

Old Hove Conservation Area Character Statement

Designated: 1997

Area: 13.9393 Hectares 34.4441 Acres

Article 4 Direction: 'None



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. This statement was approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 18th February 1997.

Historic Development of the Area:

The original village of Hove was situated along what is now Hove Street, and consisted of a manor house and a few fishermen's cottages. The manor house was built on the east side of "Old Hove Street" between 1785 and 1796 for John Vallance the Lord of the Manor. The 1861 OS map shows the building with a large number of stables and secondary buildings around a courtyard, with fields to the north and south and substantial kitchen gardens, called "Cliftonville Nursery", to the east. To the south along Old Hove Street are small cottages and the coast guard station, and to the north the road leads up to Church Road. There were two inns - the Ship Inn close to the beach, and the Connaught Hotel, close to Church Road. The land to the west is shown as being still totally rural with long fields set at right angles to the beach, although towards Brighton can be seen the beginnings of the Osborne Villas development.

In the mid 19th century the only other buildings of substance were St. Andrew's Church, situated to the north east of the manor, and the adjacent gas works. St. Andrew's Church was the first parish church in Hove and was built in the 13th century, but by the beginning of the 16th century it had become ruinous and in 1531 the parish was amalgamated with the larger and more important one of Preston. In 1801 the tower collapsed, but in 1834 the church was almost totally rebuilt in the Romanesque style by the architect George Basevi whose father was a prominent Brunswick Town Commissioner and the uncle of Benjamin Disraeli. Behind St. Andrews Church was a large grave-yard and to the east, at the junction with George Street, was the "National School". On the other side of the church, and built rather oddly at the same time as the church reconstruction, were the gasworks, dating from 1835. The gas works buildings were much smaller than the present gasometer, but no doubt they were built to cope with Hove's rapidly increasing population, which doubled to over 4,000 between 1840 and 1850.

In 1879 St. Andrews again became the parish church for thirteen years until All Saints Church replaced it. At the same time the area around the church was being developed and although the manor house and Old Hove Street remained untouched St. Aubyns was about half built. Twenty years later, St. Aubyns was complete, and Connaught Road had been developed, including a new church school to cope with the increasing number of children (now the College of Further Education).

By 1911 Vallance Road and Vallance Gardens had been laid out on the old Cliftonville Nurseries site, although only about 50% of the potential sites had actually been built upon and further development was delayed until after the war in the 1920s. Church Road had been widened opposite the gas works, and a substantial new terrace built including the new Public Library, completed in 1907. Land belonging to the Manor House was gradually sold off for redevelopment and finally in 1936 the building was demolished and a block of flats built on the site. A flint wall (on Brighton & Hove city's List of Buildings of Local Interest) is all that remains on the south boundary of the original site. During the 1930s the land to the south of Kingsway was developed with the construction of the King Alfred Leisure Centre and associated amusement park.

Important Buildings

There are 3 listed buildings or groups of listed buildings in this part of Hove:

St. Andrew's Church, Church Road grade II.

Public Library, 182 Church Road grade II

2-6 St. Aubyns grade II.

There are no scheduled ancient monuments. The only locally listed buildings are the Manor House Wall in Hove Street and St. Aubyns Mansions, on King's Esplanade.

Definition of the Special Character of the Area

The proposed conservation area contains principally late 19th century development - housing to the north and south of Church Road, and commercial and community uses along Church Road itself. St. Andrew's Church and the Public Library are important listed buildings at the centre of the conservation area, with the churchyard around St. Andrew's providing a welcome green space. The imposing terraces along Church Road are matched by those along St. Aubyns, although to the north along Sackville Street, the buildings are slightly more domestic in scale. However, in Vallance Road and Vallance Gardens the small domestic houses date from the 1920s, and much of Hove Street dates from the 1930s.

The area therefore conveniently divides into four, each with its own character:

i) SACKVILLE RD (east side only) / CONNAUGHT RD

Character assessment:

Sackville Road is a busy north - south route through the area and consists of both residential and commercial properties dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The character of the street is very mixed, with mainly terraced houses in commercial use on the east side and more domestic, smaller houses on the west. Architecturally the later buildings on the east side have much in common with the Edwardian houses already included on the west side within the Pembroke and Princes Conservation Area, but the earlier Victorian buildings suggest a greater group value with the area to the south along Church Road. There are good views to the west and east along Church Road by the traffic lights. Connaught Road is to the east and is a relatively quiet residential road, quite wide, with a good collection of street trees, and pleasant views down to Church Road. It contains two important buildings - the College of Further Education, and a substantial terrace of Victorian buildings (nos. 5-23) dating from c.1890 and which is now converted into flats.

The buildings :

The buildings in Sackville Road which are suggested for inclusion in the new conservation area date from the 1880's through to the 1900's, with the older buildings in the north adjacent to Blatchington Street. Nos. 45 to 63 are mainly three storey, with stuccoed fronts and concrete and clay tiled roofs. Nos. 29-43 are built from buff gault brick, and nos. 29-33 are a particularly good terrace on three floors with canted bays and strong gables to the road. Nos. 5-27 are mainly Edwardian and are constructed in red brick with nos. 5-11 particularly forming a terrace of special interest on four floors with canted bays, pedimented door hoods over panelled front doors, and traditional timber sash windows. This terrace has an attractive rendered front boundary wall with stone trellis patterned inserts between the gate piers. All the buildings along this stretch of Sackville Road have small front gardens or areas, and some of them have attractive hedges and planting.

Nos. 5-23 Connaught Road are three storeys high, with stuccoed fronts and tiled roofs. Opposite to this terrace is the College of Further Education, originally built as the Church School to St. Andrew's Church at about the same time. The school, however, is constructed in brown brick in a completely different style of architecture from its neighbour appropriate to its institutional status. It therefore has red brick arches and red terracotta string courses, large multi-paned timber sash windows, and prominent Dutch gables to the street. Behind the main building is a slightly later extension, and to one side, a twitten leads through to Blatchington Road. To the south of the College is a slightly smaller terrace of Victorian houses, nos. 1-4, which have also been converted into flats.

ii) CHURCH ROAD

Character assessment:

Church Road is the main east to west pedestrian and vehicular route through the centre of modern Hove and is always busy given that the buildings have shops and restaurants at ground floor level and that the shopping centre in George Street is close by. The character of the road is therefore of a busy commercial centre with constant movement of people and cars through the area. Additionally, this part of Church Road provides a range of community facilities including the church itself, the adjacent church hall, the public library, the College of Further Education, and a new school in what used to be the back of the old churchyard. Most of the buildings date from between 1880 and 1900, apart from St. Andrew's Church which provides the centrepiece of the area with a flint boundary wall and attractive lych gate into the church-yard. The lych gate is roofed in Horsham stone slabs, one of the few examples of this material in the Borough, and presumably robbed from the main building when it was being rebuilt. The church yard is a particular feature being the only public area of green space in the proposed conservation area.

The Public Library is architecturally quite unlike anything else in the street with its double height pedimented entrance bay and huge circular windows at first floor level. The skeletal outline of the old gasometer is an important though some might say unattractive feature which is hidden to a degree by the fine brick and flint wall forming its boundary with Church Road. According to the old maps the gasometers have been rebuilt several times and the current one is of no special archaeological significance. Of note also is the former Segas Office, no. 169 Church Road, a 1920s neo-classical building currently empty. Overall, the road is pleasantly wide with on-street car parking, although there are no street trees other than those in the churchyard.

Over the years the shopfronts in Church Road have been altered so that only a few of the late Victorian shopfronts remain. It is essential that these are kept in good repair and not replaced with modern alternatives. It is also important to note that many of the buildings above the shop units display a wealth of architectural detail and original features which add to the character of the proposed conservation area and which must be protected from unsympathetic alteration or even total loss.

The buildings:

The main feature of Church Road is St. Andrew's Church which was rebuilt by George Basevi in 1834. The walls are all in flint and there is a tall square tower with a castellated parapet and corner pinnacle. In the churchyard are memorials to Sir George Everest, after whom Mount Everest was named, Charlotte Elliott, the writer of hymns, Sir George Westphal, a veteran of Trafalgar, and Sir John Hindmarsh, the first governor of South Australia.

Adjacent to the churchyard are the former gas works, erected in 1835 but altered over the years. A very high and prominent flint and brick wall forms the boundary to Church Road, and the proposed conservation area boundary has been drawn carefully to include this special feature. The 1920s former gas showrooms (Segas House) were designed in the classical style and are now empty but appear to be in good condition and could be re-used for offices. To the west is an imposing Victorian villa c.1850, built of brick and flint, with another important brick and flint boundary wall to Church Road. The villa, showrooms and flint walls are very important features in the townscape and every effort should be made to retain them.

To the west of the gasworks site, along the north of Church Road, are two good terraces. Firstly, nos. 171-179, built in red brick with slate roofs, date from c.1900. They are three storeys high plus an attic, with prominent gables to either end facing the street and they have shopfronts on the ground floor. No. 179 still has its original shopfront. Nos. 181- 193 are a little earlier in date, c.1880, and built in stucco with canted bays to the first floor and slated roofs. They are also three storeys high with attic rooms at either end and in the middle of the terrace which form an unusual and important feature of the group. No. 181 has a good shopfront, most of which appears original.

On the south side of Church Road, there is a very important terrace (nos. 186-216) of four storey buildings with Dutch gables to the street and ground floor shopfronts. Nos. 188 and 194 retain some of the earlier detailing to their shopfronts. At the east end of this group, is the grade II listed Public Library, dating from 1907. This was built in the Wrenaissance style to the designs of Percy Robinson and W. Alvin Jones of Leeds, and was funded by Andrew Carnegie. The building originally included a cupola, removed in 1967. The interior is full of spacial interest and overall the library is possibly the most important building apart from St. Andrews Church in the proposed conservation area.

On the eastern side of the library is a modern development built in red brick which although somewhat discordant with the other surrounding historic buildings, does maintain the form and height of its neighbours, and marries in reasonably successfully with nos. 170-176 Church Road, a four storey terrace dating from c.1900. This group has modern shopfronts at ground floor level with striking top floor gables facing Church Road and Vallance Road, with an attractive cupola on the corner with Vallance Road. The whole composition is built in red brick with white-painted stucco string courses and copings, with similarly decorated bays beneath the gables.

Between the junctions of Church Road with St. Aubyns and Vallance Road is a small group of Victorian three storey buildings (nos. 162-168 Church Road) of which no. 162 is most important from the townscape point of view as it turns the corner into St. Aubyns and has prominent ground floor shop, inserted first floor bay window looking down the street towards the east, and attractive original bays to the front and side. This group is mostly stuccoed with slate roofs and simple modern shopfronts. The last buildings in Church Road to be included within the proposed new conservation area are nos. 150 - 160, which are three storeys high and were clearly built as one continuous terrace in c.1890.

iii) VALLANCE ROAD AND VALLANCE GARDENS (WITH HOVE STREET)

Character assessment:

Vallance Road and Vallance Gardens is a totally residential area which was built on open land to the east of the old Manor House. The new roads had been laid out by 1911 but only about half of the building plots were developed, and many of the buildings were built after the end of the First World War.

The streets are wide with large plots for the houses with deep front gardens. The overall scale of development, with two storey houses set in quite large gardens, is suburban and quite different from the more closely-knit urban development to the north and east. There are good views up Vallance Road to Church Road and down Vallance Gardens towards the sea, although the view is truncated by the King Alfred buildings. There is a shortage of street trees although many of the original swan-neck street lights remain.

Hove Street is a busy vehicular and pedestrian street linking Church Road to the sea front and the King Alfred Leisure Centre. It contains a mixture of modern buildings of no special architectural interest built between 1914 and 1940. Its contribution to the special character of the proposed conservation area is therefore one of purely historic significance as the original "High Street" of Old Hove and as the west side of the street is already included within the Pembroke and Princes Conservation Area, I recommend the inclusion of the east side.

The buildings:

The buildings in Vallance Road and Vallance Gardens are mainly terraced or semi-detached residential houses built of red brick on two storeys. There are some pleasant and well detailed houses (nos. 1-9, 6-12 and 43 Vallance Gardens) dating from this earlier period but the other houses are slightly later and not quite so interesting architecturally. Nos. 6-12 for instance are built in red brick in the Queen Anne Revival style popular during the Edwardian period with white painted timber porches, large bay windows facing the street with timbered gables above, and red tiled roofs.

By 1911 only 3 properties in Vallance Gardens (nos. 29-33) had been built. Most of the buildings have timbered gables at first floor level and like the buildings in Vallance Road they are all built from the same red brick. There is a group of detached houses towards the sea (nos. 4 - 20) which have particularly attractive porches and decorated front doors.

Hove Street no longer contains any buildings of any architectural merit as most of the street was rebuilt between 1914 and 1940. The only early feature is the locally listed flint wall to the former Manor House, which presumably dates from the 18th century, when the Manor House was built. Most of the buildings at the northern end date from the 1930's when large blocks of flats were constructed following the demolition of the Manor House. Regent House, formerly the Fire Station, is probably the most architecturally interesting building in the street and also dates from the 1930's when it was built in the "Georgian" style with large multi-paned sash windows and prominent red tiled roof. The original openings for the fire engines have now been blocked up and the building is used as offices. Further south towards Kingsway are a group of late Edwardian houses, quite different in scale from the blocks of flats in the same road, which relate architecturally to the buildings in Vallance Gardens and which were presumably built at much the same time. At the far end of Hove Street facing Kingsway is another block of 1930's flats, of no special interest, although the adjacent 1930's Ship Hotel, with its timbered gables, has more townscape value and fits in well with the red brick houses around it.

iv) ST. AUBYNS / ST. AUBYNS GARDENS

Character assessment:

St. Aubyns was built between the 1860's and the 1890's and consists mainly of large terraced houses set back slightly from the street with a wealth of good details including front balconies, fine railings and heavily panelled front doors. The northern end of the street contains a number of large street trees and the original swan neck lamp posts are still in use down the entire length of the street. The views down St Aubyns to the sea and up to the churchyard of St. Andrew's are particularly important. Because most of the houses have now been converted into flats, car parking is a problem although many of the buildings on the west side have car parking in their rear gardens, and on the east side, access for cars is available from Seafield Road. The high concentration of properties means that the road is always busy with pedestrians and cars. St. Aubyns Gardens forms part of Kingway at the south end of St. Aubyns and dates from the 1860s. The corner terrace consists of a number of large, imposing listed buildings which until the King Alfred Leisure Centre was built, faced the sea across a grassed lawn.

These buildings now contribute to the wealth of historic buildings along Hove's seafront, although it is regrettable that their setting has been compromised to a degree by modern development and by the large amount of vehicular traffic along Kingsway.

The buildings:

The more southerly of the buildings in St. Aubyns date from the 1860s and the 1879 OS map shows that the northern end of the road was still undeveloped when the area was surveyed in 1873 and the land was recorded as being in use as an "Archery Ground". By 1898 however the whole street was built, with individual villas or semi-detached houses mainly on the west side, and terraced houses on the east with gardens backing on to Seafield Road. The style of development for this road was clearly more in tune with the grander developments further east towards Brighton and the houses are much larger with more embellishment than in any other part of the proposed conservation area.

The listed buildings at the junction with Kingsway (nos. 2 - 6 St. Aubyns) date from the early 1860's and form part of a continuous terrace from St. Aubyns Gardens round into St. Aubyns itself. (It should be noted that according to the statutory list, no. 8 St. Aubyns is also included within the listed group but this building is quite different stylistically and this would therefore appear to be a drafting error.) These buildings are all stuccoed and four storeys plus a basement high, but the listed group is more decorated than its other slightly later neighbours. A particular feature of the group, and common to St. Aubyns in general, are the very fine decorative railings to the basement front areas, with trellis patterned cast iron panels set between rendered piers.

The other buildings in St. Aubyns are all stuccoed and mostly on four floors with basements. Some, like the group facing the listed group at the southerly end of St. Aubyns, have prominent bays rising the whole height of the building and punctuated by first floor balconies with attractive decorative cast iron railings. Further along St. Aubyns is a long terrace (nos. 31 to 97) with a variety of details unified by their similar scale, the use of stucco and decorative iron work, and prominent bay windows rising two or three stories which sometimes have raised ground floors. On the western side of the road are a number of brown brick individual villas and semi-detached pairs of two or three storeys, with rendered string courses and bay windows facing the street.

Most of the buildings in St. Aubyns have been sub-divided into flats or are in commercial use. Many of the roofs have therefore been altered and large modern mansard dormers inserted which regrettably do detract from the overall composition. However, the architectural character of the street survives very well, helped by the retention of important features like the cast iron railings and many of the original front doors.

The Following Properties are Included in the Old Hove Conservation Area:

Brooker Place: west side.

Church Road: 167-201 (odd); 148-216 (even); St Andrews Church and Hall.

Connaught Road

Hove Street: The Ship PH; 5-19 (odd); Hove Manor; Vallance Court; Audley House; Regent House;

Vallance Hall

Kingsway: Lancaster Court

Namric Mews

Sackville Road: 5-63 (odd) including 27a.

Seafield Road: West side

St Aubyns Gardens

St Aubyns

Stirling Place: 19-23 (odd)

Vallance Gardens

Vallance Road