Warrior Square Conservation Area

Warrior Square's Special Interest

Warrior Square is associated with the period of Southend's rapid growth towards the end of the nineteenth century. It is one of only two Victorian residential squares built in Southend (the other is Prittlewell Square).

The Warrior Square estate was formed from a 13 acre field at the corner of the High Street and Southchurch Road. The field was subdivided into plots and auctioned in 1881 for the speculative development of shops and houses. A private garden in the centre of the estate had already been "tastefully laid out with tennis and croquet lawns and planted with beds of flowers and ornamental shrubs" and was to be reserved for the use of the Square's future residents, on payment of an annual fee of one guinea.

This garden was probably intended to encourage the estate's development in a location which, at that time, was seen as a little distant from the town's main attraction, the seafront, and from other developing areas. The garden did not achieve this purpose, and despite other incentives, development was slow. It took twenty years before the Square was substantially completed by which time Southend's late Victorian development boom was well under way. Development here took place in 1896 (nos. 13-43) and 1901 (nos. 1-11).

The south and west sides of the original Square have been largely redeveloped and the houses on the east side are of a later period. The Conservation Area, therefore, is confined to the surviving Victorian terrace on the north side and the central gardens which are now in public use.

Example of a late Victorian Square

Speculative housing around a central private garden was a common form of development in many urban areas in the 18th and 19th centuries, but not Southend. Warrior Square is a very late example and its failure may have discouraged any further attempt in Southend.

Architectural Interest

The north side of the Square has not been greatly altered and presents an attractive façade of typical late Victorian terraced housing with appropriate detailing and materials. The houses were built in pairs with mirrored designs - central entrance doors, recessed porches and balconies over, on either side of which are two-storey bays. Consequently, the terrace has a good degree of design unity. But note the subtle variations in design. Houses in the older part of the terrace are grouped in fours with square or canted bays, gables or hipped roofs to the bays and with different window designs typical of this period. Detailing such as panelled entrance doors with tiled and leaded lights surrounds, decorative ridge tiles, fish scale slates to some of the bay roofs and balcony ironwork, also provide attractive features.

Setting and Townscape
The central garden and the mature street trees provide an attractive setting for the terrace and help give the area a relatively peaceful character in the busy town centre.