

There is some pressure to relax the planning policies that have ensured that development in the past three decades has fitted to fit into the scale and intricacy of the historic city. There are several recent buildings of 10-12 stories, and the current proposal by Broadway Malayan for the Anglia Centre site includes 1250 residential units and a 25-storey tower. However, because the area is large, major redevelopment does not, so far, appear to threaten the supply of premises suitable for creative industries. A greater- if more distant- peril would arise if the erosion of the city's historic character as a result of major redevelopments led to a change in the perception of Norwich as an attractive, desirable location for small businesses.

3.7 RAMSGATE CONSERVATION AREA

3.7.1 LOCATION, ORIGINS AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

Ramsgate Conservation Area covers much of the historic town of Ramsgate. It extends to 12.2 km² and is the largest conservation area in Kent. It contains 333 listed buildings of which several are listed grade I or II*. The local authority is Thanet District Council, which also covers the nearby towns of Margate and Broadstairs and their rural hinterland. The council has not prepared a local list or formally identified unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the area, but a substantial number of those predating 1914 would probably fall into the latter category.

In the medieval period, Ramsgate was a limb (i.e. branch) of the Cinque Port of Sandwich, but it was essentially a fishing village until the 16th and 17th centuries. In 1749, a new stone pier was built so that the harbour was accessible at all states of tide and could serve the merchant and naval fleets as a 'Port of Refuge', subsequently becoming a 'Royal Harbour'. By the end of the 18th century it developed as one of the first English sea-bathing resorts, and was developed with numerous terraces of houses, Assembly Rooms and baths; although it still had a large fishing fleet.

The Royal Harbour with its breakwater and associated buildings, is the defining visual and historic architectural feature of the town. The principal commercial and residential streets occupy the shallow valley that surrounds the harbour. The residential core is comprised mainly of 18th and early 19th century terraced housing. Outside this, are extensive areas of 19th and early 20th century development. Grade I listed buildings include the group comprising The Grange, St Augustine's Church, cloister and presbytery, designed for himself by the greatest of English gothic revival architect, AWN Pugin, a romantic recreation of what he saw as the medieval ideal of a Christian community; and the early 19th century church of St George. The Royal Harbour is listed Grade II*.

Much of the 19th century townscape survives and, apart from a few intrusive modern exceptions, the town preserves its historic scale of 3-4-storey terraces, with ground floor shops in the main streets.

3.7.2 POST-1945 CHANGES

Ramsgate suffered much less bomb damage than nearby Margate, for example, but, as with other English seaside towns, it suffered a significant economic decline as the domestic holiday industry was replaced by the popularity of foreign holidays. A number of initiatives to regenerate the local economy have been made.

Several unsuccessful attempts to reintroduce cross-channel ferries led to a massive industrial site (the modern 'Port of Ramsgate') being developed on reclaimed land to the west of the Royal Harbour.

