

*Designation Statement*

**Waterloo  
Conservation  
Area**



Spring 2000

# *The Waterloo Conservation Area*

## *Introduction*

The Waterloo Conservation Area is intended to conserve a small neighbourhood of Edwardian development at the gateway to the Alexandra Docks. The area is centred on the Waterloo Hotel, a major Edwardian public house and hotel on the corner of Watch House Parade and Alexandra Road. The area is characterised by commercial uses on the Alexandra Road frontage, with terraced residential development on the secondary frontage to Brunel Street. Throughout the area the dramatic silhouette of the Transporter Bridge dominates and sets a distinguished backdrop for this area steeped in Newport's rich maritime heritage.

## *Historic Background*

Pillgwenlly is named after the tidal creek which drained the marsh lands at the estuary of the Usk. Until the early nineteenth century the area remained undeveloped tidal mud flats. The development of wharfs on the lower reaches of the Usk was initiated by the construction of the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal at the close of the Eighteenth Century. The canal provided a conduit for the Iron, Coal and Lime produced in the Gwent valleys, which was exported from the banks of the Usk in Newport. The development of the Old Town Dock in the mid Nineteenth century to designs by the noteworthy engineer Charles Rennie, provided further impetus for the development of Pillgwenlly. The land surface was raised by the tipping of ballast which was purchased for reclamation. The area encompassed by this conservation area formed a discrete area of development which was dislocated from the urban development around Commercial and Dock Streets to the north.

This area of peripheral block development dates entirely from the early years of the twentieth century. However, it over lays an earlier phase of development from the first half of the nineteenth century whose street pattern survives to the present day. Alexandra Road was formerly known as Inkerman Street, after the battle of Inkerman

during the Crimean War (1854-1856). The area to the north of the conservation area was formerly brick fields where clay was quarried for the flourishing Potteries and brick manufacturing industry of Victorian Newport. Prior to the construction of the Alexandra Docks, the banks of the Usk adjacent to the conservation area were densely developed as wharfs. The Waterloo Hotel was doubtlessly named after the adjacent Wharf of the same name. An earlier public house stood on the site of the present hotel which was erected in 1904.

The Development of the Alexandra Docks following the enabling Act of 1865 (inaugurated 1875 and extended in 1893), must have revitalised this formerly peripheral area. The daily flows of dockers and related tradesmen through the main dock gates facing the Waterloo must have prompted a dramatic upturn in the fortunes of the neighbourhood. This is reflected in the renaming of the former Inkerman Street as Alexandra Road, acknowledging the importance of the Docks. For a brief period at the close of the Nineteenth century, the Alexandra Dock was the largest dock in the world. The opening of the Panama Canal brought about an increase in the size of premier ships in the global merchant fleet. The recently constructed Alexandra Dock was unable to cope with these vessels and the decline of Newport's Docks began.

The Waterloo conservation is significant since it is a lasting symbol of the zenith of Newport's strength as a port of global significance, during the closing years of the Nineteenth century. The confidence derived from this buoyant economy is manifested in the exuberance of the Waterloo Hotel, the finest surviving Edwardian public house in Wales.



## *Townscape Analysis*

The serpentine form of the Watch House Parade and Brunel Street frontages, contrasts with the straightness of Alexandra Road as it approaches the Dock gates. The southern edge of the conservation area is now divorced from the Docks and river frontage by Usk Way which cuts a swathe through the area formerly occupied by the Waterloo and Bryn Tirion wharves. The Usk Way provides an inhospitable corridor with a low environmental quality across the southern edge of the conservation area.

The Alexandra Road frontage is composed of terraced development, with a mixture of two and three stories in height. The street junctions are generally marked by more substantial landmark buildings of three stories. These include the West of England public house, 99-101 and 92-88 Alexandra Road. The Waterloo Hotel provides the most significant landmark feature with its dramatic terracotta 'peppercorn' clock tower and richly ornamented elevations.

Throughout the conservation area the Transporter Bridge provides a strong contextual reference point to the river Usk. The anchor wires leading the eye from Brunel Street across Usk Way to the river. The western corner of Brunel Street and Watch House Parade provides a weak frontage of low quality single storey sheds and galvanised palisade fencing. The western side of Brunel Street is poorly defined and exposes the rear elevations and yards of properties in Alexandra Road. The anchor blocks of the Transporter Bridge provide a powerful image with their blank elevations of coursed, rock faced Pennant stone.

## *Architectural Styles*

The area is dominated by buildings from the early Twentieth century employing a variety of debased Renaissance and Queen Anne styles. The dominant buildings within the area are all designed in a Queen Anne derived style with red brick work, Bath stone ashlar and dressings, projecting eaves with dentils/ modillions and small paned windows. The parade of shops on the south western corner of Alexandra Road establishes a strong rhythm with repeating segmental and gabled pediments. Each pediment with applied render strapwork. Throughout the conservation area paired sashes are used to enhance the division of elevations into repeating bays with added vertical emphasis. The West of England public House achieves this most successfully. The former Police Station, 103 Alexandra Road

(Alexandra House) uses contrasting red brickwork and contrasting ashlar banding to dramatic effect.

The Waterloo Hotel is essentially designed in the Edwardian freestyle. The ground floor is faced in yellow and green tile work suggestive of channelled rustication, above which is a deeply projecting ogee moulded fascia. The first and second stories are faced in red brickwork with terracotta window surrounds to the first floor only. The top floor windows have brick aprons, gauged brick arches with keystones set beneath a dentil moulded cornice. The roofscape is punctuated by red brick stacks with recessed panels in the Queen Anne style. The corner of the building has an exceptional cantilevered octagonal clock tower rising to four stories in height with pierced terracotta strapwork chamber to the top storey. The whole is set beneath a roof clad in fishscale clay tiling. The clock faces south to the docks serving to reinforce the historic dependency between the two.

The residential development in Brunel Street and Alexandra Road is composed of identical terraced housing. Each of two bays in width with a two storey canted bay set beneath a timbered oversailing gable, carried on timber brackets. Originally faced in red brickwork with Bath stone window surrounds, string courses and flat door hoods carried on corbels. These properties have suffered from the inappropriate application of dashed renders and masonry paint to dressed details. The removal of timber box sashes, panelled doors and slate roofing has served to disrupt the composition of each terrace.



## *Strengths & Weaknesses*

The majority of frontages within the conservation area retain later Victorian and Edwardian development of key and contextual significance to the special historic character of the conservation area. There is a serious

problem with the poor maintenance of buildings and inappropriate repair. There are a high number of buildings which lack a beneficial use or are under-used. This position is serving to exacerbate disrepair and vandalism. It is important that steps are taken to encourage investment in repairs and maintenance.

The strength of the conservation area is derived from the surviving architectural detail and coherent use of Edwardian design vocabulary. The conservation area has a historic significance to the town illustrating the growth of the port-related economy at the turn of the twentieth century. The conservation area includes buildings of considerable group value with the grade I listed Transporter Bridge, part of which lies within the conservation area. The richness of detail which gives the area its special character requires protection to prevent the erosion of local identity. The replacement of historic joinery (especially timber sashes and doors) by inferior substitutes together with the application of harsh renders to fine red brick work has served to damage both the aesthetic qualities and fabric itself of the building stock.

The poor environmental quality of Usk Way detracts from the amenities of the conservation area and consideration should be given to the potential for enhancement to soften this corridor and provide a legible boundary to the conservation area. The weakly defined western Brunel street frontage requires special consideration to screen the unsightly rear elevations of commercial properties in Alexandra Road.. The key building within the conservation area, the Waterloo Hotel requires extensive repair and it is essential that this important listed building is repaired and a viable new use found.

## ***National & Local Planning Policies***

Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy, First Revision sets out the broad policies of the National Assembly with regard to the historic environment. These themes are elaborated upon at Circular 61/96 which sets out in detail the statutory provisions of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in respect of the duties of the local planning authority. In addition, the circular provides a technical digest concerning specific aspects of building repair and alteration. The Council has produced supplementary planning guidance concerning the repair and alteration of historic buildings.

The Unitary Development Plan seeks to implement the broad themes set out within the Circular through clear and concise policies. The conservation policies within the plan represent an explicit statement of the expectations of the planning authority regarding management of the historic environment

## ***Key Considerations in the Waterloo Conservation Area***

- **Does the proposal respect the architectural form and detailing of the original building?**

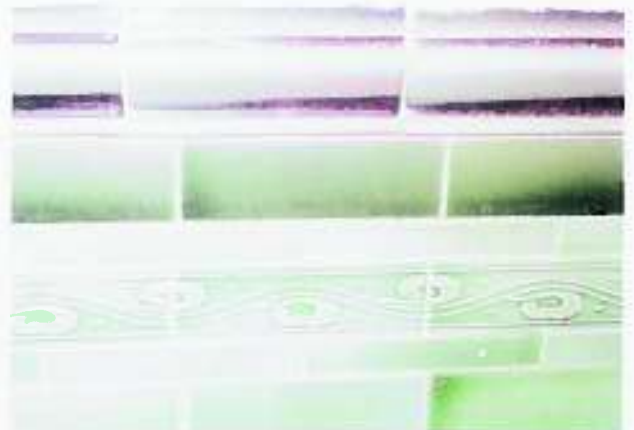
In terms of scale, articulation, massing, modelling, composition, materials.

- **Does the proposal intrude into or obstruct key views or vistas through the conservation area?**

The perception and enjoyment of the conservation area is derived from the specific way in which buildings frame space. New development can be used to reinforce existing character but if used inappropriately can significantly detract from the special historic character.

- **Does the proposal add to the vitality of the conservation area?**

For example by re-using an existing building or introducing a complimentary use. Uses which would conflict with existing neighbouring uses would serve to undermine the character of the conservation area. The demolition of traditional buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area will not normally be acceptable.



## *Schedule of Properties within the Waterloo Conservation Area*

**Alexandra Road** 88, 90, 92, 94, 96, 98, 100, 102, 104, 106, 108, 110, 112, 116, 99, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111

**Watch House Parade** 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 15, 42

**Brunel Street** 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20



## *Implications of Designation*

The conservation area designation provides statutory protection for the built heritage. The demolition of buildings requires the consent of the planning authority, allowing for proper consideration to be given to the implications of demolition and the underlying justification. The position regarding demolition is set out at Circular 1/98, which provides clarification concerning the scope of works which require consent.

The designation is an acknowledgement of the heritage merit of the locality and seeks to ensure that change is managed to protect and enhance local character. Proposals for new development will be required to preserve or enhance this special character. In addition, trees within the area also benefit from protection.

The designation of the area will enable applications for grant assistance for building repairs to be made to both the County Borough and Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments (an executive agency within the National Assembly) under the 1990 Act.



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Scale 1:1000

- Conservation Area Boundary
- ⋯ Key Frontage
- ⋯ Contextual Frontage
- ⋯ Discordant Frontage
- ★ Listed Building
- ↑ Key Views
- Landmark Building
- Opportunity Site

