

The undesigned heritage of the historic Milton area of Westcliff

The built heritage of Southend-on-Sea exists right across the city. Our heritage relates to periods from the Georgians, through the Victorians and Edwardians, to the interwar period with examples of Art Deco and references back to the Arts and Crafts movement. Later, post Second World War development does not, generally, display fine architectural attributes. But very large areas of the city that grew in the late C19 and first half of the C20 do show fine quality development that describes our built heritage. This includes the distinct Victorian estate at Clifftown, the changing

The finest neighbourhoods depicting these period styles have, over the years, been designated as conservation areas. But this leaves vast areas of good quality development that is otherwise undesigned, although some of these roads certainly have designation potential

. Most of this development was built from the early C20 to the middle of the century, a fifty-year period.

All development is protected by the Town & Country Planning Act which has its roots during these fifty years. This limited what could be done to properties, particularly the street facing parts. Most notably and with the need to upgrade deteriorating building fabric over the years, timber elements have been replaced. This can be seen in windows and doors, in particular, where uPVC replacements have been employed. But the main elements of masonry walls and bays and roof forms, have not been lost.

This heritage, whilst not meeting the criteria for conservation area designation should not be lost and many people take great pride in restoring and enhancing original building features. This can be helped by understanding and explaining these building types. Better selective repairs can then result.

The National Planning Policy Framework update published in August 2026 places a much greater emphasis on Non-Designated Heritage Assets, now allowing an assessment of 'substantial harm' if this outweighs the public benefit of a development proposal.

The Hamlet Court area

The roads around the Hamlet Court Road high street date from the late Victorian period, with most being laid out on the early 20th century.

These include, from the north east, Burdett Avenue, St John's Road, St Helen's Road, Preston Road, Cossington Road and Canewdon Road. And from the north west, Ceylon Road, Argyll Road, Anerley Road and Ditton Court Road.

All of the roads display two storey, pitch roofed houses, detached, semi-detached and terraced.

For ease of understanding it is worth categorising the roads into the following quarters:

- The north-east quarter (Burdett Avenue, St John's Road & St Helen's Road)
- The south-east quarter (Preston Road, Cossington Road and Canewdon Road)
- The north-west quarter (Ceylon Road, Argyll Road & Anerley Road)
- The south-west quarter (Ditton court Road)

The North-East Quarter (Burdett Avenue, St John's Road & St Helen's Road)

The earliest of the roads to be developed was **St John's Road** and in fact this was the earliest road locally, laid out even before Hamlet Court Road. The 1895 Ordnance Survey shows that the road was laid out on both sides as a series of semi-detached villas, with large gardens. A short Victorian terrace is located at the south-west end of the road and a pair of Art Deco houses survives on the north side of the road. The large plots remained until the 1930's and the 1938 Ordnance Survey shows that most of the garden frontages were then developed with additional, infill houses. Many of the early Victorian villas can still be seen today with their recessed front doors, decoratively cut stone arched porches, bay windows and two upper windows. Originally all of the houses had slate roofs and decorative brickwork banding at the eaves. There has been considerable erosion of these properties, some removed altogether to give larger plots for infill of two larger properties. Invariably the 1930s infill properties were red brick and rendered estate type housing with large bay windows, hipped or gabled roofs and projecting oriel windows over the front doors. Inevitably, the new larger bay windows influenced the older properties and a number of the smaller Victorian bays were replaced with larger bay windows and roof changes. In places, some of the larger gardens became infilled later in the 60s, 70s and 80s, and there are a few, out of type bungalows. On the north side of the road the properties are set back a little further from the road, than on the south side. This appears to acknowledge the potential for small front gardens where sunlight allows. All of the properties have moderate sized rear gardens.

The road has suffered some loss of original, degradable fabric over the years, most notably timber windows and front doors.



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Burdett Avenue, by contrast is Edwardian from the early 1900s, with mainly terraced housing with occasional breaks for side alleyways, creating some end-of-terrace semi-detached properties. These properties retain much of their original form which include substantial square or angled bay windows with decorative cast stone window heads and mullions, some fluted, some with decorative capitals, gabled roofs with decorative barge boards, and decorative brick banding at the eaves. Originally all houses had slate roofs with decorative ridge tiles. Front doors are recessed within decorative porches with head and bracket stones and ornate over-panels with paired swan-neck and swag pediments. Clearly, these were influenced by similarly grand decorations on the buildings in Hamlet Court Road. All of the houses had its own name engraved into the porch head-stone, including 'Ivydene', 'Hiawatha', 'Walmer Lodge' and 'Leightonhurst'. The front gardens are very small and there is little evidence of original boundary walls which appear to be utilitarian walling where they do exist. All of the properties have very small rear, courtyard gardens.

As elsewhere the road has suffered some loss of original, degradable fabric over the years, most notably timber windows and front doors.



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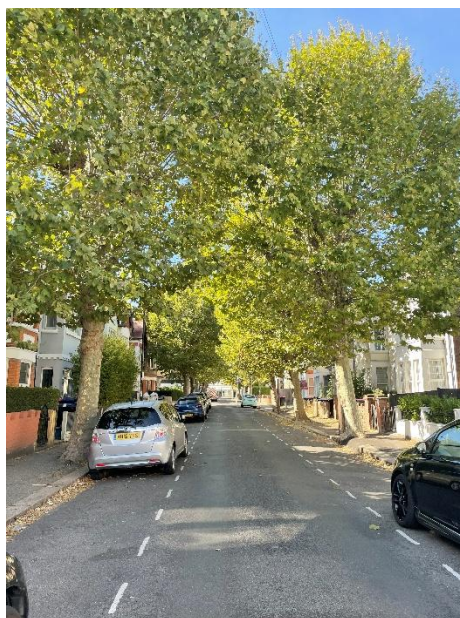


St Helen's Road also dates from the Edwardian early 1900s. Here the houses are generally semi-detached on slightly wider plots on the north side and terraced on the south side. The houses were originally mostly red brick (some yellow stock brick) with angled or square, brickwork or cast stone bays, and gabled roofs. Most of the houses have either painted or rendered over the brickwork and there is some pebble dashed render at first floor level. A few houses at the west end of the road retain their Arts & Crafts stylistic influence, such as the shallow arched porches with clay tile cat-slide roofs, tile hung gables and multi pane windows. Originally most properties had sliding sash windows and the bays have minimal decoration but different sections of the road have different details including mock keystones over the windows, small swag or geometric panels at first floor level. One pair of houses have castellated bays. Another small section of terraced houses have paired entrance porches with a classical or baroque revival column for central support. These small variations are typical of different buildings and developers expressing their own designs.

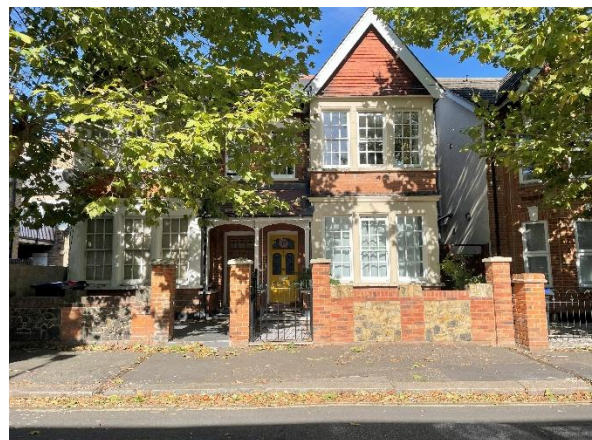
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The South-East Quarter (Preston Road, Cossington Road and Canewdon Road)

Preston Road is a road of larger scale than is found to the north and was laid down in the first years of the C20. The road contains a mix of mainly Edwardian detached and semi-detached, two storey houses with larger front and rear gardens and is also dominated by a mature avenue of London Plane trees. The typical historical construction in the road includes varying Edwardian designs but notably including hipped and gabled pitched clay tile roofs, often with decorative ridge tiles, barge boards and gable timbering or decorative plasterwork; chimney stacks; red brick or render (some pebble dashed) walls, some vertical clay tiling; bay windows, some cast stone window surrounds; arched windows and doorways; sliding sash and casement windows; ornamental balconies.

Most of the main original building fabric including walls, roofs, bays, window and door openings is intact. The road has suffered a lesser amount of loss of original degradable fabric over the years, including timber windows. A good number of original front doors and some other decorative features, such as barge boards and balcony rails, survive.

The road contains a number of notable properties as shown below.



42 Preston Road: Edwardian semi-detached with fine roof form and paired gables and bracketed bay windows and decorative balustraded porch canopy. Simple lunette dormer window (referencing DCR). Familiar Edwardian window design of multi-pane over single pane (albeit modern replacements)



35 Preston Road: Red brick and rendered early C20 Arts & Crafts house by Herbert Fuller-Clark with two storey decorative bay and multi-pane windows, echoing the former HSBC building in HCR



33 Preston Road: A double fronted Edwardian red brick villa with decorative bays and familiar multi-pane over single pane windows



30 Preston Road: An Edwardian semi-detached pair of highly decorated houses with elaborate and individual half-timbered gables and half hipped roofs, swept down over decorative balconies, bay windows, arched openings and numerous decorative features



23 Preston Road: A large Edwardian villa with half-timbered gabled bay exposed decorative rafter feet, balcony making canopied entrance. Brick pier boundary wall. This property is now renovated



21 Preston Road: A modest Edwardian villa with large half-timbered gable over bay windows and decorative arched entrance porch



5-7 Preston Road: Semi-detached pair of large houses with dormer windows and windows in half-timbered gable windows, bay windows, arched entrance porches with unusual angled windows above



Preston Road has one of the finest avenues of Edwardian trees in the city which makes an important contribution to the townscape merit of the road

Cossington Road is similar to Preston Road but the road does not contain as many quality Edwardian buildings nor the same landscape heritage. However, the road does contain a number of interesting Edwardian buildings which, as in Preston Road, are a mix of Edwardian detached and semi-detached, two storey houses, typical of the neighbourhood. Of the Edwardian buildings typical in the road are red brick, pebble dash render and vertical clay tiling; bay windows; some stone window surrounds; hipped and gabled clay tiled roofs with chimney stacks; half-timbered gable fronts; arched windows and doorways; sliding sash and casement windows; ornamental balconies, generally similar to Preston Road.

Most of the main original building fabric including building form, walls, roofs, bays, window and door openings is intact. Typically, some of the degradable fabric has been lost but these elements are recoverable and replaceable. The perishable elements include many of the window frames and roof finishes. A good number of original front doors and some other decorative features, such as balcony rails, survive.

A representative number of the houses are identified as follows:



32 Cossington Road: A detached corner property with a dominant corner facing bay and half-timbered gable. A second decorated gable elevates the flank which also has a decorative balcony and entry porch



26-24 Cossington Road: A semi-detached pair of Edwardian villas with centrally paired gables with bull's eye windows, full width balconies creating entrance porches and ground floor bay windows



7-9 Cossington Road: A dramatic pair of half-timbered detached Edwardian villas with heavy timber detailing and projecting first floor over bay windows and projecting second floor window, recalling timber framed vernacular. No. 7 is not in good repair but appears to retain it's original windows as multi Pane lights over casements



3 Cossington Road: A substantial red brick double fronted villa with square and angled bay windows to either side, a framed, arched and pediment entrance, balcony and decorated tripartite window above, all topped with a turreted outlook cupola



1 Cossington Road: A substantial red brick double fronted villa with identical twin bays with decorative gables including ornamental barge boards, bull's eye windows and insignia swags. Ornamental column entrance with segmental arch pediment and similarly decorated oriel window above

Canewdon Road generally comprises the end properties of Ditton Court Road, Preston Road and Cossington. Further east the same thing happens at Retreat and Hadleigh Roads. Some of these properties markedly respond to this condition with corner features including a circular bay window at Retreat Road, a corner facing bay and balconies at Cossington Road, and a corner turret at Preston Road and Ditton Court Road. Worth a special mention is the house at the NE corner of the Preston Road junction (see Preston Road above). Here a very elaborate Arts & Crafts house includes half timbered gables, bay windows, and at the corner the gable roof sweeps over a large open, decorative balcony. Much of the road is made up of fences and boundary walls to the rear gardens of these properties.

The exception is a terrace of houses on the raised north side of the road where they all have stepped approaches. The Edwardian houses all have brick and cast concrete bay windows with brick (some timbered) gables, with decorative barge boards. Over half of the range have sea facing balconies at first floor, some with decorative support columns. These properties are general similar to those in the surrounding roads, elsewhere described.

The North-West Quarter (Anerley Road; Argyll and Ceylon Roads)

Anerley Road contains mainly semi-detached (some terraced) two storey houses with squared, gabled bay windows and, where they survive, decorative gable timberwork. To the south side of the road the houses were constructed in three sections of 5, 13 and 7 houses with the middle 13 most decorative. Here most of the bays are decorated with rendered masonry or cast stone window surrounds including fluted classical revival pilasters with decorated capitals. These houses also have unusual oriel windows with circular columns, cornice and shaped apron brackets in the classical revival style. They also have decorated barge boards. Front doors are set to the side of the houses. The 5 houses have little decoration but squared bays, brick and cast stone window surrounds. The gables have decorative rendering and originally roofs would have been slate. Some decorative ridge tiles survive. Front doors are set to the front with three of the houses having entrance porches with tiled roofs supported by decorative timber ladder frames. The 7 houses are similar to the 5 but all have surviving vertical timber and render infill to the gables. Front doors are also set to the front but recessed and a few original front doors survive. In all cases the windows were originally sliding sash windows but only a few survive.

At the far west end of the road is a red brick house in the Queen Anne style.

To the north side of the road the houses are similar but less decorated with some fluting on the bay window surrounds. Front doors are set to the front and are recessed with some surviving original timber doors. At the eastern end there is one corner turret and some replacement tile hanging to the gables which likely reflects the original finish.

The front gardens are all quite large and this has afforded the opportunity of conversion to car parking spaces in most cases.



Argyll and Ceylon Roads are similar to each other with all houses being semi-detached on slightly wider plots than Anerley Road. Again, they follow the same pattern of two storey houses with gabled, square bay windows. The roads show groups of similar houses built by the same builder/developer with subtle difference between each group. Details include:

Gables

Differing render and timberwork infill designs, differing barge board designs

Bay windows

Differing window surround details, some highly decorative with classical or baroque revival styles

Entrance doors

All generally recessed but differing surround details in render and cast stone. Few original doors survive.

Again, the roofs would have all been slate originally, with decorative ridge tiles, and the windows would have been sliding sashes.

The front gardens are all quite large and this has afforded the opportunity of conversion to car parking spaces in most cases.

One major difference in the two roads is that Argyll Road has many large London Plane street trees whereas Ceylon Road has just one large tree.



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The South-West Quarter (Ditton Court Road)

Ditton Court Road

Ditton Court Road was laid down in the first years of the C20 although the grounds of Hamlet Court were not infilled until around 1938. This gives the road a mix of mainly Edwardian detached and semi-detached, two storey villas and a few later buildings, one reflecting the Arts & Crafts movement and others C20 Tudor Revival. Of the Edwardian buildings typical in the road are red brick, pebble dash render and vertical clay tiling; bay windows; some stone window surrounds; hipped and gabled clay tiled roofs with chimney stacks; half-timbered gable fronts; arched windows and doorways; sliding sash and casement windows; ornamental balconies. Some elements show clear echoes of HCR.

Only four properties in the road are not original. Two of these were created when a very fine house by H. Leon Cabuche of c.1902 was demolished in 2014. Although the two new properties are reasonably well designed this highlights the role that conservation designation can play.

Most of the main original building fabric including building form, walls, roofs, bays, window and door openings is intact. Typically, some of the degradable fabric has been lost but these elements are recoverable and replaceable, where such an approach is desirable to the building owner. Other local conservation areas have seen these elements slowly reinstated over time. The degradable elements include many of the window frames and roof finishes. A good number of original front doors and some other decorative features, such as balcony rails, survive.

A representative number of the houses are identified as follows:



8-10 Ditton Court Road: two semi-detached houses with original balconies and front doors



18 Ditton Court Road: a detached villa with emphasised arched entrance. Note repeat of door type to previous image



19 Ditton Court Road: two substantial semi-detached houses with embellished bay windows and arched doorways



30-26 Ditton Court Road: variation in Edwardian design illustrating the compatible individualism employed by differing building contractors. [38 by architect H. Leon Cabuche]



27 Ditton Court Road: a substantial house c.1938 recalling the Arts & Crafts of Voysey, Mackintosh, Lutyens and Baillie Scott



46 Ditton Court Road: an Edwardian bungalow with bay windows, lunette window and tapering chimney stacks



Corner of Ditton Court Road and Canewdon Road : a dramatic Edwardian corner turret building and a clear ascension of window hierarchy facing DCR



The building photographed in the early C20 with references to the corner turrets in Hamlet Court Road





Westcliff Towers 58-56 Ditton Court Road: an imposing semi-detached pair of Edwardian houses with multiple references to HCR including the corner turret, elaborate arched entrances, dormer windows, tripartite window hierarchy



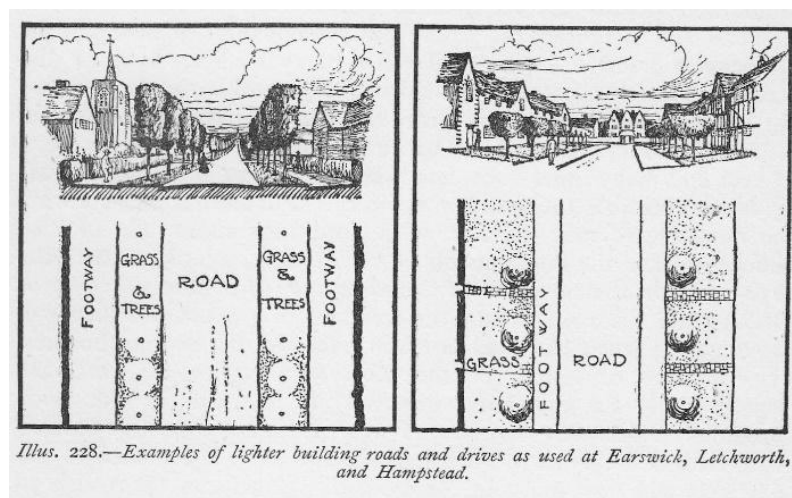
69/67 & 71/73 Ditton Court Road: Two of an impressive row of Edwardian houses built as maisonettes on the east side of the road with dominant bay and dormer windows, echoing others in the road

The Urban Landscaping

Ditton Court Road was laid out as the earliest known residential example of planted verges in Southend-on-Sea. This is very significant in the history of our town and this treatment pre-dates the Chalkwell, West Leigh and Thorpe Bay estates by some 30

years. The road was constructed c.1904 by Tapp Jones & Son and is very well documented in a series of photographs of the time (in itself significant). The planting is very particular with trees spaced very closely at $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 to the road width as opposed to the more usual urban tree spacing, approximately equal to the road width. This spacing suggests a raised hedge feature rather than the usual tree avenue. Post and chain edging was used. Today the planted verges survive together with a good number of the original *Ilex aquifolium* (Holly) trees.

At the early part of the C20 this treatment can be identified to Raymond Unwin and the Garden City Movement and although research has not yet established a direct connection this is most historically significant. This has been recognised by Dr M Miller, a leading international authority on the Garden City Movement (see Appendix A). These verges need to be protected and this is a major reason for the conservation designation of Ditton Court Road. Perhaps planting restoration might one day be possible and HCCF would certainly be willing to investigate the feasibility of such a project.



Extract from Unwin's 'Town Planning in Practice' showing, on the left, the close planting of a raised hedge, as used in Ditton Court Road and the surviving Holly trees





Ditton Court Road looking north from Canewdon Road. Note the post and chain edging widely used at Hampstead Garden Suburb



Ditton Court Road looking north east and showing the open site of Hamlet Court. Note the particularly close spacing of the trees



Ditton Court Road looking south showing the planting and post and chain edging



A further image of Ditton Court Road looking south