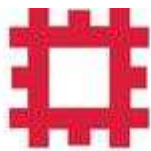




**HERITAGE STATEMENT IN  
SUPPORT OF A LISTED  
BUILDING CONSENT AND  
PLANNING APPLICATION  
CONCERNING THE SWISS  
COTTAGE QUARTER,  
OSBORNE HOUSE**

**DECEMBER 2012**



**ENGLISH HERITAGE**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

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# HERITAGE STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF A LISTED BUILDING CONSENT AND PLANNING APPLICATION CONCERNING THE SWISS COTTAGE QUARTER, OSBORNE HOUSE

## INTRODUCTION

As part of its remit to enable visitors to enjoy, understand and value the historic properties in its care, English Heritage intends to enhance the Swiss Cottage Quarter by improving access, installing new interpretation and providing new visitor facilities. These proposals will involve carrying out work to designated and non-designated heritage assets, and are subject to receiving planning permission and listed building consent.

Paragraph 128 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning applications associated with heritage assets should be supported by a description of the significance of the assets concerned. Similarly, English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* requires that proposals for alterations to a heritage asset should be supported by sufficient information to allow assessment of any impacts on the significance of the heritage asset. This Heritage Statement draws together information regarding the history of the Swiss Cottage Quarter, provides an assessment of its significance and offers an evaluation of the impacts associated with the proposed project on the heritage values of the site.

This document takes into account online guidance provided by the Isle of Wight Council on the required content of heritage statements ([http://www.iwight.com/living\\_here/conservation\\_and\\_design/Heritage\\_Statements/](http://www.iwight.com/living_here/conservation_and_design/Heritage_Statements/)).

## **PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE HERITAGE ASSET**

This section of the document indicates which parts of the Swiss Cottage Quarter are designated heritage assets, then sets out an overview of the site's historical development and provides an assessment of the site's heritage values.

### **Designations and Historic Environment Record**

The following designations apply to the Swiss Cottage Quarter:

- The Swiss Cottage is listed at grade II
- The Swiss Cottage Museum is listed at grade II
- The Tool Shed is listed at grade II
- Victoria Fort and Albert Barracks are listed at grade II
- The Swiss Cottage Quarter is a component part of the Osborne House estate, which is entered on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens at Grade II\* (list entry number 1000929 (Parks & Gardens UID 1926))

A search has been made of the HER database for recorded assets and findspots within a 3 mile radius of Osborne House (NGR SZ 51592 94802). Apart from records associated with the existing built structures there is nothing specific to the Swiss Cottage Quarter contained on the database. (Understanding of the historical development of the site is discussed below and the assessment of the site's heritage values in section 2 takes into account the HER information.)

### **Historical Development of the Swiss Cottage Quarter**

As it exists today, the Swiss Cottage Quarter is primarily a creation of the 19th century, overseen by Prince Albert after Queen Victoria purchased the Osborne estate in 1845.

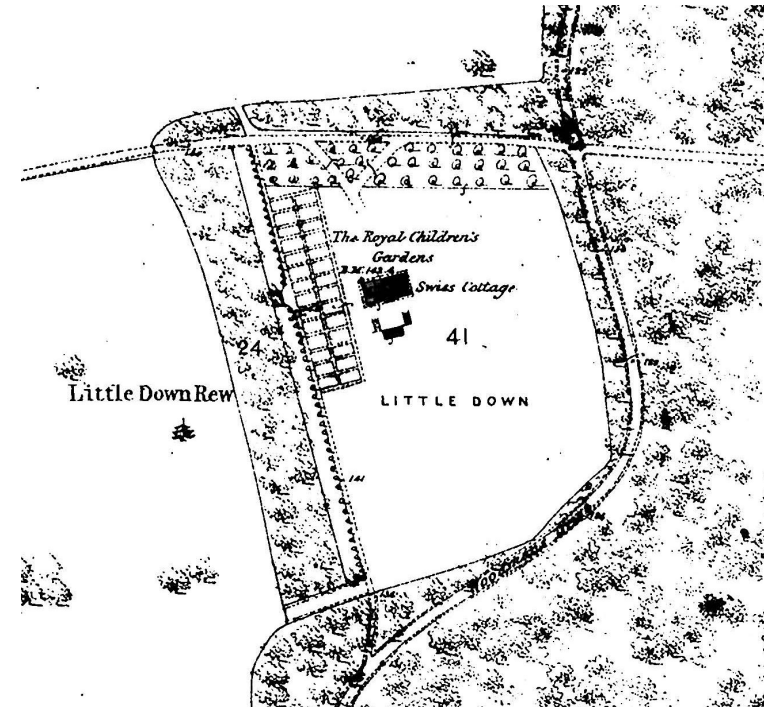
A flint core found to the northeast of Osborne Bay, Neolithic finds to the west of the Osborne estate and a Roman coin hoard in Barton Wood provide evidence of early activity in the general area. More substantial finds, such as the evidence for pottery trading sites at

Fishbourne beach, show that areas of the coastal zone on the north side of the Isle of Wight were exploited from an early age. To date, however, no evidence of such use has been encountered within the Swiss Cottage Quarter or within the wider Osborne estate. The medieval use of the site is little understood. Osborne lies in the parish of Whippingham, a manor which had a church by the time of the Domesday survey. The site occupied by Barton Manor contained a moated site and Augustinian priory. However, there is nothing to suggest, either archaeologically or historically, that the Swiss Cottage Quarter was the focus of activity during the medieval or early modern periods.

In c.1774-81, Robert Pope Blachford rebuilt the early modern Osborne House. Although the parkland setting of the Blachford house was radically altered by Prince Albert following the acquisition of the Osborne estate by Queen Victoria in 1845, the Whippingham tithe map of 1841 provides an indication of the layout of the Swiss Cottage Quarter immediately before its acquisition by Queen Victoria. The tithe map shows the woodland clearing called Little Down where the Swiss Cottage was to be built, together with a shelter belt of trees on its west and north sides, identified as 'Littledown Rew'.

In October 1850 the pre-existing woodland clearing at Little Down was given over to their children by Victoria and Albert for use as gardens. Each child was given a plot in which to grow soft fruit and vegetables, which they then sold to their father at market rate as part of Prince Albert's plan to educate his children in the practicalities of household economy. A thatched tool shed was built in 1857 on the west side of the gardens to house the gardening tools used by the royal children.

In 1853 work began on the Swiss Cottage, a two-storey timber building which emulated a Swiss-style log-built chalet, following a vogue for Swiss style chalets which had been widespread in the first half of the 19th century. Although traditionally regarded as an importation from Switzerland, analysis of Osborne's Swiss Cottage suggests otherwise. It was designed in imperial measurements (25ft x 50ft) and metal ties were employed rather than relying on the structural use of the timber. Timber analysis has revealed that the logs were either *Pinus cembra* (Siberian yellow pine) or,



Detail from the 1854 OS survey



more probably, *Pinus strobus*, a long-leafed pine found in North America. It is possible that the building was prefabricated in England and re-erected at Osborne by local carpenters. The Alpine conceit extended to weighing down the roof with large rocks, a feature which can be seen in drawings, paintings and photographs of the building before the 1930s. Some of the royal children were involved with the construction of the cottage; in time all would use it as a place of recreation and education.

On the ground floor fully working  $\frac{3}{4}$ -size kitchen equipment allowed the children to learn how to cook, and meals prepared by the children for their parents were regularly eaten in the rooms on the first floor. As well as allowing the children firsthand experience of domestic economy, the Swiss Cottage also housed their museum on the first floor, a collection of natural and historical curiosities either collected by the children or given to them as gifts.



Photograph of the Swiss Cottage, north elevation, pre 1934.

By the time Prince Albert died in 1861 the collection had outgrown the confines of the room in which it was housed. A new purpose-built museum was constructed after Albert's death, in 1862. It was built on a plot southeast of the Swiss Cottage and was a single-storey timber-framed structure with slate roof, again built in the Swiss chalet style but with a less elaborate external decoration than the Swiss Cottage. Glass cases housed the children's collection within, which continued to grow as the queen's grandchildren sent objects for inclusion in it.

To the south of the Swiss Cottage a miniature fort, consisting of earth ramparts and brick-built barracks, was constructed between 1856 and 1860. Again, the elder princes helped with its construction. Sham battles would be fought on the fort by the children. West of the fort was a shed for housing animals, known as the Gazelle House. This was rebuilt in 1872.

With the major exceptions of the Museum and the Gazelle House, the Swiss Cottage Quarter was maintained for the rest of Victoria's life very much as Prince Albert had known it before his death in 1861. This was not simply a consequence of

the queen's wish to memorialise Albert but also appears to have reflected a strong nostalgia on the part of their children. The gardens were a favoured venue for the planting of commemorative trees by the royal family, with family events marked in this way. Documentary evidence shows that Victoria used the Swiss Cottage Quarter for the rest of her reign. She enjoyed taking tea on the lawn in the gardens which offered shelter from wind and observation due to the trees surrounding it. She also used the rooms on the first floor of the Swiss Cottage as an extra-mural office, transacting her correspondence there.



*The Swiss Cottage Museum*



*North-east corner of Victoria Fort showing Albert Barracks*

Following Queen Victoria's death in January 1901, regular royal use of Osborne House ceased and in 1902 Edward VIII gifted the house to the nation as a memorial to the late queen, the transfer being enshrined in the Osborne Estate Act of 1902. Under the provisions of the act, the Swiss Cottage Museum and the gardens (but not the Swiss Cottage itself) were opened to visitors in May 1904. Visitors to the museum in 1904 would have seen its collection displayed in the same manner as it had been prior to Queen Victoria's death. In 1915, however, the museum was closed for several months while the display was reorganised by Sir Guy Laking, the leading museologist of his generation. Laking also rearranged the objects and furnishings in the Swiss Cottage, which was opened to visitors for the first time in 1916. Laking's re-presentation of the Swiss Cottage changed its character somewhat, with what had become an adult-orientated first-floor now presented to reflect its appearance during the childhood of Queen Victoria's children.

The next major alteration to the Swiss Cottage Quarter occurred as a consequence of a visit by Queen Mary in August 1932 and demonstrated the interest of the king and queen in what would now be termed the conservation management of the Swiss Cottage. The queen noted water staining in the Swiss Cottage and as a result of raising her concerns with the Office of Works a large-scale project was undertaken to the roof of the cottage and to decaying timber on the north-east corner and southern elevations of the building. The large stones were removed from the roof at this stage, as they were perceived to be contributing to its failure.

Repairs to the stairs and balcony of the cottage occurred in 1974-77. These were followed by a major conservation exercise undertaken in 1990 by English Heritage. Large areas of decayed external baulk timber were replaced, mostly with eastern white pine or pitch pine; the area of greatest replacement was on the west elevation. The roof was completely overhauled, receiving new sarking boards, a new monarfol roofing felt, a ventilated eave and ridge and new stained Douglas Fir planks. Internally, the building was redecorated following extensive paint analysis. The balconies also required extensive timber renewal.

In 1998 the exterior of the Swiss Cottage was redecorated. At a currently unknown date in the 20th century a bituminous covering containing black tar had been applied to the exterior. This was removed using sponge blasting and replaced with *Sadolin Superdec* acrylic wood stain in walnut, which was regarded as a close match to the burnt umber used in the 19th century. (A small section of earlier paint survived beneath the date plaque, providing a reference against which the modern colour could be measured. The colour was described as red-brown and appeared similar to linseed oil.)

Complementing the redecoration of the Swiss Cottage, the royal children's gardens were restored in the 1990s. The original plan of the children's plots had been lost before World War II. It was decided to restore the gardens to their 1862 appearance. The multiple memorial



plantings which had occurred later in Queen Victoria's reign had resulted in trees planted too close to each other to allow them to mature healthily and most had either failed or been taken out long before the 1990s. The royal children's Tool Shed was re-thatched in 2003.

### **The cultural significance of the Swiss Cottage Quarter**

The cultural significance of the Swiss Cottage Quarter has been analysed using the family of heritage values (evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal) identified in English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* and noted in paragraph 19 of the PPS5 practice guide. The following assessment has been taken from the Swiss Cottage Quarter Conservation Management Plan.

#### **Evidential value of the Swiss Cottage Quarter**      *(Moderate significance)*

The structures of the Swiss Cottage Quarter have varying potential to inform about their inherent construction techniques, their development and their historic function. The Swiss Cottage was subject to conservation on several occasions during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, not all of which was well-documented. As a consequence, the evidential value of the building in particular has been eroded, especially with regard to its exterior, where replacement of timber and successive surface treatments can be expected to have resulted in significant loss of evidence associated with Victorian treatments. Nevertheless, the timber analysis and paint research undertaken in the 1990s demonstrates that even this building has the potential to respond to investigation and analysis, and that such analysis can question previously held orthodoxies (such as the Swiss Cottage being an import form Switzerland). Conversely, the lack of documented intrusive works to the Museum, Tool Shed and Gazelle House suggests that they enjoy a greater potential for evidential value, although in terms of intrinsic interest and research objectives the Tool Shed and Gazelle House might be considered to be of a lower order. Archaeological evidence associated with the existing Gazelle House's predecessor may survive below ground, although it is likely that construction of the present structure obliterated most traces of the earlier building.

Having been continuously worked on since the 1850s, the gardens at the Swiss Cottage Quarter are very unlikely to possess any potential for using archaeological investigation to develop further understanding of their Victorian use. The surviving historic trees may retain in their form evidence of historic horticultural treatments. They also represent a living link with the Victorian royal family and represent their intentions for the future of the Swiss Cottage Quarter.

The collections held in the Swiss Cottage and in the Museum (over 4000 objects in the latter) have the potential to reveal information about their use by the Victorian royal family and also, in the case of the museum exhibits, about their historic function and their conservation treatment from the 1850s to the present.

### **Historical value of the Swiss Cottage Quarter**      *(Exceptional significance)*

The Swiss Cottage Quarter is of exceptional historical value due to its close association with Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and their children and grandchildren. Nowhere else at Osborne enjoys the same degree of direct artifactual association with the royal family, for here three of the structures (the Tool Shed, the Swiss Cottage and the Fort) were built with the documented assistance of some of the princes, many of the trees planted by the royal family survive and the collections in the Swiss Cottage and the Museum were used and collected by the royal children.

The Swiss Cottage Quarter epitomises the private life of the royal family at Osborne. It vividly expresses the educational vision of Prince Albert, who sought to provide his children with an education which was practical as well as intellectual. This is illustrated by the combination of gardening, animal husbandry, collecting of historic and natural historic artefacts, honing of domestic skills and military-based playing which occurred here. With its well-preserved interiors and collections, the Swiss Cottage and its contents present an intimate experience of the physical environment in which the royal children's recreational and educational activities took place (albeit viewed through the prism of Sir Guy Laking's re-presentation of 1915-16. The significance of the place for the children is illustrated by the prince of Wales's comment that the construction of the Swiss Cottage was "the most important thing that happened" during 1853 and by the continuing interest shown in the Swiss Cottage Quarter by the children as adults and parents. The Swiss Cottage itself is a derivative building, following rather than establishing a contemporary fashion for emulating Alpine architecture.

Similarly the Museum represents the success of Prince Albert's aspirations for his children. Constructed in the year following his death, the Museum housed a collection which continued to grow during the second half of the 19th century as his children, and subsequently his grandchildren, continued to add to it. Recent research suggesting that parts of Prince Albert's own childhood collection entered the Swiss Museum in 1863 underscores the personal association with the Prince Consort. In addition, the collection benefited from gifts made to the queen and her children, an indication of the special status of its owner. Its global range reflects Great Britain's imperial experience at a time when she was the predominant power of the age, while the fact that many of the objects were collected or received by members of the royal

family during visits abroad illustrates the personal role played by the queen's family in representing the Crown throughout and beyond the empire.

The current arrangement of objects in the Museum (and in the Swiss Cottage) is due to Sir Guy Laking's reorganisation of 1915-16. Laking was arguably the greatest museologist of his generation. Honorary inspector of the armouries at the Wallace Collection and keeper of the king's armoury at Windsor (a post made specially for him by Edward VII), Laking was the first keeper and secretary of the London Museum and was responsible for forming its collection from scratch and arranging it in Lancaster House, its first home. In its organisation, Laking's scheme reflects contemporary museology, has survived with little alteration and is of intrinsic interest.

More importantly, the location of the collection within the buildings designed to house it enhances the significance of both elements as an entity. At the Swiss Cottage Quarter visitors can see the collection in its historic setting, which helps to contextualise it, and similarly the collection helps visitors to understand the purpose and use of the buildings. Each element would suffer if dislocation of collection and buildings were to occur.

While the central role of the Swiss Cottage Quarter in the lives of the royal children is critical to its historical value, it should be noted that the Swiss Cottage Quarter continued to serve Queen Victoria as a private space into the final decade of her reign, with the Swiss Cottage functioning as an office outside the main house at Osborne. It therefore illustrates aspects of the queen's domestic arrangements while staying at Osborne.

The gardens of the Swiss Cottage provide a living link with the Victorian royal family. Memorial trees and plantings, commemorating the pivotal events in the lives of the queen and her family and planted by them, are therefore of exceptional associative value. The Royal Children's Gardens do not enjoy the same high associative value as they are the result of restoration, but they are of considerable illustrative value on account of the accuracy of the restoration and because they illustrate the life of the royal family at Osborne, in the provision of an area to learn and play in realistic surroundings. The layout of the beds and the divisions for the individual children reflect Prince Albert's intention to teach his children the rudiments of household economy. The gardens provide an authentic, historically accurate context and setting for the Swiss Cottage and the other historic buildings.

### **Aesthetic value of the Swiss Cottage Quarter**      *(Moderate significance)*

Considered as a single unit, the Swiss Cottage Quarter displays little evidence of formal design value. Instead its character is the result of the combination of structures and areas associated with the various educational and recreational pursuits of the royal children. Gardens, structures and earthworks mingle together in a space defined on its south, west and north sides by tree cover. The trees occlude views into and out of the Swiss Cottage Quarter, and therefore contribute to its sense of seclusion, of being a place set apart. This was already the case before the royal children's gardens were established here and the separateness of the site may have inspired Prince Albert's adoption of it as the location for the children's area. Within the Swiss Cottage Quarter there are clear views across the Royal Children's Gardens. The Museum is hidden in views from the Royal Children's Garden due to its lower location and the growth of trees to its west. Visibility of the cover over the Alberta Deckhouse in views south along the western footpath of the gardens is an intrusive feature.

The individual buildings are generally modest and of little architectural value. The exception is the Swiss Cottage, which due to its size and location, dominates the north-east corner of the Swiss Cottage Quarter. The exterior is decorated with robust carving: primarily decorative friezes with geometric shapes at mid-height, friezes with text in gothic script above the first floor windows at the gable ends, and carved brackets supporting the deep eaves of the roof, and carved brackets and balustrade on the gallery. The external decoration of the Museum employs a similar approach, albeit on a reduced scale; here also the interior presents carved timber in the tie beams, struts and purlins supporting the roof. In contrast to the light rooms within the cottage, the Museum's interior is dark partly due to the requirements of conservation of the objects but also a consequence of its design using a lot of dark stained timber. With numerous cabinets positioned within the single space of the Museum, and with each cabinet filled with many objects, the sensory experience of entering the museum is exciting but perhaps visually overpowering.

### **Communal value of the Swiss Cottage Quarter**      *(Considerable significance)*

The Swiss Cottage Quarter's communal value resides primarily in its being part of the historic Osborne estate available to visitors, which is one of the top ten English Heritage sites in terms of visitor figures. It is open seven days a week from March to October and at weekends throughout the rest of the year. For much of the year the core visitor profile at Osborne is the 60 plus market, which is in line with the visitor profile of the Isle of Wight generally, although the profile is very slowly changing as the Isle of Wight markets itself to a more active, younger audience. Given the Swiss Cottage Quarter's role in the education of the Victorian royal family, it has considerable potential for revealing further aspects of childhood history which would be of interest to groups outside the core visitor profile.

For students and scholars researching the Victorian court the Swiss Cottage Quarter is a valuable resource as it allows investigation of the private lives of the royal family. From 1861 until well into the 20th century memorialisation and personal nostalgia were primary motives for the maintenance and conservation of the Swiss Cottage Quarter. Today these impulses are primarily intellectual and historical rather than personal but the surviving historic plantings have additional value as a literally living legacy of the activities and emotional life of the royal family, to which visitors may respond empathetically.

The collections also have a, perhaps as yet untapped, international communal value, with unique assemblages and items such as the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet ware, part of George Washington's coffin, and a sepia tinted photograph of Miss Muirhead, alias Nodinoque (Lady of the Wind), with two native American males of 1869 (lately taken to Buckingham Palace to show the American President Barak Obama and his wife). It also contains various items from the Zulu wars and a photograph of the last survivor of the Battle of Trafalgar, Emmanuel Louis Cartigny.

It is hoped that improved intellectual access to the collections in the form of new on-site displays and an online database, created by the Royal Collection, will only increase its communal value.



## PART TWO: THE PROPOSED WORKS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

The proposed works include alterations to existing buildings and some new build. The proposals have been developed in accordance with the policies of the Swiss Cottage Quarter Conservation Management Plan. In this section, each element of work is individually described, followed by a rationale for the proposal and an assessment of its impact on the heritage values of the site provided. A concluding section gives a general assessment of the proposals, taking into account the policies of English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* and the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **Structural repairs and redecoration of the Swiss Cottage and the Museum**

(Caroe & Partners drawings 03, 04, 05, 08, 09, 10; Structural Engineer's drawing XSI/01)

#### *Proposed works*

- Stabilisation of first floor of the Swiss Cottage by fixing it to the outer frame of the building.
- Removal of failing external paint system of both buildings.
- Redecoration of exterior and interior of both buildings.

#### *Impact assessment*

The structural issues affecting the Swiss Cottage have been identified as a priority conservation issue in the conservation management plan for the site. These stem primarily from previous repair work, when the first floor of the Swiss Cottage became detached from the outer frame of the building, leaving it supported on only the partition walls of the ground floor and on the lathe and plaster lining of the outer walls. This situation means that the floor is structurally unsound and currently requires propping from below to allow public access to the upper floor. The propping is unsightly and only suitable as a short-term response. It is proposed to reinstate fixings between the floor joists and the load-bearing outer walls, using newly specified steelwork.

As a result of the structural issues noted above, there has been some cracking to plaster surfaces and deterioration of the decorated interior, particularly on the first floor. It is proposed to repair damaged plaster and joinery on a like-for-like basis, and to redecorate the dressed spaces of the cottage, again on a like-for-like basis, using the paint research undertaken in the 1990s as the basis for this work. Similarly, the interior of the Swiss Cottage Museum will be redecorated on a like-for-like basis.

Externally the Museum and the Swiss Cottage were redecorated in the 1990s, when the existing paint was removed and replaced with *Sadolin Superdec* acrylic wood stain. This has failed due to the presence of a bituminous coating underneath. This situation is unacceptable because where the system is blistering water is penetrating the timber, increasing the rate of decay and risk of rot. It is proposed to remove the existing coatings using an Eco-paint softener and pressurised heated water and to replace them with a new breathable system. This will be either Engwall and Claesson Linseed Oil System or Keim Lignosil; tests are currently being undertaken to determine the new system to be used.

In addition to be beneficial to the conservation of the buildings, the proposals are neutral in terms of material impacts on the heritage values of the Swiss Cottage and the Museum. With the final colour of the external decoration replicating that of the current arrangement, there will be no alteration to the character or appearance of the buildings; and as the failing system is a modern application its removal will not entail the loss of any historic material. These proposals were informally discussed with the conservation officer of the Isle of Wight Council in 2011, who agreed that as the works would affect neither the special interest nor the character of the buildings that formal listed building consent would not be required.

### **Improved access to the Swiss Cottage** (Caroe & Partners drawings 08, 09)

#### *Proposed works*

- Introduction of two access ramps to the south-west and north-east ground-floor doorways of the Swiss Cottage.
- Re-hanging the ground floor doors in the north elevation.

#### *Impact Assessment*

Access to the ground-floor is currently impossible for visitors using wheelchairs as there is a single step at the threshold. It is proposed to install two access ramps, one at the north-east entrance and one at the south-west entrance, to provide non-discriminatory access to all visitors.

In designing the ramps, consideration has been given to the aesthetic qualities of the building. In order to avoid intrusive structures which affect both the building directly and its immediate context, locations have been chosen which allow the ramps to sit directly beneath the first-floor gallery rather than projecting outside the overall footprint of the cottage. The materials employed are those used on the cottage (stone and timber) to help the ramps harmonise with the historic structure. Using the ramp at the Swiss Cottage Museum as a precedent, no handrails are proposed as these would detract from the rustic conceit of the cottage. Inevitably, the alteration affects the appearance of the cottage but the sympathetic design of the ramps suits the cottage's design aesthetic and should not have a deleterious effect on the building's character. Moreover, the improved access to the building will considerably enhance the Swiss Cottage's communal value.

In order to maximise space for interpretation and visitor access in the diminutive north-west room, it is proposed to rearrange the doorway so that the door's hinges are on the east jamb and the door opens against the window. While it would be possible to alter both the door and the door frame to allow this alteration, a better way of minimising material impacts on historic fabric would be to swap the doors of the north-west room and the kitchen. This would entail no change to the doors themselves apart from location, with all door furniture being retained in its current position. Alterations to the frames would still be required but these will be treated so as not to affect the appearance of the frames. The overall impact on the appearance and fabric of the building will be very low but the benefit to the interpretation space will be very significant.

### **Alterations to the internal plan of the Swiss Cottage**

(Caroe & Partners drawings 03, 05, 08, 10)

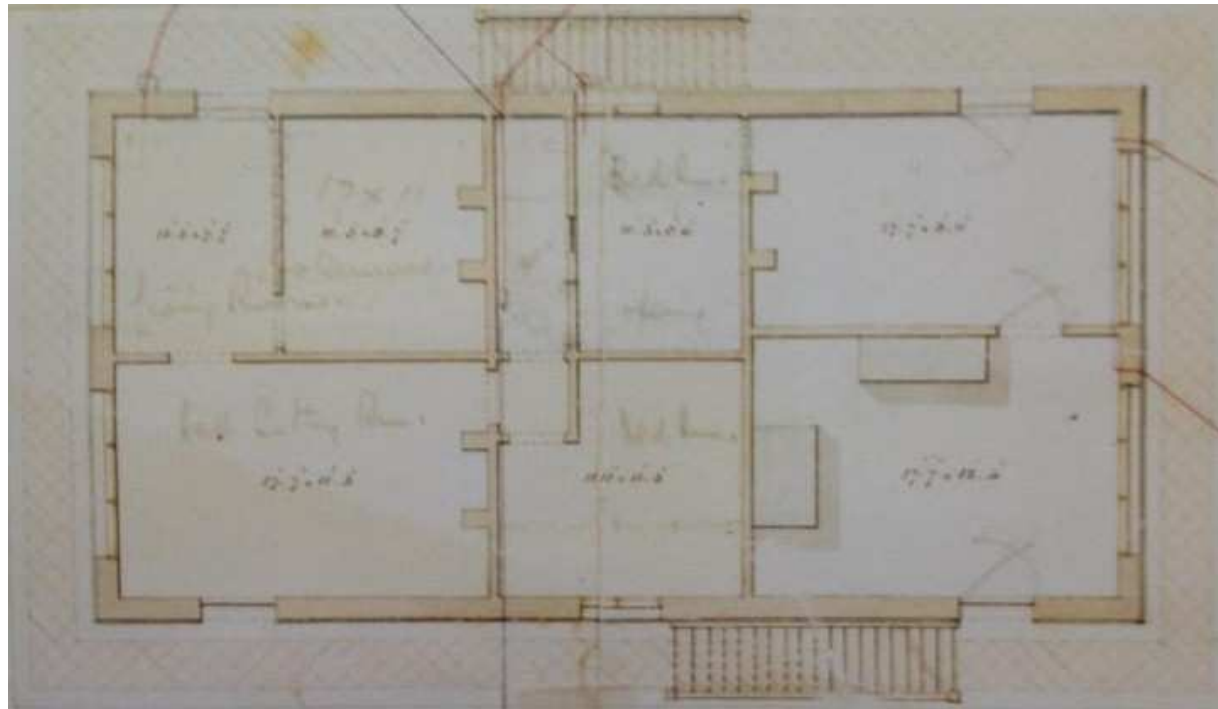
#### *Proposed works*

- Removal of partitions and WC in central southern room.
- Reinstatement of doorway from central southern room to south-west room.
- Creation of new doorway in wall between south-east room and central southern room.

#### *Impact assessment*

The Swiss Cottage is the most important of the buildings in the Swiss Cottage Quarter because of its exceptional historical value in illustrating the private lives of Queen Victoria and her family. It is also the building with the highest design value. Currently the building houses a catering

outlet in the former caretaker's apartment on the eastern ground floor, while the parts of the building used by the royal family have restored decoration and retain the collection of contents as arranged by Sir Guy Laking in 1915-16.

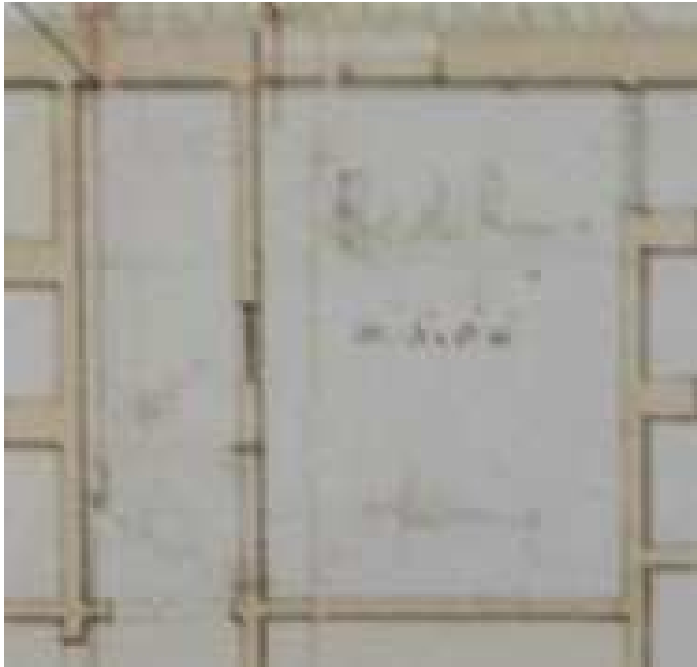


21. Ground plan of the Swiss Cottage, 1856. (South is at top.)

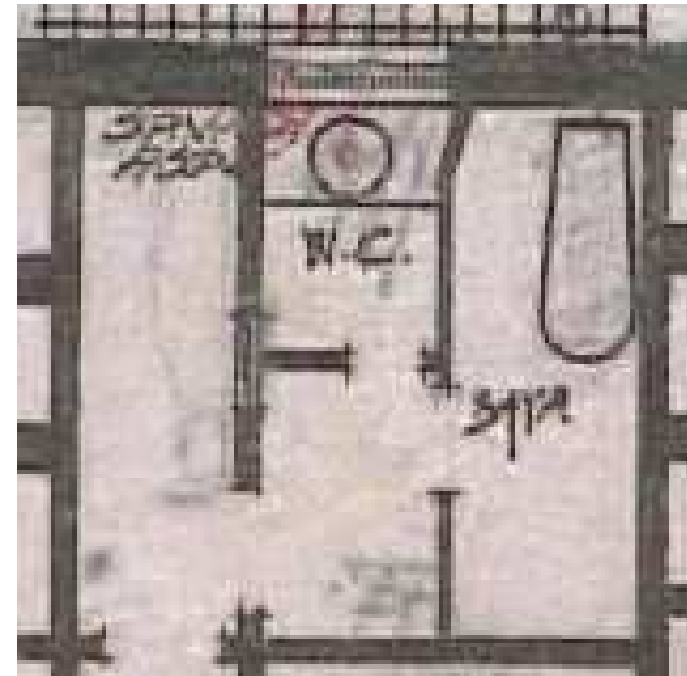
At the moment the Swiss Cottage Quarter has very little interpretation for visitors. It is proposed to relocate the catering function to the Gazelle House and use the eastern ground floor of the Swiss Cottage to accommodate new interpretation, which will provide visitors with greater understanding of the buildings, collection and their significance.

Internally, the eastern ground floor of the cottage consists of four principal spaces, with the central southern one subdivided to provide a WC facility. The current arrangement of the subdivided space does not reflect the historic form of the room. Originally the room was subdivided into two unequal spaces, with a narrow eastern portion linked to the caretaker's accommodation and a larger space, used as a larder, and connected to the royal children's pantry by a doorway in its west wall. Works accounts show that in 1890 a WC was installed in the (by then former) larder.

By c.1910 the larder had been further subdivided to provide a bathroom. The door in the west wall had been blocked and a doorway in the east wall formed to provide access to the caretaker's apartment. This arrangement had been changed by 1941, when a plan shows the current arrangement, whereby all the partitions were removed and a new one formed to provide a WC in the south-east corner of the room. It is proposed to remove the partition and WC to create a single space which is of more practical use for the proposed interpretation.

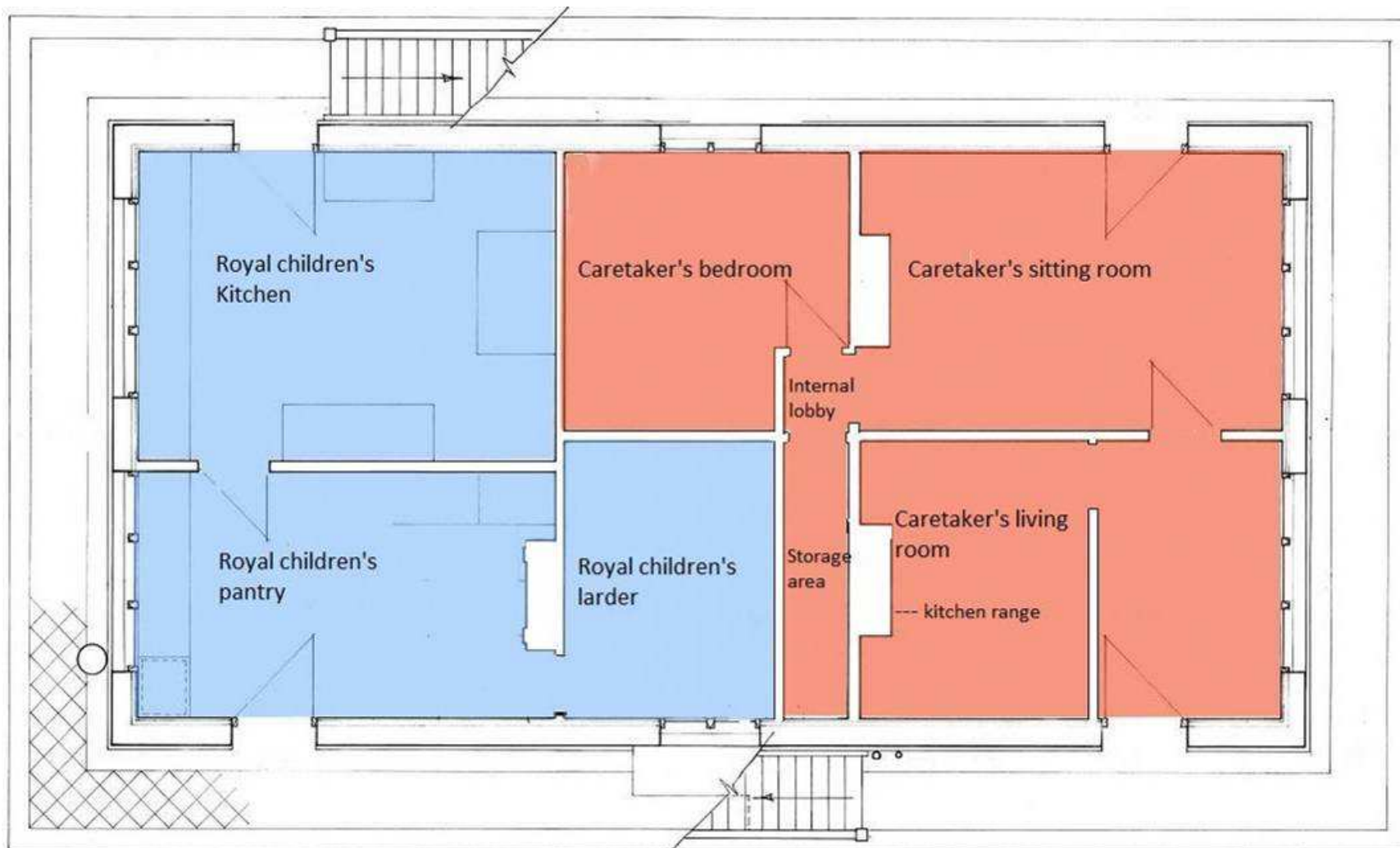


*Detail from 1856 plan showing central south room (south at top). The space was subdivided by a north-south wall, with no communication between the narrow space to the east and the larger space (the larder) to the west. Note south-west (upper-right) doorway in larder's west wall. It is proposed to reinstate this door.*



*Detail from c.1910 plan showing central southern room subdivided by multiple partitions associated with WC and bathroom uses. The current arrangement is a further alteration, dating from the 1940s.*





Reconstruction of original plan and room function of the ground floor of the Swiss Cottage.

It is also proposed to explore the feasibility of reinstating the doorway from the larder to the pantry, thus allowing visitors access throughout the ground floor, from the new interpretation space to the dressed spaces at the east end of the building. While the blocking of this doorway is not associated with a significant historical event, reinstating the doorway will allow immediate understanding of the historic relationship between the pantry and the former larder. This proposal is subject to archaeological evidence for the door being identified during investigative works over the winter of 2012 – 2013; should this evidence be compelling, then an application to amend the listed building consent to allow for the door's reinstatement will be made in due course.

In order to allow access throughout the ground floor for wheelchair users it is proposed to create a new doorway in the wall between the south-east and central southern room. This is required to allow access for wheelchair users throughout the ground-floor as the current configuration does not provide enough turning space for wheelchairs at the point of access to the central rooms, which is via an internal lobby. This is an alteration which affects the historic plan of the ground floor since there has not previously been direct communication between these two rooms, and is therefore moderately harmful to the building's evidential and historical values. However, the alternative is even more harmful as it would require the removal of the internal lobby, which is the only surviving fragment of the original partition arrangement of the central southern room and is therefore of significance for understanding the historic arrangement of the cottage. Creating the new doorway will allow wheelchair users to pass to the central southern room and then directly north-south straight through the lobby to the northern central room. On balance, the retention of the historic internal lobby and the creation of full access inside the ground floor for disabled visitors outweighs the harm associated with the new doorway.

### **Conversion of the Gazelle House**

(Caroe & Partners drawings 06, 07, 11, 12; Structural Engineer's drawing XD1/01)

#### *Proposed works*

- Conversion of the Gazelle House to use as a catering outlet.
- Work involves replacement of poor condition timber, removal of an internal partition and boarding of the interior.

#### *Impact assessment*

The Gazelle House is a small, single storey timber building constructed in 1872 and is not formally designated. Its name associates it with the gazelles and other animals known to have been kept by the royal children at the Swiss Cottage Quarter in the 19th century. The Gazelle

House is of moderate significance because of this association with the royal children's menagerie. It is a modest building but details such as the clerestory windows and the doors show the quality of ordinary estate buildings at Osborne. Aesthetically, any distinction the building enjoys resides in its exterior as the bare frame of its interior is a signal reminder of its function as a basic shed to house animals.

Currently unused, the Gazelle House is in poor condition, with much of its external boarding showing signs of rot. The proposed conversion to catering use will provide the building with a sustainable, benign function. Given the building's location close to the Museum and Victoria Fort, a guiding principle of the conversion is that the building's exterior should receive minimal alteration beyond replacement of irretrievably rotten timber and the replacement of the modern door at the north end of the building. Internally, the boarded finish is required to allow a clean environment suitable for the preparation and selling of food. A partition at the south end of the building is evidence of subdivision to provide a stall, the only part of the interior to be boarded. The removal of the partition will remove part of this evidence but it is proposed to retain the historic boarding in the stall. As the historic boarding is vertically fixed to the building frame and the new boarding is horizontal, the retention of the historic boarding will allow easy visual differentiation of old from new, retaining the distinction of the stall's space from the rest of the building.

Conversion of the Gazelle House to the proposed catering use has two additional benefits. First it is close to the existing tea garden, which is of practical benefit. Secondly, not only does the proposed new use serve the long-term interests of the currently unused Gazelle House, it also avoids the need for new build in the vicinity of the Swiss Cottage.

### **Rearrangement of the WC facilities in the Tea Garden**

(Caroe & Partners drawing 15)

#### *Proposed works*

- Internal rearrangement of WC facilities
- Introduction of new fully accessible WC facilities in the air raid shelter

#### *Impact assessment*

The site's WC facilities are contained in a building located at the north end of the Tea Garden. This building is faced externally with random rubble and appears to be coeval with the retaining wall at the north end of the garden. Both wall and building are shown on the OS survey of 1854 and early plans identify it as a wash house. The WC building is therefore of some historical value as an ancillary structure associated with

the use of the Swiss Cottage quarter. Its value resides almost entirely in its exterior as the interior of the building has been subdivided and rearranged at several points in its history to allow provision of public toilets. No historic fixtures or fittings survive. The proposed alterations, which involve relocation of WC units and removal of some partitions, will rationalise the available space without any impact at all on the exterior of the building. In terms of the heritage values of the building the proposals will have a neutral impact.

The air raid shelter is a building of little inherent significance other than its historical value in illustrating aspects of the use of the site during World War II. The proposed introduction of a fully accessible WC to the building will result in one additional opening and the alteration of an existing opening. These alterations will be sensitively managed to match the aesthetic of the site. The minor impacts associated with these changes will be outweighed by the considerable enhancement of the site's communal value.

### **Repairs to Albert Barracks**

#### *Proposed works*

- Roof repairs to the barracks

#### *Impact assessment*

Albert Barracks, together with Victoria Fort in which the building sits, are of historical value because of their association with the royal children. This association is artefactual since Prince Arthur helped to make the bricks used in the barracks construction. Water ingress through the roof is affecting supporting timbers and contributing to the saturation of the interior. The proposed water-proofing of the roof will eliminate this issue and will be undertaken so as not to affect the appearance of the barracks.

### **New electrical services**

(Martin Thomas Associates Ltd drawings 99436/ME001A, 99436/ME002A, 99436/ME003A, 99436/ME004A, 99436/ME005A, 99436/ME006A)

#### *Proposed works*

- Introduction of new electrical services to the buildings in the Swiss Cottage Quarter.

### *Impact Assessment*

The enhancement of visitor facilities through improved interpretation and the new catering facility requires an upgrade in electrical power provision. It is proposed to connect to the high-voltage supply to Osborne Bay and enabling works (subject to a separate planning application) will provide a new sub-station, located in the gardeners' compound. From the compound the supply will be buried within the Swiss Cottage gardens, again avoiding areas of historic planting, and will run to the individual buildings .

The new electrical supply will enter the Swiss Cottage via the existing services cupboard / box on the south side of the building. From here it will pass through the existing cable entry point in the wall and will rise through the central southern room to a new distribution board located in the first floor WC. Within the central southern room the cable will be run in the corner, discreetly boxed-in. The existing power supply is being renewed within the building on account of the age of the existing provision and because the current arrangement includes surface-mounted components which are harmful to the building's aesthetic value. Advantage is being taken of the opening up associated with the conservation works to the building so that cable runs can be concealed below floor boards. Socket plates will be flush-mounted with paintable surfaces to be as visually unobtrusive as possible.

At the Swiss Cottage Museum, the power supply will again enter the building via the existing access points, entailing no additional impacts on the building. At the Gazelle House, the new power supply will rise from below ground within the building, ensuring there are no harmful visual impacts on either the exterior of the building or in the gardens surrounding it.

As noted in section I above, the archaeological potential of the Swiss Cottage Quarter is considered to be very low and the cable routes are not expected to affect sub-surface archaeological deposits. Installation of the new services will be subject to close attendance by the project architect and English Heritage's Properties Curator, who will ensure that physical and visual impacts are minimised. In order to avoid harming the significance of the site, the design of new services has been fully informed by the advice and relevant policy contained in the Swiss Cottage Quarter conservation plan:

The historical and aesthetic values of the restored interiors of the Swiss Cottage and of the Museum could be easily eroded through insensitive installation of modern infrastructure. This has already occurred in the cottage, where electrical sockets have been fixed to the walls. Future installation of services should be as discreet as possible, with cable routes taking advantage of floor voids or, where surface mounting is unavoidable, following angles of walls and features to ensure that any consequent visual disruption is kept to a minimum. Limited works of an intrusive nature, such as letting sockets into skirting, is preferable to



surface-mounting services in the restored spaces. Where sockets and switches need to be exposed they should be made of materials which will harmonise with the historic decoration and, where appropriate, be painted to match their immediate decorative context.

*Policy 1.2.8 Installation of services in the restored interiors of the Swiss Cottage and in the Museum should be designed to minimise visual impacts in these spaces in order not to compromise their historical and aesthetic values.*

## **Introduction of new interpretation in the Swiss Cottage Quarter**

### *Proposed works*

- Installation of interpretation in the ground floor of the Swiss Cottage
- Installation of interpretation panels in the gardens
- Creation of new play area

### *Impact assessment*

Most of the interiors of the Swiss Cottage contain historic fixtures, fittings and contents of historical value, presented in spaces which have restored decorative schemes based on paint research and analysis. The exceptions are the ground floor rooms associated with the accommodation provided for caretakers and custodians and latterly used as a catering facility. These spaces have been redecorated on a regular basis throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and do not retain significant fixtures and fittings. As a consequence these rooms can sustain a wide degree of alteration to their appearance without affecting their individual heritage values or those of the building generally. These rooms have therefore been identified as the appropriate location for new interpretation designed to inform visitors about the history and significances of the Swiss Cottage Quarter. Primarily material will be printed on the walls but there will in addition be interactive displays. There is a risk of harm to fabric associated with fixings for the interactives but one of the principles to which the exhibition designer will be expected to respect is that fixings to historic fabric (i.e. walls and floors) must be minimal in size and extent.

Within the gardens of the Swiss Cottage Quarter new interpretation will develop the themes established in the cottage to show how the gardens were used by the royal children. Panels at the entrance will introduce visitors to the site, while across the gardens interpretation will be provided on low-level plant labels supplemented by small topiary figures to indicate the interests of the individual children. Given the

historic value of the restored gardens and the contribution they make to the setting of the Swiss Cottage, it is important that the new interpretation does not have a negative impact on their character. To this end the labels and topiary have been designed at a scale suitable for their immediate location but avoiding any visual impacts on wider cross-site views.

The Swiss Cottage Quarter was used by the family of Victoria and Albert as a place of recreation as well as learning. In the period since the royal family stopped using the cottage and gardens there has been no provision for play on the site. It is intended to provide a play area for children at the south-east corner of the gardens. Justification for this proposal is three-fold. First, given the recreational use of the site by the royal children, re-establishing active play in the Swiss Cottage Quarter would be entirely appropriate for the site and would help to underline the historic role it played. Secondly, the play area would appeal directly to children and families, who as a portion of the Osborne audience are under-represented at the Swiss Cottage Quarter at the moment. Third, the play area will take direct inspiration from historic features such as Victoria Fort which are too fragile to allow visitors to play upon them.

Creating a new play area obviously carries risk of harming the character and setting of the Swiss Cottage gardens. In order to minimise these risks, the south-east corner of the site has been chosen as the location of the play area. Currently this space is used to display the Alberta Deckhouse and has been landscaped for this purpose. The deckhouse is being relocated and its cover building, which is an intrusive feature in the gardens, will become redundant. This area therefore provides a space which enjoys neither historic planting nor any restored horticultural schemes and is situated away from the Swiss Cottage and Museum. The land falls away to the south which means that the natural topography will help to hide the new play area in general views from the northern half of the gardens. The need to avoid harming the character of the gardens and the setting of Victoria Fort, which is low-lying and in the adjacent south-east plot, has been further taken into account by restricting the play area to the ground south of the main fort's artillery trace and by avoiding tall structures in the vicinity of the fort. The new play area will employ natural materials sensitive to its garden location. The design of the play area will be informed by the advice and policy recommendation of the Swiss Cottage Quarter conservation plan:

**The southern end of the Swiss Cottage Quarter (SCQ):** currently housing the Alberta Deckhouse, there is no historic planting here, the area having been landscaped to accommodate the deckhouse (and formerly the Bathing Machine). The existing landscaping and cover buildings date from the late 20th century. The relocation of the Bathing Machine to Osborne Bay in 2012 has left part of the area empty and functionally redundant, a situation which is having a negative impact on the aesthetic value of the SCQ. The deckhouse is land-locked and appears out of place. Development which provided a new and appropriate context for the Alberta Deckhouse would be beneficial. The relocation of the deckhouse would allow it to be presented in a context

better suited to its inherent values while freeing the southern plot for new landscaping and a presentation better attuned to the heritage values of the SCQ.

In particular this area would lend itself to the provision of space for physical activity, a historic function of the SCQ which is currently not available for visitors to experience beyond walking through the gardens. It is a pity that a place which was the location of play historically has no play area in it today. This gap is underlined by the disappointment caused to visitors by not being able to allow routine access to the Victoria Fort on account of the fragility of the structure. The Childhood at Osborne project proposes to make good this deficit by creating a play area in the southern end of the SCQ inspired by the historic structures and activities of the site. While detailed design has yet to be produced at the time of writing this document, it is clear that the fort and the cottage will almost certainly be major models for the new area.

Any new development within the SCQ will need to respect the character of the gardens in terms of scale and materials. While the covers over the Alberta Deckhouse are honestly modern, their garish colour and hard materials do not provide a successful model for future development. Natural materials which weathered would harmonise better within the garden context and should be considered in any future development such as the play area. An additional consideration is the setting of Victoria Fort, the detached bastion of which lies close to the southern end of the site. Views across the fort need to be taken into account and as a guiding principle the new area should be designed so that taller structures are located at its southern end, while elements closer to the fort are subservient to it.

*Policy 3.4.6 In principle, the creation of a children's play area which allowed direct experience of ludic and physical activity would accord with the historical function of the SCQ.*

*Policy 3.4.7 Development proposals for a play area at the south end of the site must respect the character and setting of Victoria Fort by locating taller structures away from it and ensuring that any adjacent elements are subservient to it.*

## CONCLUSION: *Conservation Principles* and the National Planning Policy Framework

*Conservation Principles* has established criteria for new work and alteration against which are tested all development proposals affecting the national collection of heritage assets managed by English Heritage. These criteria are listed in paragraph 138:

- There should be sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposals on the significance of the place
- The proposals must not materially harm the values of the place but should seek to reinforce or further reveal them
- The proposals should aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future
- The long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future

When determining planning applications, local authorities are required to test proposals against the policies listed in paragraphs 126 – 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework. These include, *inter alia*, the following which are regarded as being particularly pertinent to this particular application:

- In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
  - the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability; and
  - the character of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (Paragraph 131)
- A requirement for proposals for development on a heritage asset to be supported by an assessment of the asset's significance and for this significance to be taken into account by the local authority when determining consent for planning applications (paragraphs 128 – 129).
- That when considering the impacts of proposals local authorities should place great weight on the asset's conservation, proportionate to the asset's importance (paragraph 132).

- That where a development proposal will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use (paragraph 134).

The following general assessment of the proposals is organised under the heading provided by the Conservation Principles criteria but take into account the National Planning Policy Framework policies referred to above.

*1. There should be sufficient information comprehensively to understand the impacts of the proposals on the significance of the place have to be measured*

As this document sets out, the general development history of the Swiss Cottage Quarter is very well understood. The cultural significance of the heritage assets has been described in part one of this document, with the greatest significance identified as being the historical values the site enjoys as a consequence of its direct personal association with Queen Victoria and her family. The historical value of the site has been enhanced through restoration of internal decorative schemes and by the restoration of the royal children's gardens, which together with the surviving historic planting, provide an appropriate setting for the buildings and form part of the Osborne's registered landscape.

*2. The proposals must not materially harm the values of the place but should seek to reinforce or further reveal them*

The proposals have been designed carefully to protect the heritage values of the Swiss Cottage Quarter. The individual impact assessments show how the significance of the site generally and of the buildings within it have been taken into account during the development of the proposals. In essence, this project is about enhancing the communal value of the site by increasing visitors' understanding of all aspects of its use by the royal family during the 19th century. Major material impacts have been restricted to conservation of the fabric; the minor alteration of the ground floor plan of the Swiss Cottage to allow greater access for disabled visitors and to explore the feasibility of restoring an original door; the introduction of sympathetically designed access ramps to the Swiss Cottage; the conversion of the Gazelle House to a viable new use; and the introduction of a new play area. Perhaps the greatest degree of change and associated risk lies with the play area but by locating this within the southern two-thirds of the south-west plot, and by locating taller structures towards its southern end, the setting of the adjacent Victoria Fort and the character of the wider gardens will be protected. The rationale for the play area lies with the historical use of the site as a place of recreation by the royal family. Put simply, we are restoring this active play element without harming the values of the place.

Existing infrastructure which harms the values of the site, such as the harsh modern canopy over the Alberta Deckhouse or the surface-mounted electrical fixings in the Swiss Cottage are being removed. The renewal of services will allow the removal of visually intrusive pipes, drains, cables, plastic trunking and disused tanks, which have been added incrementally to the site but which collectively harm its aesthetic values. Conversely, new services are being designed to harmonise with the site and to be subservient to historic architectural features.

*3. The proposals should aspire to a quality of design and execution which may be valued now and in the future*

The design of the proposals has been guided by the existing structures, taking account of the materials used historically in the Swiss Cottage Quarter. This can be seen clearly in the design of the new access ramps to the Swiss Cottage, which employ timber and stone in a manner which takes its cue from the cottage itself but which do not present themselves as faux Victorian. With the play area, natural timber will be used in combination with earth banks to provide an accessible alternative to the fragile historical resources, allowing young visitors to enjoy an approximation of the activities followed by the children of Queen Victoria in the cottage and on the fort.

*4. The long-term consequences of the proposals can, from experience, be demonstrated to be benign, or the proposals are designed not to prejudice alternative solutions in the future*

The single greatest impact on the Swiss Cottage Quarter is the introduction of the play area. This has been located in an area which entails no physical harm at all to existing heritage assets. In the future it could be removed without additional impacts on the site. Other alterations, such as the conversion of the Gazelle House to a viable use or the alterations to the Swiss Cottage to allow greater access are proportionate to the significance of the assets with which they are associated and will make a positive contribution to their future viability as heritage assets of exceptional cultural significance displayed to an exemplary standard.

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**Territory Properties Curator (South)**  
**18 December 2012**