Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan

SEAFRONT ____















This appraisal and mangement plan addresses the Seafront Character Area within the Great Weston Conservation



INTRODUCING THE SEAFRONT



The Seafront character area is defined by the long sweep of Weston Bay, extending from Royal Sands in the south to Birnbeck Pier in the north. It takes in all the buildings fronting Beach Road, Royal Parade, Knightstone Road and Birnbeck Road. The character area includes Knightstone Island, Marine Lake and Grand Pier.

The Seafront shares its boundary with adjacent character areas to the east. Buildings of special note include Birnbeck Pier, Claremont Crescent, the Royal Hotel and the Thatched Cottage Restaurant.

What is a conservation area?

A conservation area is "an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance" (Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

Great Weston Conservation Area

Weston-super-Mare is a special place with a strong architectural identity and a distinctive history. In 2018, a review of conservation areas in the town led to the merging of five former conservation areas into one single area.

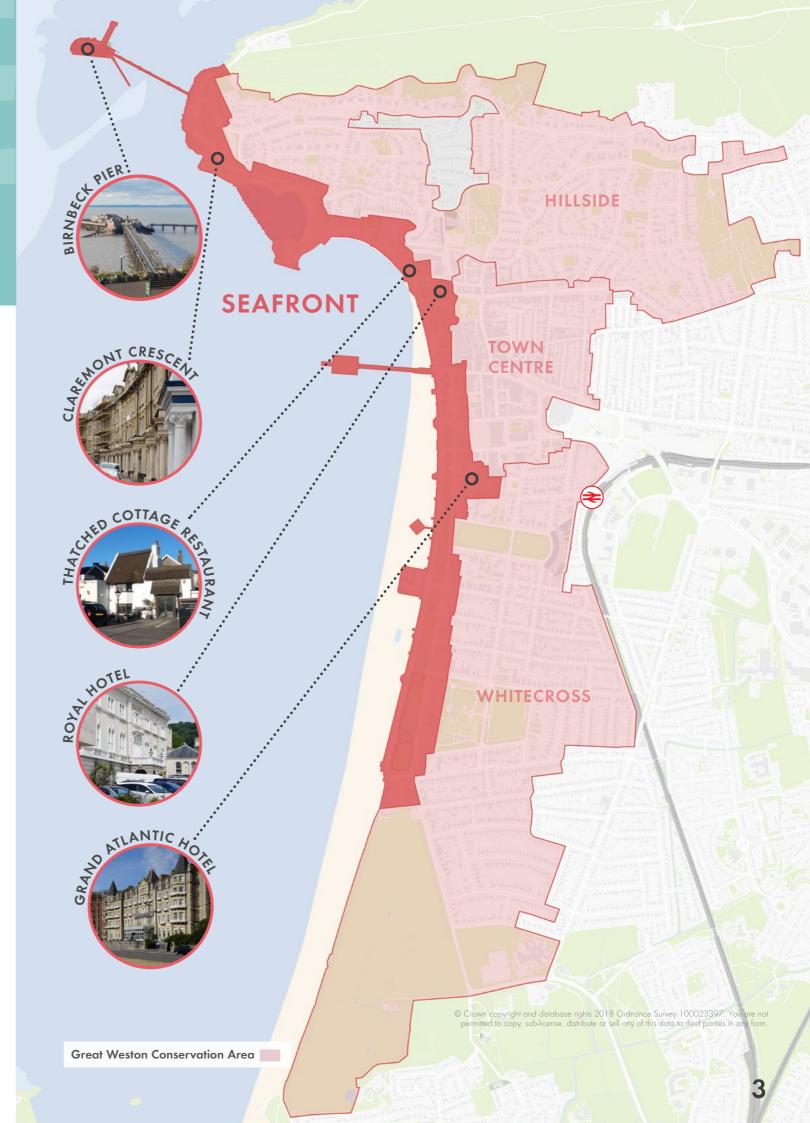
The new Great Weston
Conservation Area has been
divided into four character areas
to assist the understanding of what
makes the conservation area of
special interest, and provides a
basis from which change can be
positively managed. Each of the
four character areas has its own
appraisal and management plan.

How to use this document

This document is interactive, allowing on-screen readers to follow links to other documents.

The document is accompanied by an 'Introduction' document, giving an overview of the conservation area as a whole and an explanation of key terms. This can be found on the Council's website:

www.n-somerset.gov.uk/ my-services/planningbuilding-control/planning/ planning-advice/heritage/ conservation-areas/





2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SEAFRONT

1840



Only a few buildings are evident in 1840. Baths and lodgings were built on Knightstone Island in 1838.

1867



The Birnbeck Pier opened in 1867 and was the main attraction in the town. Further south, Ellenborough Park and Beach Lawns were laid out with large villas fronting the seafront.

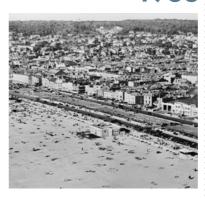
Photo ©National Archives

1888



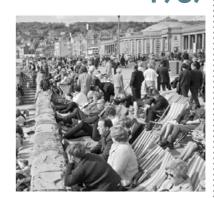
The 1888 map shows the rapid growth since 1840.

1933



Marine Parade in the 1930s ©Historic England

1967:



This photograph shows how busy the seafront was in the 1960s ©Weston Mercury

Today



The restoration of Grand
Pier, public realm investment
and new uses for Tropicana
have helped to rejuvenate the
seafront.

Beginnings



Weston began as a small farming and fishing village. From the 1750s, doctors recommended bathing in the sea for its health benefits, attracting people to Weston. The first hotel opened in July 1810.

1841



The arrival of the railway to Weston led to the rapid development of the town, as day visitors from Bristol and Bath increase. Birnbeck Road is laid out between 1841 and 1853.

Photo ©National Archives

1880s



The Sea Front Improvement
Scheme led to the creation
of the sea walls and
promenade and day visitor
numbers soared. Weston
was a fashionable seaside
resort. This photo shows
the pier and promenade
c. early 1900s ©National
Archives

Early 1900s



This photo shows the sands looking south from the Grand Pier, 1910 ©National Archives. Grand Pier opened in 1904 and Tropicana was a former open air pool which opened in 1927.

1943



By 1943, houses and hotels had been built the full length of Beach Road.

1970s



Like many seaside towns, Weston started to decline in popularity as foreign holidays become cheaper. Flats were built on the seafront.

4

3 SPECIAL **INTEREST**

The special historic interest of the character area is in the traces of the early town and in the expression of the various stages of growth of the 19th century resort.

The seafront today is characterised by the long sweep of Weston Bay, with hotels, residential homes and blocks of flats on Beach Road facing the Bristol Channel across the expanse of the lawns. From Marine Parade there are long views north, west and south. Travelling northwards beyond the Grand Pier the scale reduces, with smaller buildings and terraces coming closer to the esplanade and providing some containment.

Knightstone Island provides a vantage point across the bay to the town centre. The headland at Birnbeck Pier is craggier, less formal, with sinuous terraces responding to the topography. From their raised position Prince Consort Gardens offer views across the bay and to the islands and the South Wales coast.



Key characteristics of the Seafront character

- Seaward facing Victorian villas, stone terraces and Weston's earliest hotels:
- Formal Beach Lawns:
- Panoramic views across the bay and towards the town;
- Contrast between open and enclosed spaces, formal and informal spaces;
- Changing seasonal character, bustling with activity in the summer months;
- The enclave of Knightstone Island; and
- The contrasting form of the Birnbeck and Grand Piers.

The variation in building types and styles in the seafront area reflects two centuries of growth and change. The success of the town after the coming of the railway in 1841 prompted development inland from the seafront and south towards Uphill and also resulted in early renewal.

Examples include the Royal Hotel, opened in 1810 but refaced and substantially enlarged in 1849. Claremont Crescent dates from the 1860s on the site of the former Claremont House, built in 1816. The villas on Kewstoke Road in the Tudor Gothic style are representative of the picturesque qualities sought in the 1840s.

The piers and the promenade were the most obvious manifestations of the seaside resort, but the Beach Lawns, Winter Gardens and bathing areas were also a key part of the story. The development of Knightstone Island was a further chapter in the promotion of Weston.



Prince Consort Gardens were laid out at two levels in the 1860s in memory of Prince Albert. They overlook Birnbeck Island. The Grade II* Listed pier is now derelict but remains a major landmark.



A small promenade of sorts was laid down in the 1820s and substantially remodelled in the 1880s. The current promenade was repayed and a secondary wall was installed as part of flood protection measures in 2007-10.



Knightstone Island is historically important as an early focus for development in the new resort, from the 1820s onwards. Formerly used as a medicinal bath house with accompanying reading room and lodgings.



Beach Lawns were created as part of the 1880s sea wall and esplanade. They opened to the public in 1910. Their generous dimensions provide the foreground for long views towards the town centre, or out to sea.



The terraces and hillside are seen to advantage from Knightstone Island. This photograph shows layers of Weston's seaward facing Victorian

Materials and features

Materials and features contribute to the essence of a place. They range from road signs to architectural detailing to paving style.



Gothic ornament



Seafront shelter



Bath stone and classical ornament



Regency detail



Sea walls



Stucco



Stone boundary



Rockery and beaches



Decorative stonework



Street pattern following the landscape



Sash windows



Views to the headland at Brean Down and the two islands of Steep Holm and Flat Holm are an important asset of the seafront.



Claremont Crescent (1865-7) with its facades of limestone ashlar faces inland onto the winding Birnbeck Road, giving the area a more intimate character in contrast with the openness of the promenade and Beach Lawns.

Listed buildings

Listed buildings are buildings of special architectural or historic interest. There are several in the character area, and range from formal groups to seafront pavilions and a Victorian fountain. Birnbeck Pier is Grade II* Listed and its associated buildings are Grade II Listed. The other Grade II Listed buildings are:

- Westcliff Villas (No.2-10 Upper Kewstoke Road)
- 1 South Road
- Claremont Crescent (No. 1-19)
- Dr Fox's Bathhouse and Cafe on Knightstone
- Former Knightstone Theatre
- Swimming Baths on Knightstone Island
- Sunningdale, 20 Knightstone Road
- 18 Knightstone Road
- The Thatched Cottage Restaurant, 14 Knightstone Road
- Royal Terrace, 1-13 Knightstone Road
- The Royal Hotel
- Beach Lawn with Coalbrookdale Fountain
- Three sea-front pavilions, Marine Parade
- Cafe, shop and public lavatories, Marine
- Former Chapel of the Royal Hospital, Uphill Road North
- Grand Pier





Coalbrookdale fountain



Former chapel of Royal Hospital







Westcliff Villas







Claremont Crescent

Royal Hotel







18 Knightstone Road







Knightstone Island



Royal Sands

Rest of Great Weston Conservation Area

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Grade II* Listed (only Birnbeck Pier)

Grade II Listed



OVERALL HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY RATING



Level of historic and architectural integrity

HIGH Upper Kewstoke Road (100%) Birkett Road (88%) **Knightstone Road (64%)** Manilla Crescent (64%) LOW Sirnbeck Road south (58%)

Assessing condition

The 'historic and architectural integrity rating' has been calculated using results from a street-by-street assessment of key issues affecting the condition of the conservation area. The assessment looked at 16 elements, for example 'loss of historic features on buildings', 'loss of front gardens to hard standing' and 'general maintenance of land / buildings'.

For every street, each element was rated from 0-4, 0 meaning it is not an issue and 4 meaning it is a significant issue that should be addressed. The scores across elements were totalled for each street; the higher the number, the greater the loss of intactness. A percentage was given to each street and inverted to show its historic and architectural integrity rating; the higher the percentage, the greater the integrity of the street. The overall rating above is an average of all streets in the character area.

The street-by-street assessment has been adapted from the Civic Voice Conservation Area Audit which is a method for assessing the condition of a conservation area at a point in time. It is intended as a simple framework to gain a snapshot of the key issues and has been used to inform the development of an action plan for the whole conservation area to help address these issues.

4 CURRENT CONDITION

The condition of the Seafront has been assessed using the results of a streetby-street survey that identified positive and negative features and stakeholder consultation. Using the findings from the survey, a level of integrity has been assigned to each sub-area that summarises its current condition.

Positive features

Marine Parade

- Historic north-south route connecting Uphill with Weston town centre:
- Beach Lawns is a fine example of a late Victorian esplanade garden and the main contributor to the spacious seafront character:
- · Good examples of Victorian detached and paired villas fronting the lawns; and
- The Grand Pier and beach activities make this area vibrant in the summer





Integrity - 79%

Knightstone

- Smaller scale Victorian buildings and terraces close to the Esplanade which are largely intact and showcase a classic form of architecture;
- Knightstone Island is a mix of modern and historic fabric dating back to 1832. The island provides a vantage point with views south across the bay, and north to the town centre with Worlebury Hill / Weston Woods as a backdrop;
- The promenade is a key public space with recently improved simple lighting and durable paving; and
- The beach at Marine Lake is lively with residents and visitors alike in the summer months



Integrity - 74%

Birnbeck Road

- Rising slope towards Birnbeck Pier which is less formal, with terraces curving in response to the topography;
- Prince Consort Gardens offers views across the bay and gives an open setting for the Gothic villas at Westcliff;
- The stretch of Birnbeck Road with Claremont Crescent has an enclosed and winding character, with glimpses of the sea along alleyways down to Anchor Head;
- Birnbeck Pier is Grade II* listed, built in 1867, the dominant feature in the sub-area; and
- Strong group value of the terraces.



Negative features

Marine Parade

- Poor quality development fronting Beach Lawns which disrupts the area's Victorian character e.g. Carlton Mansions and Etonhurst:
- Loss of historic features on buildings; and
- Unsympathetic alterations and extensions to historic buildings to provide hotel accommodation along Beach Road.

Knightstone

- Large houses converted to flats has resulted in the loss of historic features on buildings;
- Unsympathetic alterations and extensions to historic buildings to provide hotel accommodation along Birnbeck Road;
- Poor maintenance and use of inappropriate materials on historic buildings;
- Oversized and uncoordinated signage on fronts of buildings and shopfronts;
- Knightstone Road can feel traffic dominated at
- Off-street parking in front of hotels particularly at Manilla Crescent; and
- Some instances of overscaled development.

Birnbeck Road

- Loss of historic features, including original windows and doors:
- Poor extensions, most notably the roof extension at Claremont Crescent;
- Poor maintenance and deterioration of stonework, particularly at rear of Claremont Crescent and Birnbeck Road terrace:
- · Boundary treatments lost along Birnbeck Road;
- Hoardings and poor bin storage at Birnbeck Road detract from its prominent seafront location - historically this was a centre of activity and location of Royal Pier Hotel;
- Traffic is dominant and pavements are narrow along Birnbeck Road / Claremont Crescent; and
- Ruined stated of Birnbeck Pier.







Marine Parade sub-area



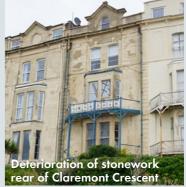






Knightstone sub-area







Birnbeck Road sub-area





5 VIEWS, LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACE

Weston-super-Mare's setting of coastline and hills provides impressive views into and out of the conservation area. The map opposite shows the open spaces, key views, listed buildings and landmarks in the seafront area.

Landscape and open spaces

- Beach Lawns is a series of late Victorian public lawns, sheltered by the rockeries, a stone walled bank topped with shrubs that is an integral part of the sea defences. The lawns are divided by roads into several sections. They are of historic interest and provide the spacious setting of Marine Parade;
- Prince Consort Gardens is a peaceful landscaped public space that provides an open setting for the listed buildings at Westcliff on Upper Kewstoke Road;
- The seafront promenade is the largest public space and contributes to the quality and distinctiveness of the conservation area. The sea provides a changing character at low and high tides;
- Worlebury Hill / Weston Woods provides an impressive backdrop to views out of the character area to the north;
- Water Adventure Play Park is a popular attraction for families and a breathing space adjacent to the car park and promenade; and
- The garden at Madeira Cove, a unique community space at the end of the promenade.









Views and vantage points

Views of the sea and across the bay can be experienced not only from the seafront, but also from glimpses down roads and between buildings in adjacent parts of the conservation area. Further north, the Prince Consort Gardens gives panoramic views of the Severn Estuary, as well as Birnbeck Pier. The entire conservation area can be viewed from Knightstone Island, looking north towards Worlebury Hill / Weston Woods, east towards the Town Centre and south along Beach Lawns. Beach Lawns can be seen in southern views from Royal Parade. Birnbeck Pier, whilst no longer publicly accessible, once afforded fine views towards the town and across the bay.

Trees

There are few trees in the character area due to its coastal exposure, but the trees of Worlebury Hill / Weston Woods provide a green backdrop in views from the seafront and Knightstone Island.

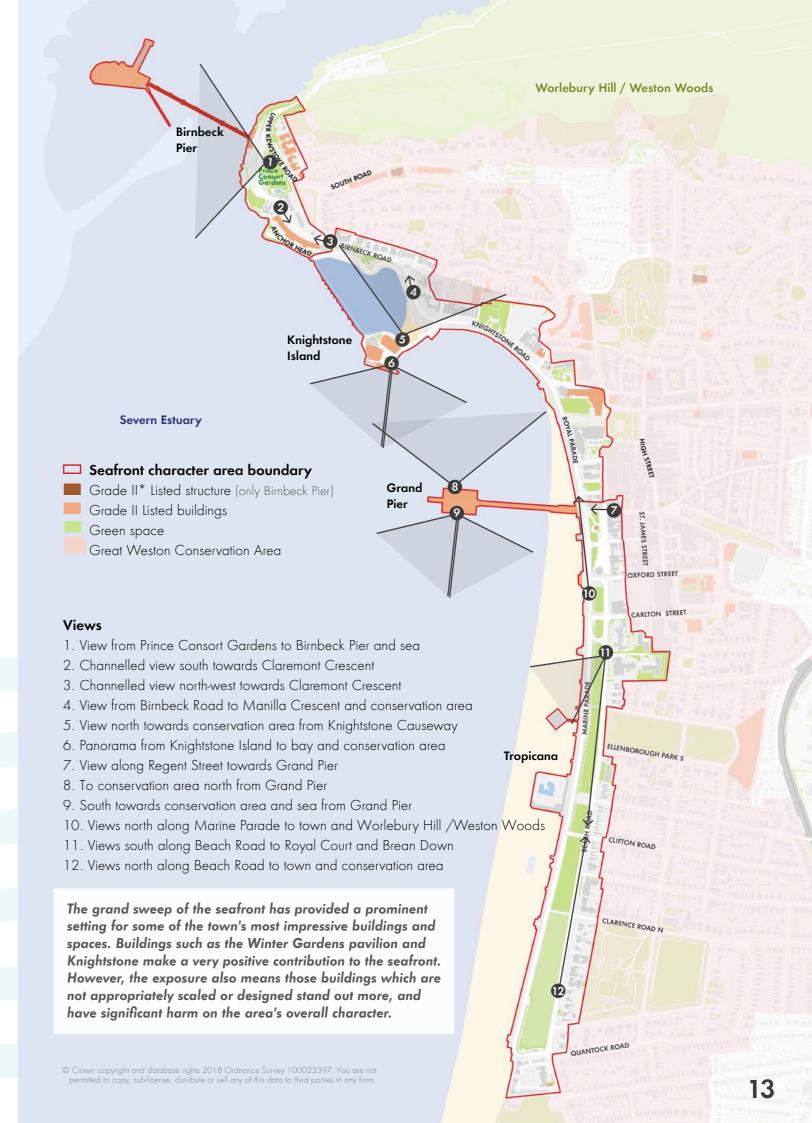










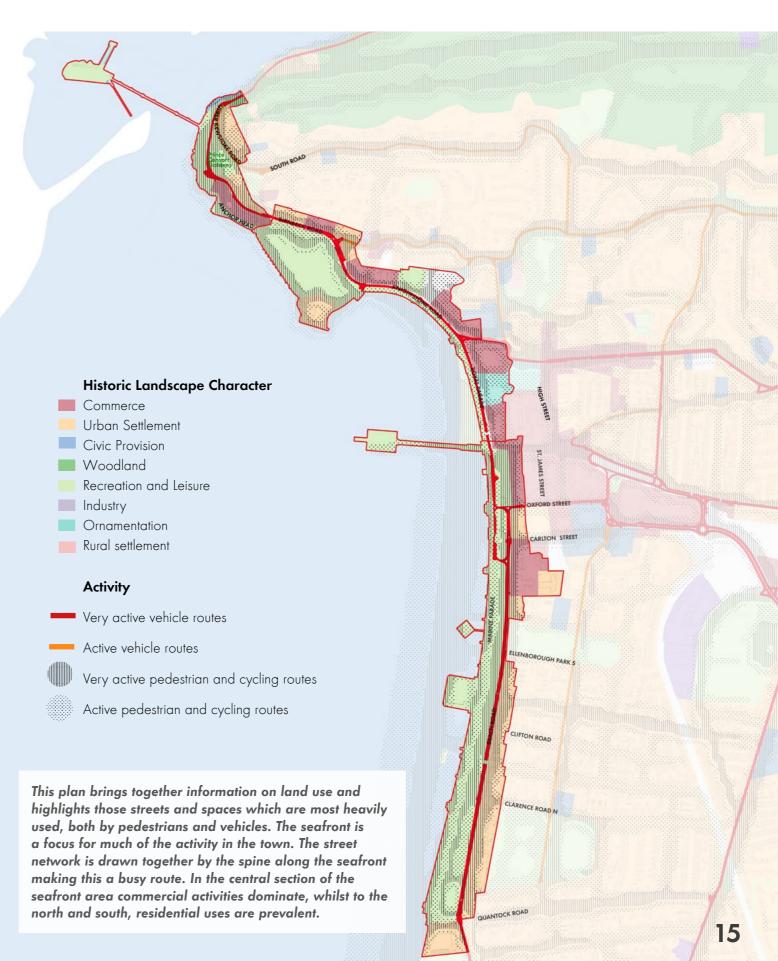




6 CHARACTER CONTRIBUTIONS AND STREET INTEGRITY

This plan shows buildings that contribute very positively or very negatively to the character area. The plan also shows the 'integrity rating' for each street, described on page 10. Roads which are shaded red are those which need significant attention. Character contributions Grade II* Listed structure (only Birnbeck Pier) Grade II Listed buildings ■ Very positive buildings Negative buildings Strong group value Overall street integrity Streets are shaded High Medium Low Green space Great Weston Conservation Area © Crown copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100023397. You are not permitted to copy, sub-license, distribute or sell any of this data to third parties in any form. 14

7 USES AND ACTIVITY







BUILDINGS

Inappropriate alterations and extensions

Many of the properties in the seafront area have seen the introduction of poorly designed extensions.



BUILDINGS

Insensitive new development

A number of modern developments have not been sensitive to the character and setting of the seafront area, including large blocks of flats developed over the last 50 years, as well as more recent commercial properties such as hotels.



STREETS, SPACES & ACTIVITY

Seaside town offer challenge over what is appropriate

A variety of commercial uses along the seafront are aimed at tourists. The quality of shopfronts and advertising can be overassertive.



Seafront which are summarised here.

BUILDINGS

Loss of historic features

Many buildings have lost their traditional features such as sash windows for replacement uPVC windows. Front doors and gables are also at risk.



NEGLECT AND VACANCY

Poor maintenance of buildings

There are a number of examples across the seafront area where buildings are not well maintained and outward showings of decay and disrepair are having a negative impact on the streetscape.



BUILDINGS

Loss of boundary treatments

The loss of front garden walls is harming the character of the area.

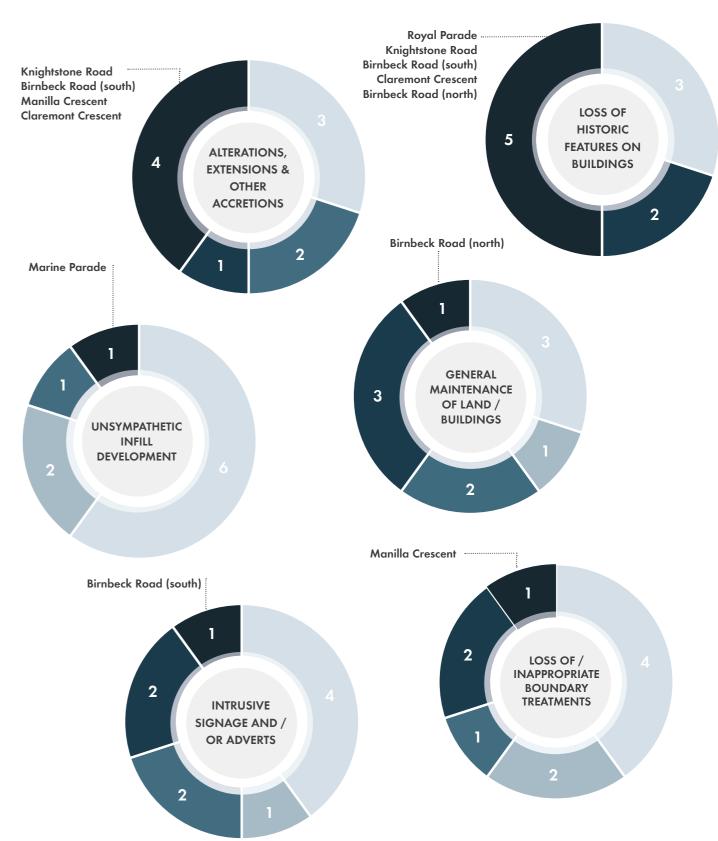


Evidence of issues

These graphs show the distribution of results from the street-by-street survey (found in the Appendix) for the most prevalent issues facing the Seafront character area. The numbers on the charts correspond to number of streets.



- 0 No examples, not an issue
- 1 Minimal, not really an issue
- 2 Some, issue could be monitored
- 3 Moderate issue needs monitoring
- 4 Significant serious and requires action



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9 PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING CHANGE



Overarching principles

A series of principles have been established to steer management across the whole of the Great Weston Conservation Area.

These principles cover the following topics:

- **Context and setting** ensuring all proposed interventions demonstrate a clear and informed understanding of the wider context and special character of the Conservation Area, and that the area's distinctive topography and important views are fully recognised and used to inform change.
- **Streets** each street should be considered as a whole entity and any changes should take account of their effect on the whole street.
- Public spaces and movement an understanding of the existing public space assets of the Conservation Area should be the starting point as they are part of the area's special character, with opportunities to enhance public space and the way the wider public realm is used taken at every opportunity.
- **Buildings** opportunities to restore and revitalise historic buildings or reinstate architectural features should be maximised. Any new development must enhance the character and quality of the street.

Character Area Objectives

The special character and key features of the Seafront are detailed earlier in this document.

The Seafront represents an important area of focus for improvement and enhancement. This management plan sets out some of the main priorities for the Seafront, informed by the following area-wide objectives:









- To restore the sense of grandeur and composition of the Seafront through restoring tired buildings and spaces.
- To respect the special space the bay, beach and lawns create and ensure this open quality is maintained for generations to come.
- To recognise that the natural assets require balanced management to maintain and to encourage the sustainability of the seafront
- To breathe new life into the spaces along the seafront exploring future enhancement to the Beach Lawns and the future role of the hard spaces along Marine Parade.
- · To address insensitive additions, in particular to buildings fronting on to the seafront.
- To address the loss of boundary walls.
- · To ensure that the grand sweep of the seafront develops in a positive manner.

Important attributes

These street sections identify many of the key attributes evident at the Seafront today which interventions need to respect.

RESPECTING 10 CHARACTER

Respect the predominant Preserve Retain stone Maintain the Preserve views to Retain materials of Weston Stone architectural boundary walls and from the sea spacious and gaps details such and gateposts with Bath stone dressings between green sea front along roads in and encourage character of Whitecross properties as ornamental gables and cast the reinstatement Beach Lawns iron railings of front gardens

Marine Parade sub area

Inappropriate front extensions harm the Victorian seaside character

Maintain the group value of the buildings by respecting the scale and form of the Victorian architecture

|Seek to prevent | Prevent future off-street unsympathetic car parking and protect stone boundary architectural walls integrity of the

roof extensions hillside that harm the

Preserve the Preserve views of the architectural details such as balconies, doors and sash windows

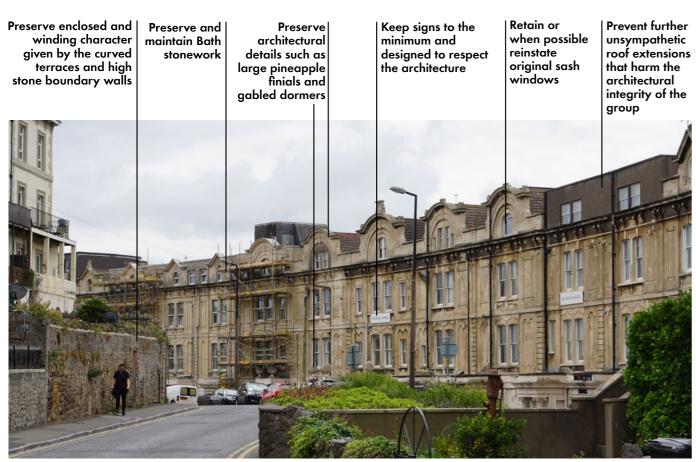


Knightstone sub area

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APPENDIX

Street-by-street assessment



Birnbeck Road sub area

Key

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- 4 Significant serious and requires action

The street-by-street assessment has been adapted from the Civic Voice Conservation Area Audit which is a method for assessing the condition of a conservation area at a point in time. A link to the Civic Voice audit can be found here:

www.bigconservationconversation.com/conservation-audit

SEAFRONT CA ISSUES '18	Marine Parade		Kn	ightstone		Birnbeck Road						
Road name> Issue	Marine Parade	Royal Parade and Victoria Square	Knightstone Road	Knightstone Island	Birnbeck Road (south)	Manilla Crescent	Claremont Crescent	Birnbeck Road (north)	Brikett Road	Upper Kewstoke Road	lssue tol	tal %
Historic character												
Loss of historic features on buildings e.g. UPVC windows Alterations, extensions and other	3	4	4	0	4	3	4	4	0	0	26 23	19 16
accretions												
Unsympathetic infill development	4	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8	6
Loss of/inappropriate boundary treatments e.g. front garden walls Neglect and decay	2	1	0	0	3	4	1	3	0	0	14	10
Vacant/derelict land or buildings	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
General maintenance of land/buildings	1	2	3	0	3	2	3	4	0	0	18	13
Graffiti, vandalism or anti-social behaviour	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bin storage and/or fly-tipping	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	2
Litter on streets	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Public realm												
Inappropriate car parking	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	9	6
Poor quality and consistency of highway / footpath surfaces	0	0	1	0	2	1	1	1	3	0	9	6
Street clutter	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Intrusive signage and / or advertisements	0	3	3	0	4	1	2	0	2	0	15	11
Inappropriate shopfronts and / or roller shutters	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
Landscape and green spaces												
Poor maintenance of public open spaces	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Loss of front gardens to hardstanding	0	0	1	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	9	6
Loss of trees	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other issues											140	
2												
TOTAL SCORE	17	12	22	•	27		15	14				
TOTAL SCORE TOTAL POSSIBLE SCORE - 68	17	13	23	0	27	23	15	14	8	0		
TOTAL SCORE % (n/68*100)	26.6	20.3	35.9	0.0	42.2	35.9	23.4	21.9	12.5	0.0		
HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL												
INTEGRITY RATING (inverted Score %)	73.4	79.7	64.1	100.0	57.8	64.1	76.6	78.1	87.5	100.0		
AVERAGE FOR SUB-AREA (%) AVERAGE FOR SEAFRONT (%)	73.4			73.1	78.1			85.	5			

Benchmark

High street integrity = 80% and over

Medium = 61-79% Low = 60% and lower

