Shorefields Conservation Area

Shorefield's Special Interest

Shorefields is associated with the start of Southend's rapid growth as a seaside resort and residential centre between 1870 and 1900. During these decades, the national rise of holidays and day trip excursions and Southend's easy access from London by rail, and later by boat, made it increasingly popular as a resort and a residential centre. By the early twentieth century it had become the second largest resort in England.

The Shorefields estate was sold for piecemeal development as the resort expanded westwards from the earlier Cliff Town estate, along the top of the West Cliff.

The Conservation Area contains the resort's oldest surviving hotel - the Westcliff Hotel built in 1890. Demand for accommodation also encouraged residents to open their homes to visitors. Some of the housing development in Shorefields was designed for this dual purpose. The west side of Trinity Avenue, is a notable example and still retains Guest House uses.

Transitional Architectural Styles

Shorefields contains a variety of late Victorian architecture and materials. This results from the estates' subdivision into small development plots for speculative building and occupation by owners, and from the changing architectural fashions towards the end of the nineteenth century. Simply, this can be summarised as changing from yellow stock brick to red brick or render, from slate to red clay plane tiles and decorative ridges for roofing, from timber sliding sash windows to side hung casements and fanlights, from roof eaves to gable frontages. Trinity Avenue is a good example of the changing styles, the terrace on the west side being a notable example of the later architecture and having attractive detailing with, for instance, terracotta panels on the front elevation.

There are two notable exceptions. The Westcliff Hotel had a relatively plain classical symmetrical frontage with alternating decoration above window openings. 27 Westcliff Parade, on the corner of Trinity Avenue, was originally a substantial house in an Italianate design. Built in the 1880s, this type of design was fashionable throughout the nineteenth century but rarely used in Southend - note the projecting eaves and decoration.

Other architectural features contributing to the area's interest include the various balcony designs exploiting sea views, the variety of porch and doorway designs and various decorative detailing to individual frontages.

Shorefield's Setting

The Conservation Area has a fine setting overlooking the Cliffs and Estuary. Whilst making an attractive amenity for residents, it also provides a suitable context for Shorefields' Victorian architecture and a continuing reminder of its association with the resort's history. Although outside
the Conservation Area, the Cliffs include features, such as shelters and lighting, and planting that complement Shorefields' character.