former New Sussex Hospital was redeveloped and extended in 2003 providing 43 flats. The eastern end of the road is enlivened by school children who constantly cross Temple Gardens. The brick and cobble wall to the side and in front of The Temple is also listed and important in views up Denmark Terrace. Views down Denmark Terrace and on to Montpelier Road and the sea are noteworthy, and along Clifton Hill can be glimpsed a mixture of smaller scale domestic buildings.

The overall architectural character of this area is therefore rather mixed with continuous terraces along one side of some of the roads (Norfolk Terrace, Montpelier Road and Denmark Terrace) facing more open sites around The Vicarage and The Temple. Norfolk Terrace is very tall and imposing, four storeys high, with slightly different detailing as the buildings progress up the hill although all of the buildings have front elevations of painted render with the exception of the lower 1960s pale brick Baptist church at the south end. Nos. 14-19, the Abbey Hotel, has segmental bays and first floor balconies with ornate cast iron railings. The condition of this building is very poor. Further along, the buildings are flat fronted with arched window heads and prominent string courses and bracketed eaves corncicing. Opposite these and close to the junction with Montpelier Place is Belvedere Terrace built in 1834 with shallow segmental bays and continuous cast iron balconies to the first floor.

The listed terraced houses on the east side of Montpelier Road (nos. 70-74 and 76-80) date to 1840 and are rendered and all painted shades of cream. The buildings have segmental bays with individual balconies to the first floor windows, many of which retain their original nine over nine sashes. The roofs are largely concealed behind parapets, but the many tall chimney pots are very visible as the buildings step down the hill towards the sea. On the west side, nos. 58-65 date from c.1850 and are similar in form and detailing to those on the opposite side of the street although they have continuous first floor balconies, composed of curving cast iron with spear-and-tassel finials and console brackets. The road also contains some very valuable trees which greatly contribute to the attractiveness of the street and these link-in to the gardens of the Old Vicarage.

There is a pair of Edwardian houses, built from red brick, which sit on the corner of Temple Gardens. This three storey block is fronted by a red brick wall and a flint wall, of greater antiquity, along Temple Gardens. The two six storey blocks which constitute Park Royal sit back from the road with car parking between them. These date from the late 1960s and are built from reddish-brown brick with white-painted string courses marking each floor.

The Old Vicarage in Temple Gardens dates from 1834-5 when it was built by George Cheeseman for the Revd. H W Wagner. It is stucco, scored to replicate ashlar blocks, in what would now be termed a neo-Tudor style with gables and mullioned and transomed windows. It is surrounded by mature trees and has a new sports hall positioned between it and Montpelier Road. It is regrettable that the bottom level of the sports hall has not been fully enclosed as it gives an unfinished appearance. The Temple was probably designed by Amon Wilds and built for Thomas Read Kemp, the founder of Kemp Town, but the building has been much altered over the years and now only the east and north sides retain their original ground floor treatment of Egyptian pilasters, said to be based on the Temple of Solomon. The brick and cobble wall around this building, with its lion head motifs, is separately listed. In the south east corner is an important evergreen oak tree.

To the east of The Temple is an attractive collection of five Edwardian houses with timber gables to the streets and tiled roofs with a leaded dome on the corner with Windlesham Road. Strangely, there is one slightly later, and smaller house, in the centre of the group, and beyond this, the former New Sussex Hospital dating from 1843-4 is surprisingly unlisted.

On the east side of Denmark Terrace is a continuous terrace of houses, all of which have been converted to flats, dating from the 1860s. The buildings are very tall, four storeys high, with canted bays and first floor balconies which continue from building to building. The ground floors are channelled stucco which is either painted or left a natural light brown. Each building is surmounted by a deep bracketed eaves cornice and additional balconies have been added to some of the houses, stretching from bay to bay. There are small front areas contained by balustraded front boundary walls, also rendered. Opposite the north end of the terrace is another collection of Edwardian houses called Vernon Gardens. These buildings are well detailed with timbered gables, their original mullioned and transomed windows, tiled roofs and red tile hanging. Most of them are in use as a private clinic and a modern brick tower (presumably to provide a lift) intrudes somewhat uncomfortably between two of the original buildings. A large four storey extension has been added to the Windlesham Avenue elevation which is reasonably neutral in its effect. Presence of recycling bins, again, is regrettable.

(3) Montpelier Villas, Montpelier Street, Victoria Place, Victoria Road, Victoria Street, Powis Square, Powis Villas, Powis Grove, Clifton Terrace and Vine Place

This residential area lies on a south-facing slope as well as the more level land at the top of Clifton Hill. It contains the major "set pieces" for which the Clifton Hill Conservation Area is rightly famous, which date to the 1840s and 1850s. They include terraces, semi-detached and detached villas, and an unusual crescent, all of which are remarkably intact. By contrast there are also some small cottages accessed only by a narrow twitten and a mixture of relatively modest houses with a wide variety of details dating to the 1850s and 1860s, so that by the time of the 1876 map, this part of the conservation area was already fully developed.

Also within this area is Clifton Gardens and the more public open space which was once a graveyard to St. Nicholas's Church, outside which is a K 6 telephone box. Views down the hill towards the sea are important from Clifton Terrace, down Clifton Place to Upper North Street, and down Clifton Hill to the top of Vernon Gardens.

Being mainly residential, there is limited traffic movement throughout the day in comparison to the more major through routes along Upper North Street or Montpelier Road. There are some small shops on the corner of Victoria Road and Powis Road but otherwise little commercial activity.

Montpelier Villas was built in c.1845 and steps southwards down the hill towards the sea. The road consists of ten pairs of listed semi-detached villas on three floors with stuccoed fronts, deep bracketed eaves, and margin lights to the first floor windows. Each house has a curved bay window to the front with a zinc canopy with fretting over a balcony with a cast iron balustrade. Surrounding the gardens are railings which are now separately listed. The group is unusual in Brighton, being semi-detached, and the gardens and mature street trees are a special feature of the road.

Montpelier Street runs parallel to Montpelier Villas with a continuous terrace of two storey listed houses on the western side, with segmental bays and three-light multi-paned windows to each bay. The buildings are all rendered with string courses below a parapet and date to c.1845. Each house has small front area contained by cast iron railings. On the east side are two or three storey buildings of a slightly later date with canted bays and simpler mid-19th century sashes. These also have attractive spear-head railings to the front boundaries, and some of the taller houses have ornate railings to small first floor balconies.

Victoria Street contains mainly unlisted, modest houses of two storeys, all of painted render, with those retaining their curved segmental bays being listed. They also date to c. 1845 with canted bays being added about thirty years later when fashions changed. Views down Victoria Street to the red brickwork and spire of St. Mary Magdalen Church are very important. Victoria Place has one interesting listed building on the south side, no.1, which is detached and on four floors dating from around 1845.

Victoria Road runs east-west and is a very mixed street with some notable buildings, particularly the vast red brick Church of St. Michael and All Angels. This was built by George Bodley in 1858-62 in the Italian Gothic style. However more space was almost immediately needed and a substantial extension was designed by William Burges which more than doubled the accommodation. The enlarged church was not completed until 1895 by which time Burges had died. Also of note is a pair of listed houses, nos.14-15, with giant Greek Ionic pilasters.

Clifton Place is steeply sloping and down its eastern side is a long terrace of three and two storey white-painted houses, unlisted and dating to c.1860. They have canted bay windows and sashes with parapets hiding the roofs. Each building steps down the hill creating an interesting series of facades, decorated by cast iron railings to the small front areas. On the eastern side, views over Clifton Gardens can be seen from the houses but they are obscured in part by The Garden House, a four storey block of flats dating to the 1970s. Clifton Terrace is in two blocks, one short block on the west side (nos. 27-33) and one much longer group (nos. 1-23) along the north side of Clifton Gardens. Nos. 27-33 are c. 1845 and three storeys high with canted bays and decorative ironwork. Nos. 1-23 date to 1850 and are all painted stucco, on two floors with bracketed eaves, shallow pitched slated roofs (and many inappropriate dormers), tripartite sashes to the first floor, and canted bays below, protected by zinc canopies with timber fretwork around the eaves. These buildings have small front gardens, contained by white-painted walls with cast iron railings. In front of the terrace is a raised pavement with some examples of 20th century BLEECO street lights. Views over Clifton Gardens include many fine mature trees and the whole garden is enclosed in a mature hedge which provides a high degree of seclusion. Clifton Gardens was once the site of Clifton Windmill, which was erected in c.1810 and then moved to another site in Windmill Street in 1837, presumably to provide opportunities for development. Number 43 Dyke Road, St George's House, is a fine but slightly altered 1840s villa.

Below Clifton Gardens the former graveyard to St. Nicholas's Church contains some grave stones, repositioned around the edge, with a raised terrace under which was once some burial vaults. These were designed by Amon Henry Wilds and were built in c.1840. They are listed along with the stone and brick front boundary walls and gates (dated 1846) facing Dyke Road. To the south of the gates is a motley collection of four, three and single storey buildings dating to the mid-19th century which turn the corner into Upper North Street.

Behind Clifton Terrace is a narrow twitten called Vine Place along which are some small cottages with no. 9 retaining its original cobbled façade. They are very hidden by high walls and fences. Powis Grove lies to the north of these cottages and contains a variety of 19th century buildings, none of which are listed, with front gardens and some very attractive front boundary railings. The pleasant outlook of this street contrasts with the busy traffic along Dyke Road. Between Powis Grove and Clifton Hill is a car park which was once the site of the William Vine's post-mill which stood here from around 1810 until about 1850. To one side of the car park is a former coach house and stables, now used for storage, that has recently been listed. This brick and flint building was built in 1852 and retains its original full height coach opening, hay loft and brick and cobled floors. Its NW end, at right angles to the road, has stone embellishments intended to enhance the view from the original owner's house at 5 Powis Villas. The flint walls which lie along Clifton Hill contribute to the character of the conservation area. Powis Villas were developed in the 1850s and the listed buildings are mainly semi-detached and have some good ironwork and verandas. Powis Square is an impressive horseshoe-shaped crescent with ends returning into Powis Road, built in c.1850 around a wide green enclosed by railings. The three storey houses have bow fronts and decorative ironwork and all the buildings are listed. On the green are two listed K6 telephone kiosks. The green is well cared for and local residents use it for social occasions.

(4) St. Nicholas's Church, Wykeham Terrace and Crown Gardens

St. Nicholas's Church is important in the history of Brighton in that it was the parish church for Brighthelmston during the medieval period. Unfortunately the building was extensively rebuilt by R C Carpenter in 1853 and now only the tower, chancel arch and some of the nave arcade remain of the original 14th century building. It is listed grade II* and the church and its associated graveyards provide a valuable open space on the site overlooking Brighton town centre.

The building and its setting is especially notable in views up from Western Road and the many trees which surround the church also provide a welcome break to the more densely developed centre of the town. Amon Wilds is buried in the churchyard and his tomb is listed grade II. Two other notable tombs are those of Martha Gunn and Phoebe Hessel. The handsome main approach has ancient elms overhanging the path with original cobble margins and 19th century paviers. There are two pairs of historic bollards, one with unusual gothic features and two last remaining pier mounted lamp brackets. The path around the church has beside it one surviving gas lamp standard of the Brighton design. Wykeham Terrace is close to the church and is set back from Dyke Road. Built between 1827 and 1830, this Regency Gothic terrace has a rendered front, with drip moulds over the small casement windows which are sub-divided by patterned glazing bars. In front of the terrace are attractive communal gardens separated from the street by a low rendered front boundary wall.

To the north of the church, on the other side of Church Street, is another former graveyard, now a popular playground for children after school. This is surrounded by a flint wall and hedging which is very important in views along Dyke Road.

Along Church Street, and just within the Conservation Area, are some individual cottages one of which, at the end of the truncated Mount Zion Place (no.2) , is listed grade II. It dates from c.1800 and has a cobbled front wall. Further down Church Street are two groups of unlisted terraced houses, mid-19th century in date but rather altered. These have rendered fronts and slated roofs. Right on the conservation area boundary is the entrance to Crown Gardens, a narrow twitten along the west side of which is a terrace of 2 storey brick cottages, some rendered, set back with front gardens, but barely visible behind the high walls of the twitten. The backs of these buildings are far more visible (from Kew Street), and the wedge shaped north end forms an interesting focal point from North Gardens. The buildings on the east side of Crown Gardens, which front straight on to the twitten, are in the West Hill Conservation area.

(5) Clifton Hill, Dyke Road and St. Michael's Place

Clifton Hill contains some early buildings of c.1820 but otherwise the buildings in this area are mid-19th century with St. Michael's Place dating to the 1860s and the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Sick Children to 1880. The area is rather constrained by the busy traffic along Dyke Road and also by the activity generated by the hospital. Along Clifton Hill are some shops and a public house, with a taxi rank close by, but otherwise the buildings are in residential use.

The Brighton Hospital for Sick Children was founded in 1868 in Western Road but in 1870 it moved into the disused former Church School in Dyke Road. This building was demolished in 1880 and a completely new building provided in the Queen Anne style with red brick and terracotta decoration. A further wing was added in 1904 and the site now includes a mid-19th century villa further to the north along Dyke Road. Whilst rather untidy with parked cars and the inevitable "temporary" buildings, the hospital is an important part of Brighton life and a well known local landmark. It also provides some garden space on the junction with Clifton Hill which contributes to the character of this part of the conservation area. These premises are due to be vacated by the children's hospital in 20- when it is to relocate to the Royal Sussex County Hospital site in Eastern Road.

Turning into Clifton Hill and dropping slightly down the slope are some terraced houses on either side of the road, with two storey houses to the south of c.1850 and two and three storey houses to the north of a similar date which are set back slightly from the front boundary to create small gardens. These houses are unlisted but are relatively unaltered and some of them have attractive cast iron railings to the front. This pattern of development continues after the junction with Powis Road, where the road widens into what could almost be termed a town square. The small shops, the Crescent Public House, and the taxi office provide activity and visual interest. However the dark-coloured paint and altered windows of the pub are regrettable, as are the two tall aerials which are used by the taxi business. Further westwards along Clifton Hill, the road dips more sharply and there are views across Vernon Terrace towards Hove. Of note are the listed buildings, nos. 1 and 2, dating to c.1850 and designed in the Italianate villa style with bracketed eaves, tripartite windows, prominent ground floor bays and a large, three storey entrance tower to the right hand side of no. 2. Nos. 7, 10 and 11 are also listed and date to c.1840 with no. 7 being detached. All of these houses are painted white with Italianate details similar to nos. 1 and 2.

On the west side of Powis Road is a long terrace of three storey houses with canted bays and continuous first floor balconies. These date to the 1860s, with similar sized and dated houses on the opposite side of the road, most of which have ground floor shops although there is a gap before the Powis Square development starts with a single storey building on it. The gaps to the north and south of the head of the square may have been part of the original layout, intended to provide light to the gardens. Views down Powis Road to St. Michael's and All Angels Church are important.

Clifton Road joins the Clifton Hill area to Seven Dials so it is a quite a busy road with a mixture of early, mid and late-19th century buildings. A listed terrace along the south-east side is the most important group (nos. 1-4). These are three storeys high and date to the 1830s with curved balconies and zinc canopies to the first floor bay windows. Nos. 7-10 are also listed and also date to c. 1830 with shallow canted bays to the ground and first floors with tripartite windows above. On the other side of the road, no. 26 is a detached house of 1822-30 which was possibly designed by Amon Wilds and Charles Augustin Busby. It has Ionic pilasters and a ground floor veranda. Next to this house is a group of Edwardian houses, built from red brick with tiled bays. On the corner of Dyke Road is a large new housing development which replaced the Congregational Church shown on the 1876 map.

(6) Vernon Terrace and Montpelier Crescent

Montpelier Crescent is probably one of Brighton's most famous landmarks, with its curved frontage facing an attractive green where cricket was once played. Although busy with traffic, the large number of trees and spacious front makes this a very pleasant open space.

Montpelier Crescent designed by AH Wilds was developed in a piecemeal way which has resulted in slight differences in design but basically the houses are all of the 1850s, three storeys high, with channelled stucco to the ground floors and balconies with attractive cast iron railings to the first floors. Some of the houses are arranged in pairs and some of the pairs share a central pediment although others have a deep modillion cornice below a parapet. The houses are all painted a light cream which disguises the differences in detailing between them. It has a rare Edward VII letterbox in its south-west corner.

On the west side of Vernon Terrace is an imposing terrace of houses, now all converted into flats with very small front gardens. The earlier listed buildings are c.1850 and lie to the south of the terrace. They are three or four storeys high, rendered and have first floor balconies. Further to the north are slightly later, unlisted houses of c.1860 canted bays and one over one sash windows. Together, Vernon Terrace and Montpelier Crescent form a townscape of outstanding quality.

Around the corner in Dyke Road is a collection of small shops, some of which retain their original shopfronts, in buildings which date to the mid and late 19th century. Varied in height and detailing, none of them are listed but with the other commercial buildings around Seven Dials, they provide a valuable local service. The trees in the rear gardens of Montpelier Crescent are visible from Dyke Road and these contribute to the character of the conservation area.

Supplementary Planning Guidance.

The following conservation related documents may be relevant and should be consulted during the preparation of plans for development in this area:

- SPGBH1 Roof alterations and extensions
- SPGBH2 External paint finishes and colours
- SPGBH7 Satellite dishes
- SPGBH11 Listed building interiors
- SPGBH13 Listed buildings - general advice
- SPGBH19 Fire precaution works to historic building
- Conservation Areas in Brighton & Hove - A Resident's Guide

Montpelier and Clifton Hill

