The Leas Conservation Area

Historical Background

As Southend expanded westwards, Westcliff was developed as a new residential seaside resort. Much of the farmland close to the railway had been bought by one of the original railway developers, Brassey, in expectation of future development. Construction of Westcliff-on-Sea Station was subsidised by local developers and eventually opened in 1895. Development of the area between the railway and the seafront quickly followed, mainly with new houses and visitor accommodation over the next twenty years.

The Leas Conservation Area includes the most prominent part of this development facing and close to the seafront. Despite some subsequent redevelopment and alterations, the area retains much of the character of the original residential resort.

The area has a range of seaside architecture typical of the period which makes an attractive and visually lively setting for the seafront. Features contributing to this architectural interest include:

- Corner turrets
- Bays and gables
- Balconies with varied balustrade designs
- Period windows ranging from timber sliding sashes to "Georgian" style timber casement windows
- Individual detailing to buildings such as terracotta panels, stained glass fanlights and decorative timber to balconies, bays and porches.

Notable buildings include:

- Palmeira Mansions and the other contemporary buildings in Palmeira Avenue, built in 1901-2.
- Argyle House 1937, an imposing block of flats in the international style. It is on the local list.
- The sun shelter below Clifton Drive a typical design for the 1920s seaside resort.