

## **Connaught Rd Conservation Area Description**

The Connaught Rd conservation area extends east-west from Cross Rd to Verne Rd and includes Connaught and Down Rds.

Most properties along Buxton Rd and in Connaught Rd are of the same buff brick with brick or stone dressings around windows and doors as at Blackdown House. This suggests that they are contemporary with Blackdown House (built circa 1871). There is a common architectural theme to the semi-detached villas of arched heads or Gothic style windows on the first floor.

The Down Rd villas are of a slightly later Victorian date and are built of red brick with stone dressings around doors and windows. An important feature of these buildings are the stone capped, stepped gables that face the road, and which are complemented by the attached, attractive glasshouses that have ornate bargeboards and gables that also face the road. The majority of these original glasshouses have been retained much as constructed.

The red brick Thornlow Preparatory School dates later again and has an architecturally and visually strong double gable with large decorative bay windows.

In Connaught road many houses retain their original sash windows. The windows respond to their host building's architecture which results in slightly differing designs and details. The windows are an important feature in the street scene. Many of the villas have retained their chimneys and pots. These functional structures are varied in design and act as visual "pinnacles" that complete the architectural composition of individual buildings and contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area.

A strong linear feature in Connaught and Down Rds are the buff and red brick walls at the back edge of the footway. These walls retain their brick piers and capstones at entrances. The trees in the footway along Connaught Rd help delineate and enclose the road, particularly when in full leaf.

The semi-detached villas along Buxton Rd are 2½ storeys. Original dormer windows being small with segmental roofs. An important feature of the street frontages are the ground floor verandahs with cast iron columns, originally with lead or zinc roofs. Windows would have been vertical, sliding sashes. On the ground floor, original windows and doors are still evident. The buildings individually and as a group retain many of their Victorian characteristics and architecturally and historically are a link between Blackdown House and Connaught Rd.

## Weymouth and Portland Borough Council

The walls and fences to the front of the buildings adjoining Buxton Rd are a mix of stone, brick, render and wood, which detract from the visual cohesiveness of the buildings and would benefit from environmental improvements.

Blackdown House, originally Claylands, was occupied by the Weymouth bank manager, Edward Bayly, until 1905, after which, it was bought by the local brewing family, the Groves. It was acquired by the NHS in 1948. This house is the most important building in the conservation area and is a good local example of a mid Victorian 'gentleman's residence'. The exterior of the property is little changed from the original with the exception of the loss of the chimneys, a modern conservatory on the south elevation and a first floor fire escape on the north elevation. Although the rear gardens have been developed, the House still sits in its own grounds to the west and south. The House also retains its coach house and stables with many of the original internal fixtures and fittings.

The stone walls and piers surrounding Blackdown House are an important contributor to the appearance and character of the conservation area, as is the setting of the building itself within its grounds/gardens.

The prominent Elsadene is another architecturally well-proportioned, late Victorian or early Edwardian building at the junction of Buxton Road and Verne Road. Adjoining Elsadene is a row of Chestnut trees in the verge of the footway. The trees are of significant townscape importance. To the west of Elsadene is a modern bungalow and St Nicholas Church, a modern building of somewhat utilitarian design.

The Connaught Rd conservation area contains a group of Victorian buildings of similar design and materials with subtle differences in architectural detail, much of which remains. In this context, the area is of special architectural and historic interest in the development of Weymouth.