

# Conservation Area Appraisal

## Norton



£3.50

# Conservation Area Appraisal

**Name of Conservation Area :** Norton

**Date of Designation :** 20/05/1975

## 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 small hamlet of Norton is located in an alluvial valley within the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to the west of Seaford and just over one mile from the coast. The larger village of Bishopstone lies about half a mile to the south. Typical of many downland hamlets and despite being close to the towns of Seaford and Newhaven, Norton is surrounded by open and rolling downs to the north, east and west and has a feeling of great isolation and remoteness.

The key characteristics of this settlement are the loose knit layout, including a working farm, with buildings and walls of flint and brick construction set against the green backdrop of the rolling downland.

The peaceful rural tranquillity of Norton gives it its particular character of a small agricultural hamlet. The links to the downs are strong, as the hills dominate the surrounding landscape in every view (see picture below).

The settlement consists of Norton Farm, which lies at the southern entrance to the hamlet and scattered, mainly large, houses that lie to the north of the farm. Towards Norton bottom there are several buildings including Rose Cottage, Norton Cottage, and a large and impressive listed barn which has been converted to residential use. This cluster of development is where there is the highest concentration of buildings and these are in closer proximity to each other than are other buildings in the rest of the hamlet. This area therefore feels like the centre. However the buildings are still spread out and this loose grain is a key element of this downland hamlet’s character.

*Photo showing the close relationship with the surrounding downland*



Another key characteristic is the location of all buildings except one on one side of the road through the hamlet. This confirms the former relationship of most of them to activities of the farm.

The narrow road itself bends, has no footway and is unmade in places, all of which emphasise the rural feeling. Very little traffic uses the road other than villagers and occasional maintenance traffic to the Poverty Bottom pumping station, which lies a little to the north of Norton. Beyond the pumping station the road reverts to a downland track. The road still evidently once a major north/ south major downland route, is intersected by an un-surfaced east/ west downland track which links the hamlet to the surrounding fields. This track provides access to several of the village properties.

In front of properties numbered 141/142 the road has a small grassed area in the centre on which is large mature tree that adds to the leafy character of the area. The cluster of trees and shrubs amongst the buildings distinguishes the hamlet from its open rolling downland surroundings, which is a characteristic is typical of ancient downland hamlets.

The hamlet consists of Norton Farm on the right hand side when entering, and scattered, mainly large, houses throughout. To the south towards Norton Bottom there are several buildings including Rose cottage, Norton cottage and a large and impressive listed barn, which has been converted residential use. This cluster of development is where there is the highest concentration of buildings are, which are also in closer proximity to each other than the rest of the hamlet. This area therefore feels like the centre. The buildings however are still spread out and this is a key element of the character.

When entering the hamlet the road also bears off to the right, this is the northern part of the settlement, which consists of several houses loosely knit adjacent to the road. The road is unmade in places, which gives a more rural feel. The road also has a small grassed area in the centre in front of properties 141/142 with a large mature tree, which adds to the leafy character of the area.

The key characteristics of this settlement are the loose knit layout, including a working farm with buildings and walls of flint and brick construction set in the backdrop of the rolling downs.

## Origins and the pattern of development

Norton was originally called Northetone, meaning north of Bishopstone, the attractive village to the south of Norton. The buildings of the village are situated on the eastern and southern side of the road heading towards Poverty Bottom. The village developed around prosperous Norton Farm, which covered some 800 acres. As with Bishopstone, Norton is well located to harness the natural wealth of the surrounding land. The arable land produced fodder crops, wheat and barley, the rougher, steeper land was used for sheep pasture and the brookland used for hay and cattle.

The buildings in the village would mainly have been copyhold (tenure in accordance with the transcript of manorial records).

The village is a working agricultural village with the buildings at the southern section of the settlement still being in agricultural use, however there has been a shift in the location of the farm complex within the overall village. Originally it was to the north of the farmhouse, but has since been shifted to the south of the farmhouse on the southern side of the road.

The road through the village is well used, as it is the only road to poverty bottom pumping station.

## Archaeological Interest

Norton is within an area of archaeological interest for its importance in relation to a shrunken medieval settlement. It was a site for domestic activity in the iron and Middle Ages. In the pasture to the rear of Norton Farmhouse Middle Age pottery has been found, Iron Age remains have been found in the hamlet and also an Anglo Saxon pit.

## Buildings

### Norton Old Farmhouse

Norton Old Farmhouse is Grade II listed. It is an 'L' shaped house faced with flints and red brick dressings with quoins and a slate roof. It is the largest dwelling within the hamlet and is set in a particularly large plot in comparison to the other buildings. The building was leased to the Cooper family between 1710 and 1912, when they purchased the farmhouse for themselves. The building had a large extension in the 18th century, which was a sign of the family's wealth.



Number 140

### 140 (Former Chichester Estate number)

This building is 18th century or even earlier. It is faced with flints with redbrick dressings and quoins and has a steep slate roof. The building fronts onto the road and looks modest in comparison to the large farmhouse, which it faces, at one time the building would have had a thatched roof.



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

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# Norton Conservation Area



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Numbers 141 and 142

### Numbers 141 and 142

This building was probably the original farmhouse at Norton and is late 16th, early 17th century. It is faced with knapped flints and has long and short stone quoins. It has a slate roof, casement windows and stone munnions with dripstones over. The building fronts onto the road the same as 140 on the same stretch of road, this gives the building and street an interesting character. The building also looks imposing when viewing it from down the lane.

The window at first floor may have been blocked up when the single building was split in two dwellings and a staircase was inserted. The space in front of 141/142 includes a focal central grassed area and turning area for cars, this space is attractive and adds to the interesting character of this part of the hamlet.



Numbers 143 and 144

### Numbers 143 and 144

This building is 18th century or earlier and is within the grounds of the working farm. It is faced with flints and has red brick quoins and dressings. It has a steeply pitched roof and horizontally sliding sash windows. Unfortunately the building has an unattractive flat roof single storey extension on its western elevation, which can be seen in the photo above.



Little Hallands

### Little Hallands

This impressive grade II listed building is located at the centre of the hamlet. It was probably named after the Pelham mansion at Halland. The property is hidden behind other dwellings when viewing it from the road and trees and shrubs when on the northern boundary of the property. It has a large driveway leading to it, which adds to its individual character within the locality. The original wing of the house is 18th century, it is faced with flints and has red brick dressings and quoins and a slate roof. The ground floor windows add considerably to the buildings character and individuality, being gothic in style.

The property was the home of James Hurdis (1710 –1769), the collector of customs at Newhaven. He was leased the building as part of his job with the Earl of Chichester. The poet and vicar of Bishopstone, also called James Hurdis lived at Hallands between 1763 and 1801. He was professor of poetry at Oxford University. He wrote about nearby Bishopstone, in his poem 'The Favourite Village'. He was buried at Bishopstone and his epitaph was written by his friend William Hayley and can be seen in the Chancel of the St Andrews church.

Many famous people have at one time stayed at Hallands, including Baron Asquith the younger son of Prime Minister Asquith.

There were additions to the west and south-west in the 19th century. These are now separate dwellings called Norton House and Hunters' Moon. These are constructed of different materials, for example Norton House has a clay tile roof.



North Barn

### North Barn to the north-east of Hallands

This grade II building is probably 16th century. The roof is made of clay tiles with tie beams and queen posts. It is faced with flint and has vertical slit ventilation holes. The barn was the last thatched building in both Norton and its neighbouring village Bishopstone.

### Building materials

Norton features buildings using flint as a building material. Many of the buildings feature slate roof and have red brick dressing and quoins. A small group of buildings at the north of the hamlet, which are not listed, are painted white or cream and are a contrast to the flint buildings. Many of the buildings would originally have had thatched roofs.

### Natural elements

There are several important groups of trees in the Conservation Area. The trees to the front of No 141 on a small island in the narrow lane add significantly to the feel of the hamlet. There are some mature trees on the northern edge of the hamlet as well as scattered throughout.

Either side of the road is vegetation often above flint walls, this adds to the sylvan feel of the village. However, even with this vegetation the overall hamlet remains open, which further reinforces its open downland character.

### Former Uses

The rectangular piece of land at the north of the Conservation Area was formally the site of Bishopstone Nurseries (see photo below). It once had glasshouses associated with the nursery on the land however these have been removed. The site is now being landscaped into and has a garage and a number of wooden sheds. The site also was used as the kitchen garden associated with Hallands.



Location of former glasshouses

## Relationship between Conservation Area and Surroundings

As already stated within the introduction, although being located close to Seaford town has a feel of an isolated hamlet set within the Downs. All views out highlight its remote setting within the valley and open downland.

Just outside of the designated conservation area on the western side is a pond. At one time there was a pond within the conservation area but this dried up many years ago.

### Potential Enhancements

Possible enhancements to the hamlet could be to restore the pond and flint walls around the hamlet. Also Little Hallands has an unattractive car port on its north eastern elevation. It is considered that this could be removed and replaced with a more sympathetic addition. There is an outstanding planning permission for this, however this has not been implemented.

The extension on 143/144 is unattractive and not in style with the rest of the building, if this extension was removed it would restore the original character of the building.

There is a bungalow to the north of Norton Cottage and the converted barn. The dwelling was built in the 1960's and is not in character with other buildings within the hamlet. To maintain the character of Norton development, which is clearly not in character with the existing buildings such as this, should be prevented.

## 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](http://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](http://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

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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 Councils web site ([www.lewes.gov.uk](http://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

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