

12 Oram's Arbour The Western Suburb

12.1 Historical development

Oram's Arbour is the only visible element of the large Iron Age enclosure that predated the Roman occupation in Winchester.

The railway, built in 1838-40, has become a defining feature of the west of the City and was a catalyst for its westward growth. The line it follows is much older, forming part of Iron Age, Roman and medieval defences. Also, the line of the Roman road to Old Sarum (Salisbury) survives today as the Romsey Road. Clifton Terrace was built during the 1840s at the railway crossing point of the Romsey Road, and marks the entrance to the distinctive mid-19th century residential district extending up the hill. Also at this time, the West Hill cemetery was created on the slopes to the south. The Hampshire Police Headquarters first located on this hill in 1850, and the hospital moved from the City to its current location in 1868. Today, the area has maintained its residential character, although traffic levels along Romsey Road have grown significantly.

12.2 Building uses

Close to the railway line, the area is predominantly residential, with a few small offices. Further out from the City along the Romsey Road and outside the Conservation Area boundary are three major institutions—the Royal Hampshire County Hospital (photo 2), the Hampshire Police Headquarters and Winchester Prison. To the south of the 19th century suburb is West Hill cemetery, and beyond it, King Alfred's College.

12.3 Building character

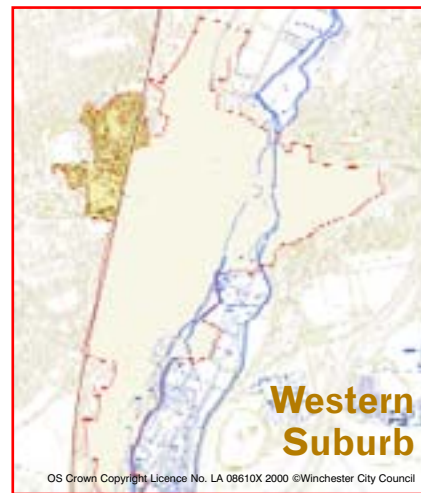
Clifton Terrace is a defining element of the area, being one of the first major developments west of the railway line (photo 3). Its commanding height and formality is accentuated by the rise of the hill, and its curved southern end forms part of a sustained sequence of landmarks rising from the Westgate. It is a 4-storey, yellow-brick terrace with stone window details and sash windows. Clifton Terrace is unusual in being finished in a Bath stone façade, quite unlike anything else in Winchester. To the south of Romsey Road, St James' Terrace is a quieter, more secluded development, where the terraced houses are less formal and consistent. There is a variety of colour and roof details, and the buildings step up as the hill rises. On Clifton Terrace and St James' Terrace, the additions to the roof profile and unbroken roof lines where they exist have been largely sympathetic. Clifton House, by Owen B Carter, is exceptional with its buff terracotta Egyptian frieze.

West End Terrace, falling down the hill to the north-west of the suburb, contains many attractive houses, with flint-and-brick walls and front gardens. In general, the area differs from the eastern suburb in the larger scale of many buildings, such as Bankside House, and the buildings associated with King Alfred's College. The round brick chimney of the former hospital to the north of Oram's Arbour is a distinctive feature of the park.










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-  Local Centres
-  Negative or neutral feature
-  Main routes
-  Other important routes
-  Pedestrian links

Top: 19th century plan
Bottom: Urban Structure

12.4 Public realm

The two most significant areas of open space are the historic open space above Clifton Terrace, and West Hill cemetery (photo 4) to the south. Oram's Arbour is defined by the trees fronting Clifton Hill, the line of stepped terraced houses to the north, and by trees to the south and east, which tend to obscure general views out over the City. It is a pleasant, gently-sloping park used as a pedestrian walking route and for informal recreation and public events like the annual Hat Fair.

There is a noticeable hierarchy of pedestrian routes. The restrictions of the steep hillside have led to Clifton Road and West End Terrace being connected by a narrow pedestrian path, with winding steps down to Elm Road. St James' Terrace is a very special street along the side of the railway, due to its narrow scale, the colours and smells of its plants and the occasional roar of a train. West Hill cemetery is well used, sometimes in conjunction with St James' Terrace, as a pedestrian route from King Alfred's College to the city centre.

12.5 Natural features and topography

The hills in this area add significantly to the quality of the townscape along many roads. In Romsey Road, the change in level gives the 3-storey buildings the same presence as skyscrapers. Further north, the slope of West End Terrace combines with the bend of the road to create a picturesque winding route on the hillside.

The trees on the thickly wooded railway embankment are a key element of the area's character, as they emphasise the line of the railway, helping pedestrians to orient themselves relative to the City. At the top of the hill, the beech wood has great value in long views from across the City, and local importance in that it obscures the tower of the Police Headquarters building.

12.6 Neutral and negative features

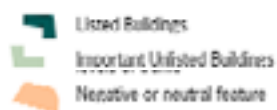
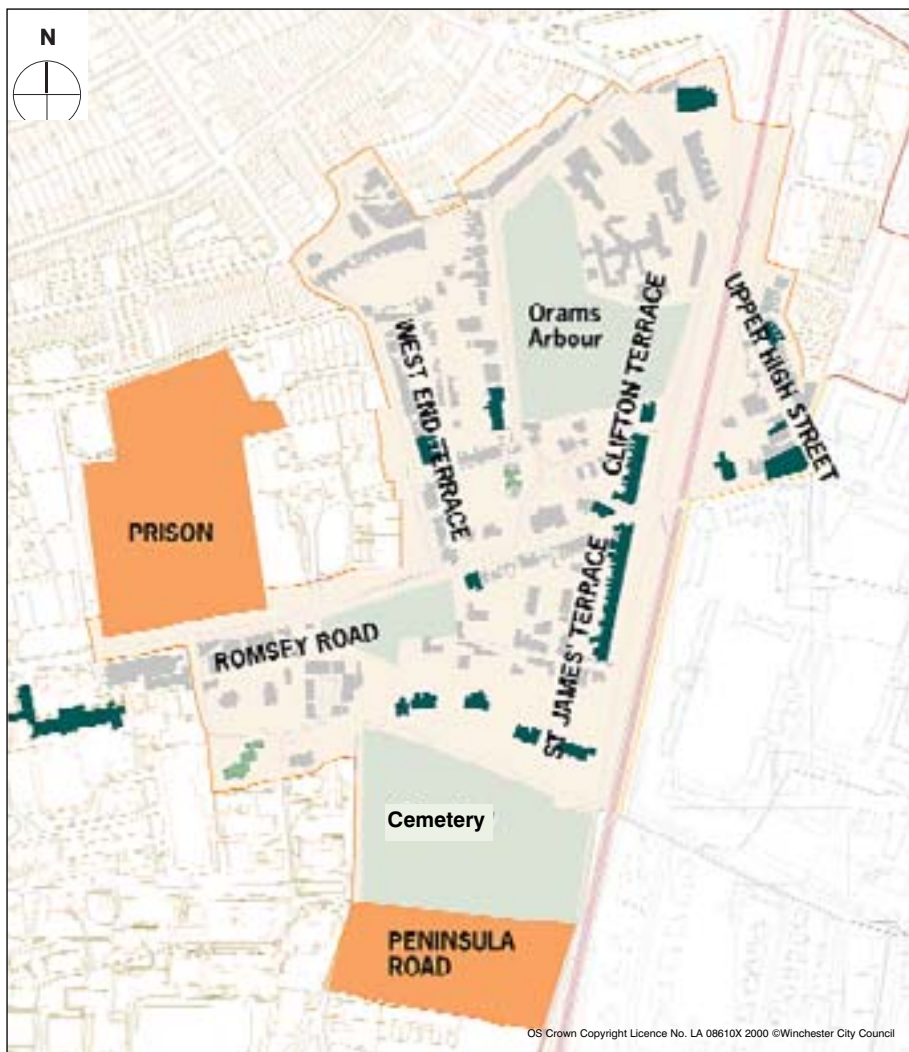
While the original buildings of the Royal Hampshire County Hospital are of high quality brick construction, many of the more recent outbuildings are mundane and cluttered. To the north of the road, the Hampshire Police headquarters tower is visible for miles around due to its hill-top location. It detracts materially from the quality of the skyline with its huge bulk and dreary appearance. The noise of the railway is a distraction and annoyance, but the suburb could be said to owe its existence to the trains, and they remain a characteristic of the area. South of the cemetery, the Conservation Area extends to include Peninsula Road and Erskine Road—a collection of unremarkable suburban homes and sparse landscaping (photo 5).

12.7 Potential for enhancement

If the opportunity arose to redevelop the Royal Hampshire Hospital, a new masterplan could seek to resolve the visual clutter which surrounds the central building. It could also aim to improve the design quality and legibility of the site as a whole, and take advantage of its situation on a south-facing slope. For example, the roof-top car park of the southern block should be replaced with a roof garden, to allow patients to take advantage of the spectacular views across the valley. If the Police Headquarters were to be rebuilt or re-located, a new design could seek to be a less dominant feature of the City's skyline.

The Conservation Area boundary confers an unwarranted protection on some areas such as Peninsula Road/Erskine Road areas, whereas other areas to the north could benefit from Conservation Area status (photo 10).





Left: Environmental Assets