

Conservation Area Appraisal

Bishopstone



Conservation Area Appraisal

Name of Conservation Area : Bishopstone

Date of Designation : 1976

What is a Conservation Area?

A Conservation Area is defined as “an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” Such areas therefore represent a key part of the district’s cultural heritage.

The Purpose of this Conservation Area Appraisal

Conservation Area Appraisals are considered by English Heritage to be vital to the conservation of these special areas. The content of this statement is based on the preferred approach set out in English Heritage’s publication Conservation Area Appraisals – Defining the Special Architecture or Historic Interest of Conservation Areas, English Heritage 1997.

The Council has a duty to pay special attention to preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning powers. This statement will therefore provide a consistent and sound basis upon which to determine planning applications. It will also help in defending appeals against refusals of planning applications, which could have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area. This statement also identifies what contributes towards the character of the area and any negative features. This provides a useful base upon which to develop proposals for preservation and enhancement if the opportunity should arise through the planning system.

The preparation of the statement also enables local residents to participate in the identification of features, which are important to the special character of the area in which they live.

Visitors to the area also may find this statement provides interesting information about special and interesting local features.

Objectives in Conservation Areas

There are tighter controls over cutting back or felling trees, demolition and alterations or building works in Conservation Areas. These are outlined in more detail in the leaflet “*Planning Controls in Conservation Areas*”. In Conservation Areas the District Council has various objectives such as seeking to preserve buildings that are historically important, securing design and use of materials that are sympathetic to the area and protecting important vegetation and spaces.

Introduction

The hamlet of Bishopstone is located in a valley within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the west of Seaford and approximately 1 mile inland from the coast. Typical of many Downland villages, despite being close to a town, Bishopstone has a feeling of isolation and remoteness as it is surrounded by the open and rolling Downs.

An unclassified road runs northwards along the valley floor from the A259 South Coast Road through Bishopstone and Norton before terminating at Poverty Bottom pumping station. The road skirts around the eastern side of the church and village green before dipping down into a hollow and rising again towards Norton to the north. The hamlet has developed in a roughly linear fashion along the line of the road.

The present tranquillity of this small and historic settlement however belies a more important role in the past.

Origins and pattern of development

Bishopstone is referred to in the Domesday Book as “Biscopestone”, meaning the land of the Bishop of Chichester. It is believed that the Manor belonged to the Bishop from the early Eighth century until the Sixteenth century. Bishopstone Road was originally the driveway to Bishopstone Place (since demolished) and flint walls still flank most of its length today. For over 1200 years the manor was only in the hands of three owners - the Diocese of Chichester, the Crown and the Pelham family, which has ensured consistency of records about the history of the settlement and has ensured that it has remained unspoilt and relatively unchanged.

Bishopstone was once adjacent to a waterway which linked the settlement to the sea, thus adding to the strategic importance of its location. The water once flowed up the valley floor right into the centre of the village and there would have been a waterfront around the eastern edge of the settlement. The photograph in this assessment depicts how this may have looked as it was taken after localised flooding a number of years ago.

The settlement grew in various stages over time and the church, manor, current site of the village green (believed to be the site of previous buildings) and a handful of other buildings were located an area of raised ground which is believed to have formed the roughly circular original settlement.

As the hamlet grew in later years to provide estate workers houses and ancillary buildings these developed to the north of the church and manor. The main route used by estate workers was not the main Bishopstone Road approach but an east-west route linking the settlement with Denton and Blatchington. Part of that route is Silver Laine, which still exists as an unmade track incorporating a public right of way.

The Manor of Bishopstone came into the ownership of the Pelham family during the sixteenth century, who built a large house for hunting and lavish entertaining on the site of the Manor. The house was demolished in 1831 when it became a costly burden for the family to maintain,



Bishopstone, looking East towards the church after flooding - an indication of how the settlement would have appeared when it once had a waterfront

although an underground cellar remains. It appears that building materials from the house have been incorporated into various other buildings and structures in Bishopstone.

Bishopstone is well placed to harness the natural wealth of the Downs, and the main activity in the rest of the village was agriculture. This is reflected in the character of the Conservation Area today as many of the buildings are of agricultural form. Farming activity was traditionally based around the Manor and many fine farm buildings remain though most have since been converted to residential use, for example Dog Kennel Barn where, as the name suggests, the hounds were kept. Farming activity migrated to the northern part of the village with the building of Manor Farmhouse in 1906 and since then the hamlet has had a predominantly residential character.

Archaeological Interest

Bishopstone is in an area known to have been populated since the Bronze Age and as such the whole of the Conservation Area is within a designated Area of Archaeological Interest (No.421). Archaeological digs are currently taking place. New evidence suggests that the site of St Andrew's church was probably a cult centre for a local Anglo-Saxon female Saint, strengthening the view that Bishopstone was an important pre-Conquest ecclesiastical centre.

Buildings

St. Andrews Church

The focal building of the Conservation Area is St. Andrews Church, which is included on the statutory list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Importance (Grade I). It is built on top of high ground at the centre of a circular enclosure. It is one of the oldest churches in Sussex and the Saxon porch with sundial is thought to have been built between the 6th and 9th centuries. The tower of the church is Norman with a

Saxon nave and a 12th century Chancel. The Norman doorway shows the crisp detail of the carving with the inscription 'Eardric' above the Saxon sundial. The wall around the churchyard and the enclosure to the east are also Grade II listed structures. The graveyard of the church also features boxed tomb graves (seen in the right hand corner of the photo below) including the graves of the Catt family. The graves have recently been restored and form an important feature of the character of the graveyard and church.

St Andrews Church



The Almshouses



The Almshouses

The Almshouse (now two dwellings) adjacent to the north of the church is a Grade II listed building. It was built in 1856 by George Catt for "poor and aged persons" in memory of Mary Anne Catt. George was also the owner of the Tidemills that operated on the coast to the south of the village, though little remains of this coastal settlement as it was used for artillery practice in World War II. The Almshouses are flint faced with stone architraves to the doors and windows and rusticated stone quoins and also incorporates three gables with bargeboards and tall decorative stone chimneys. Curiously, the houses face directly on to the village green, with no front gardens and the windows opening directly on to the green.

As well as being important in their own right this group of buildings and the enclosures around them make an important contribution to the character of the village by reason of their coherent group value.

The Manor House

The Manor House, dated 1688, is located at the "entrance" to the village and is a Grade II listed two storey L-shaped house which was refaced with render in the 19th century. The north wing was built in around 1830. There is flint and brick on the rear of the property. Windows are a mix of casement and sash. The Manor House has two storeys, an attic and a slate roof. The building was divided into three residences in 1948 and on the front of the building the Pelham buckle can be seen, the emblem of the Pelham family with the initials T.P. for Thomas the 1st Baron of Pelham and Laughton.

The Manor House





Not all features listed will be featured on this map

● Tree Preservation Orders
BANDTYPE
 TPO AREA
 TPO GROUP
 TPO WOODLAND
GRADING
 LISTED BUILDING - GRADE 1
 LISTED BUILDING - GRADE 2
 LISTED BUILDING - GRADE *2
 LISTED BUILDING - Local Interest
 conservation_areas
 Unlisted Building that contributes to the C.A.
 Key Views
 Important Spaces
 Flint Walls

Reproduced from Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. Crown Copyright Reserved. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. License No. LA078395

Bishopstone Conservation Area



1:2,500



Barn at Manor Farm

The adjacent barn, part of Manor farmhouse is also listed Grade II. It is a large flint storage barn with a modern roof and is open towards the courtyard with wooden posts supporting the roof.

There are several buildings within the Conservation Area which although not listed make a significant contribution to the character of the area:



Monksdown

'Monksdown'

Following the Bishopstone Road northwards, north of Silver Lane, is "Monksdown", with its flint facing, red brick quoins and red clay tiled roof, once the home of Mr. W.A. Darlington, drama critic for the Daily Telegraph. There was originally a glass verandah at the front of the house but this was destroyed by enemy bombs in World War II. Monksdown adjoins Forge Cottage which was once home to the black-smith and would have been a focus of activity in the hamlet.

Cleavers



'Cleavers'

"Cleavers" circa 1620 immediately to the north of "Monksdown", dates from the early seventeenth century. It was previously known as Priory Cottage, but takes its present name from the family who lived there during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Post Office Cottage and Barrack Cottage

Post Office Cottage is a two-storey red-brick buildings with red clay tiled roofs. Post Office Cottage was so named because it

stood opposite the site of the old Post Office. The garage of 'Copsford' now stands on this site.

Barrack Cottage is also a two storey building and is constructed with flint. Barrack Cottage was rebuilt in the 1960s, with only the four external walls remaining. Prior to this it was several cottages and was used in the Napoleonic Wars as barracks.

White Row and Field Cottages

At this point a track leads off westwards along the bottom of the northern bank of the small hill topped by the Church. On the northern side, White Row cottages and Pepperstitch form an attractive terrace with white painted render over flint and red brick, which can still be seen on the northern elevation. At the end of this track is Field Cottages which are some of the oldest dwellings in the village. The cottages are flint and red-brick with a slate roof, though the roofs were originally thatched. Several of the cottages still are just known by their Estate Numbers and these are so high as they were once part of an estate that took in several villages and settlements across the county.



White Row cottages

Important Spaces

The open low field on the western side of the village, visible when approaching the village along Bishopstone Road, was originally laid out as formal parkland to Bishopstone Place and the original parkland rail fence remains in places. The eastern part of this land is within the Conservation Area and this open area makes a very important contribution to the setting and approach of the village. Excavations in this vicinity have suggested that this area may have historically been used more intensively or built upon around the time of the original settlement.

The site of Bishopstone Place is prominently positioned at the approach to the hamlet. It is now overgrown with vegetation but its undeveloped and semi-wild nature and position at the heart of the settlement adds to the overall rural feel of Bishopstone.

There is a pleasant walled open grassed area adjacent to the east of the churchyard which was previously a stabling area for Bishopstone Place. This shaded open paddock makes a valuable contribution to the character of the area and provides an open foreground to the setting of the Church.

The village green is located on a high area of ground enclosed to the south by the churchyard, to the east by the former Almshouses and to the west by the village hall, formerly the village school until 1940. A wooded bank forming the northern edge of the green slopes down to the lowest part of the village. The green has a curious local name 'the Egg' (which is still used locally) derived from 'the Hagg' (meaning enclosed area). Given the green's raised and central position above the historic water level and adjacent to the church it is believed to have historically been the site of buildings and structures and is to be excavated to investigate this further.

There are several enclosed fields lying at the lowest part of the village, in the angle formed by Bishopstone Road and the track which runs west along the bottom of the bank. There used to be a village pond in this position and an impression in the ground a willow tree remain today. This open space is therefore important from an historic point of view and also adds to the informal, spacious character of the village.

Building Materials

The use of local flint and clay roof tiles on the Church, the Almshouse and the assorted agricultural buildings and walls is the most prevalent building material and reinforces the downland, agricultural character of this settlement. Red-brick is also used for quoins and detailing and for the construction of several of the cottages.

Many of the walls in the village are informal and agricultural in nature being predominantly constructed with rough field flints with a render coping.

Natural elements

There are several important groups of trees in the Conservation Area. In fact most of the buildings are obscured by trees as the village is approached from the south, with only the square tower of the Church visible above the lofty elms which provide its sylvan setting on the small hillock in the centre of the village.

The tree belt along the southern boundary of the Conservation Area adjacent to the approach road, and that on the eastern edge of the area north of Silver Lane, are also of particular importance.

Relationship between the Conservation Area and its surroundings

There are many important views out of the Conservation Area. These are primarily from the Churchyard southwards over low open fields (originally formal parkland of Bishopstone Place) towards the "Rookery Scarp" and the sea beyond. There are similar southerly views from the lower ground around Field Cottages. Views out in the other directions are of the high and rolling open downland that surrounds the village.

The most prominent view of the Conservation Area is as the village is approached from the south. The key elements of this view are the remote setting of the village in the valley and the nature of the downland ridgelines forming the valley; and the dramatic setting of the Church amidst its fine setting of elms; and the undeveloped low, flat foreground. There are also important views from footpaths along the top of the Rookery scarp to the south west, looking down over the village. Another important view into the Conservation Area is from Manor Farm looking southwards towards the Church.

Potential Enhancements

The settlement has approximately 3 miles of flint walls within and around it, some of which date from pre 1750. The walls form an important and interesting feature of the settlement, however some of the walls are falling into disrepair and without work to restore them could possibly disappear altogether. The breaking up and neglect of the walls is a negative feature of the settlement, and their neglect is exacerbated by the fact that currently the walls do not have any statutory protection.

Whilst there has been little new building in the settlement, many of the conversions from manor outbuildings or agricultural buildings into residential were undertaken in the 1960s and 1970s when conversion techniques were not as sensitive as they are today. Some of these conversions contain elements that do not fully respect the historic character of the main building such as the conspicuous white barge-board balcony at Monksdown Barn and the UPVC windows in Barrack Cottages.

Opportunities to lessen the impact of any features which have a negative impact on the conservation area will be taken if they arise through the planning system.

Planning Policies

The **Adopted East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan** [1991] contains broad policies which require the impact of proposed development on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings to be given due consideration. This plan can be viewed at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes.

Switchboard number: (01273) 481000.

Website : www.eastsussexcc.gov.uk

These policies are reflected in more specific detail in the **Adopted Lewes District Local Plan** [2003]. Chapter Eight of the plan specifically covers 'The Historic Environment' and these planning policies clearly outline the criteria that will be applied to development in, or affecting, a conservation area and the approval or refusal of any planning or conservation area application will be determined against them.

Anyone thinking of applying for consent within a conservation area is therefore strongly advised to consider these policies first. The Local Plan can be viewed at the offices at the below address or on the website at : www.lewes.gov.uk/coun/planning/index.html

Pre-application advice can also be obtained, free of charge, from Development Control Officers or the Conservation Officer.

Further Information

For further information on this leaflet, please contact:

Policy and Projects Team

Department of Planning and Environmental Services
Lewes District Council
Southover House
Southover Road
Lewes
BN7 1DW
(01273) 471600

This is one of a series of leaflets about the 35 Conservation Areas in the Lewes District. A full list can be obtained by contacting the above officers, or by visiting the Council's web site (www.lewes.gov.uk), or from Lewes Tourist Information Centre (TIC) High Street, Lewes and Seaford Tourist Information Centre (TIC) Clinton Place, Seaford.

Visitors can find out about walks and facilities in the area from Lewes and Seaford TIC's.

Lindsay Frost

Director of Planning & Environmental Services

November 2003