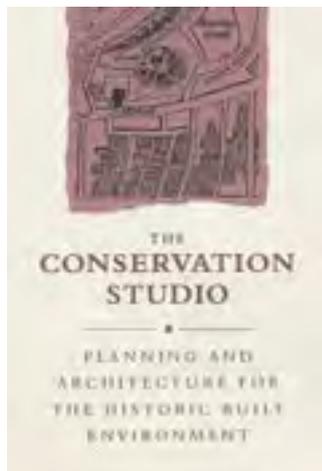


In May 2007 Lewes District Council approved this document as planning guidance and therefore it will be a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to Valerie Mellor, who showed me around the village, and who lent me her book Portrait of Piddinghoe 1900-2000 – an invaluable help with this document.



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Contents:		Page
1	Summary	1
	1.1 Key positive characteristics	1
	1.2 Recommendations	1
2	Introduction	2
	2.1 The Piddinghoe Conservation Area	2
	2.2 The purpose of a conservation area character appraisal	2
	2.3 The planning policy context	3
	2.4 Community involvement	3
3	Location and landscape setting	4
	3.1 Location and activities	4
	3.2 Topography and geology	4
	3.3 Relationship of the conservation area to its surroundings	5
	3.4 Biodiversity	5
4	Historic development and archaeology	6
	4.1 Historic development	6
	4.2 Archaeology	13
5	Spatial analysis	14
	5.1 Plan form, site layout and boundaries	14
	5.2 Landmarks, focal points and views	14
	5.3 Open spaces, trees and landscape	15
	5.4 Public realm	16
6	The buildings of the conservation area	17
	6.1 Building types	17
	6.2 Listed buildings	17
	6.3 Positive buildings	19
	6.4 Building styles, materials and colours	19
7	Issues	21
	7.1 Key positive characteristics	21
	7.2 Key negative characteristics	21
	7.3 Key issues	22
8	Recommendations	23
	8.1 The quality of new development	23
	8.2 The condition of buildings	23
	8.3 Archaeology	23
	8.4 Traffic management and the public realm	23
	8.5 Conservation Area boundary review	24



APPENDICES

Appendix 1	The historical development of the Ouse Valley	25
Appendix 2	Local Plan policies	27
Appendix 3	Bibliography	28
Appendix 4	Townscape Appraisal Map	30

HISTORIC MAPS

1806	Deans Farm Estate Map	7
1897	Ordnance Survey	8
1908	Ordnance Survey	9
1929	Ordnance Survey	10
1939	Ordnance Survey	11



I SUMMARY

I.1 KEY POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS

This character appraisal concludes that the key *positive* characteristics of the Piddinghoe Conservation Area are:

- Location between the South Downs and the River Ouse;
- Small linear village based on a winding village street;
- St John's Church sits on a mound with a circular churchyard;
- Informal village green and gravelled car park and access road with grass verges;
- Concentration of historic buildings around the church;
- Interesting mix of cottages and houses, with no high status houses;
- Rural character reinforced by the flint walls, grass verges and open gardens with trees and planting;
- Proximity of the river with its fishing club providing links to the sea;
- Use of red clay roof tiles, flint walling and red brick;
- Stunning views over the river Ouse valley;
- 20th century housing development has not spoil the historic core of the village.



Former school and St John's Church



The former boathouse needs urgent repairs

I.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

This character appraisal makes the following recommendations (summary):

- Improve the quality of new development and protect the conservation area from over-sized extensions and the infilling of existing open space;
- Ensure that Cobblers and the former boathouse by the River Ouse are repaired;
- Encourage the owners of some of the older properties in the conservation area to undertake an archaeological evaluation of their houses (although some have been carried out already);
- Consider some traffic management measures at the entrances to the village; improve public seating along the riverside walk;
- Amend the boundary of the conservation area in a number of places:
 - Add properties along Harping Hill, and the fields beyond;
 - Add Courthouse Farm and its stables and barn;
 - Add The Hoe Recreation Ground.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 THE PIDDINGHOE CONSERVATION AREA

Piddinghoe is a small downland village a few kilometres outside Newhaven on the banks of the River Ouse. The Piddinghoe Conservation Area was designated in 1972 by Lewes District Council and the boundary encompasses most of the village and includes a number of modern housing developments of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The centrepiece of the conservation area is the 12th century church of St John's, and scattered along the winding main street are a number of listed cottages, at least one of them dating back to the early 16th century, and one, The Old Vicarage, with some even earlier fabric. The village is characterised by these modest vernacular buildings and the use of flint, brick and handmade clay tiles. The location between the foot of the steep scarp slope (part of the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the river provides stunning views in many directions.

2.2 THE PURPOSE OF A CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISAL

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. 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”.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of these conservation areas. Section 72 also specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development within a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

In response to these statutory requirements, this document defines and records the special architectural and historic interest of the Piddinghoe Conservation Area and identifies opportunities for enhancement. It is in conformity with English Heritage guidance as set out in “Guidance on conservation area appraisals” (August 2005). Additional government guidance regarding the management of historic buildings and conservation areas is set out within “Planning Policy Guidance



The village street

15: Planning and the Historic Environment” (PPG15). Government advice on archaeology, which is relevant to the Piddinghoe Conservation Area, is set out in “Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology” (PPG16).

This document therefore seeks to:

- Define the special interest of the Piddinghoe Conservation Area by analysing its historical development, landscape setting, spaces, buildings and activities;
- Identify negative features and provide a list of improvements and actions, most of which will be the responsibility of Lewes District Council;
- Carry out a review of the existing conservation area boundary and make recommendations for change as appropriate.

English Heritage recommends that once a character appraisal is completed, a further document, the Management Proposals, is drawn up, ideally with the help and co-operation of the local community. This would provide more detailed guidelines to prevent harm and achieve enhancement, based on the various issues identified in the character appraisal. It is hoped that the District will be able to fund this more detailed work at some stage in the future.

Survey work for this document was carried out in October 2006 by The Conservation Studio, when a full photographic record was also taken of the area and its buildings. Unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution, trees, water courses, views and areas and buildings for enhancement were noted amongst other matters and recorded on a Townscape Appraisal Map. The omission of any particular feature does not imply that it is of no significance.



View over the River Ouse valley

Additionally the existing boundary of the conservation area was carefully surveyed and additions and deletions considered. These are detailed in Chapter 8 *Recommendations*.

2.3 THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

This document therefore provides a firm basis on which applications for future development within the Piddinghoe Conservation Area can be assessed. It should be read in conjunction with the wider development plan policy framework as set out in the East Sussex Structure Plan 1991-2011, the Brighton and Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011, and in Lewes District Council's Local Plan, adopted in March 2003.

In the Local Plan, Inset Map No. 2 confirms that the following policies apply to the whole settlement of Piddinghoe, including the conservation area:

- A Planning Boundary defines the extent of allowable development around Piddinghoe. This encompasses the built-up part of the conservation area, but excludes the following sites from future development:
 - St John's Church and car park, and the land down to the River Ouse;
 - Land to the north-west of Blythe Cottage, as far as the northern end of the conservation area;
- Excluded land outside the conservation area:
 - The Hoe Recreation Ground;
 - Properties to the south of, and including, Honey Hill.
- Countryside Policies (which limit development) apply to the land beyond the Planning Boundary;
- The South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers Piddinghoe and the surrounding countryside.

Other policies in the Local Plan, which relate to listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeology and new development are included at Appendix 2.

The 2003 Local Plan will shortly be replaced by a new *Local Development Framework*. This new planning system was established by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which abolishes Structure and Local Plans and replaces them with *Local Development Documents*. More information about this important change to the planning system can be found on the District Council's website:

www.lewes.gov.uk.

2.4 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

This document was initially drafted following a meeting with representatives from Piddinghoe Parish Council and local historians on 14th September 2006. A walkabout with some of these representatives was held on the 27th October 2006, when the extent of the conservation area boundary was discussed, along with some of the main problems and issues which face the community. Following this meeting, a first draft was agreed with the District Council and the document was then put on the District Council's website from mid-December 2006 for six weeks. After the completion of this period of public consultation, the final draft was produced and the document illustrated and printed.

3 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING

3.1 LOCATION AND ACTIVITIES

Piddinghoe is located within the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) two kilometres to the north of Newhaven, and some 12 kilometres south from Lewes, the county town of East Sussex. The village lies next to the River Ouse and is fortunately now by-passed by the C7 Newhaven-Lewes road, which diverts from the original village lane to pass to the west of the centre of the historic core of the settlement. The conservation area is centred on St John's Church, which lies on a small promontory overlooking the river, with the village being linked by a meandering lane.

Piddinghoe is primarily a residential village although Courthouse Farm still runs as a smallholding on the edge of the conservation area. There is no school, public house, shop or Post Office, these facilities now being provided in Newhaven. The only non-residential use is the Newhaven Deep Sea Anglers Club which operates from the wharf on the northern edge of the conservation area. To the south, but outside the conservation area boundary, the Seaford and Newhaven Yacht Club is based on the former clay pit which now forms a lake suitable for boating.

3.2 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Piddinghoe lies on a low promontory overlooking the River Ouse above the 10 metre contour and therefore above the floodplain. The river valley runs approximately north to south and is completely flat and crossed by deep drainage ditches. On the eastern side of the valley a loop of water marks the former course of the river prior to the improvements which were carried out in the late 18th and 19th centuries to improve the flow of water. On the other side of the valley, the Downs rise again towards Tarring Neville, with its huge chalk pits. A slight dip in the Downs to the immediate west of the village provides a small stream which flows through the field to the north of Courthouse Farm, feeding into a pond which is contained by the C7 and then into the River Ouse at the wharf.

The geology of the area is dominated by the chalk which provides lime and flints for building, and the clay which was dug out of the river valley for use in the Southerham Cement Works and the pottery and brick-making industry which, until 1913, was based on the northern edge of Piddinghoe.



The northern approach into the conservation area



The River Ouse next to Piddinghoe



Views over the River Ouse from the public footpath



Views over the River Ouse from the churchyard



Flint was once the most dominant building material in the conservation area



View from the churchyard towards the A26



The northern approach into the conservation area

3.3 RELATIONSHIP OF THE CONSERVATION AREA TO ITS SURROUNDINGS

Piddinghoe is defined by its location on a small spit of land between the South Downs and the River Ouse. The C7 follows the 10 metre contour and connects Lewes to Newhaven although it is no longer the main route, which is now provided by the A26 which is located on the eastern side of the valley. The village is therefore “contained” by the river and the hills to the west, although its slightly elevation position provides stunning views across the river valley in many directions. Newhaven is the nearest town (two kilometres) with its busy port, supermarket and shops, but Piddinghoe feels quite remote from the bustle and noise of this much larger settlement.

3.4 BIODIVERSITY

The whole of Piddinghoe and the surrounding countryside is part of the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a landscape of national significance with policies in both Structure and Local Plans for its protection. Sheep grazing is the main farming activity on the Downs, with arable crops being grown in rotation on the flatter fields. The flat valley bottom provides pasture for cattle and sheep. Towards Seaford, part of the River Ouse valley has been returned to salt marshland and is designated as a nature reserve for wild birds.

There are a number of footpaths connecting Piddinghoe with Peacehaven and Telscombe, one of them following the line of the former road to Lewes as far as Deans Farm.

4 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY

4.1 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Early Saxon settlements appear to have been established in the area following the retreat of the Romans in the 4th century AD. At this time the Ouse valley would have been a tidal estuary with areas of easily worked fertile soil on its edges, and the Saxons seem to have created a number of farms at intervals along the river now partly represented by the established villages of Kingston, Swanborough, Iford (comprising Norton and Sutton), Northease, Rodmell, Southease, and Piddinghoe.

Saxon England was divided into counties, rapes and hundreds. Piddinghoe was included in the Hundred of *Holmestrow* which in 1086 (the date of the Domesday survey) included Rodmell, *Hertinges* (including Piddinghoe) and *Orleswick*. By 1220 the Manor of Piddinghoe is recorded to be in the ownership of William de Warenne, builder of Lewes castle and founder of the Cluniac priory at Southover. His descendent John de Warenne handed over the manor to William Bardolf, Lord of Plumpton, who held the manor until his death in 1275. For the next few centuries the manor appears to have been controlled from Plumpton, since Nicholas Carew of Plumpton is recorded as holding the manor of Piddinghoe in 1536. The title of Lord of the Manor passed through a number of ownerships, ending up in the hands of the Earl of Sheffield in the mid-19th century. The last Lord of the Manor was Thomas Colgate, who purchased the title from the Earl of Sheffield in 1903.

The circular churchyard to St John's Church in Piddinghoe may indicate that a pre-Conquest, Saxon church was already located on the site but there is no archaeological proof of this. However, the church does retain an early 12th century round tower, one of only two in the area, Southease being the other. The nave and north aisle are of the same date, whilst the south aisle is late 12th century and chancel arch early 13th century. The church may well have been paid for by the monks of Lewes Priory who built other churches along the Ouse valley. As well as the tower, the nave also retains some 12th century work, although it was much altered in the 13th and 14th centuries, by which time a chancel and north aisle had been added. A south aisle and porch were added in the 19th century when the church was also restored.

Within Piddinghoe are a number of very early vernacular houses, dating to the 13th century onwards. With the church, these confirm the establishment of a modest settlement from the early 12th century onwards, which appears to have stretched up Harping Hill along the original valley road which led to Lewes. This site can still be traced in the "lumps and bumps" in the fields to the north and west of Headlands and Harping Hill House, and may have been abandoned after the mid-14th century when the Black Death resulted in the depopulation of many settlements. Part of this site, of possible archaeological potential, is proposed for inclusion in the revised conservation area boundary (see Chapter 8 *Recommendations*).



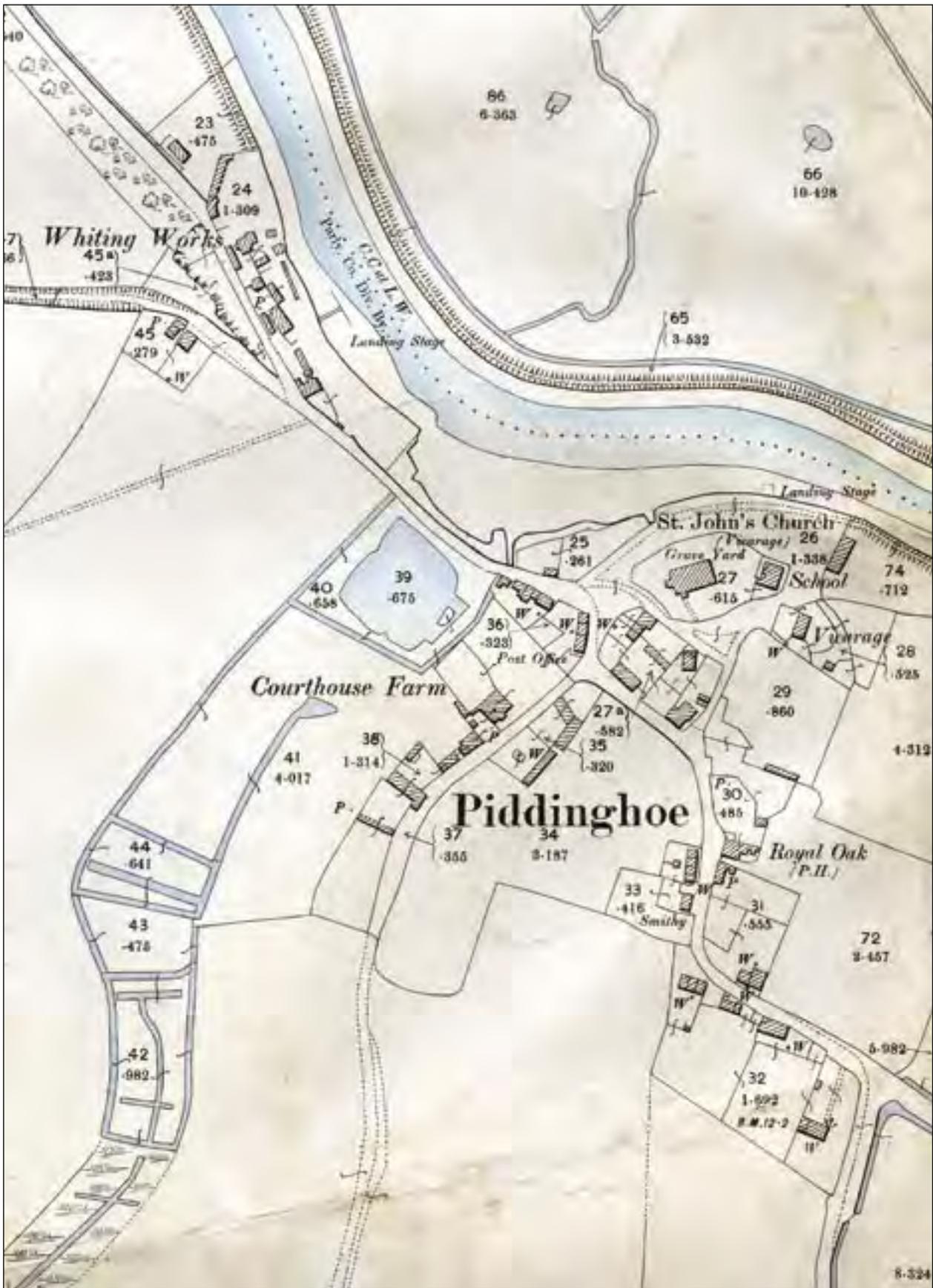
St John's Church



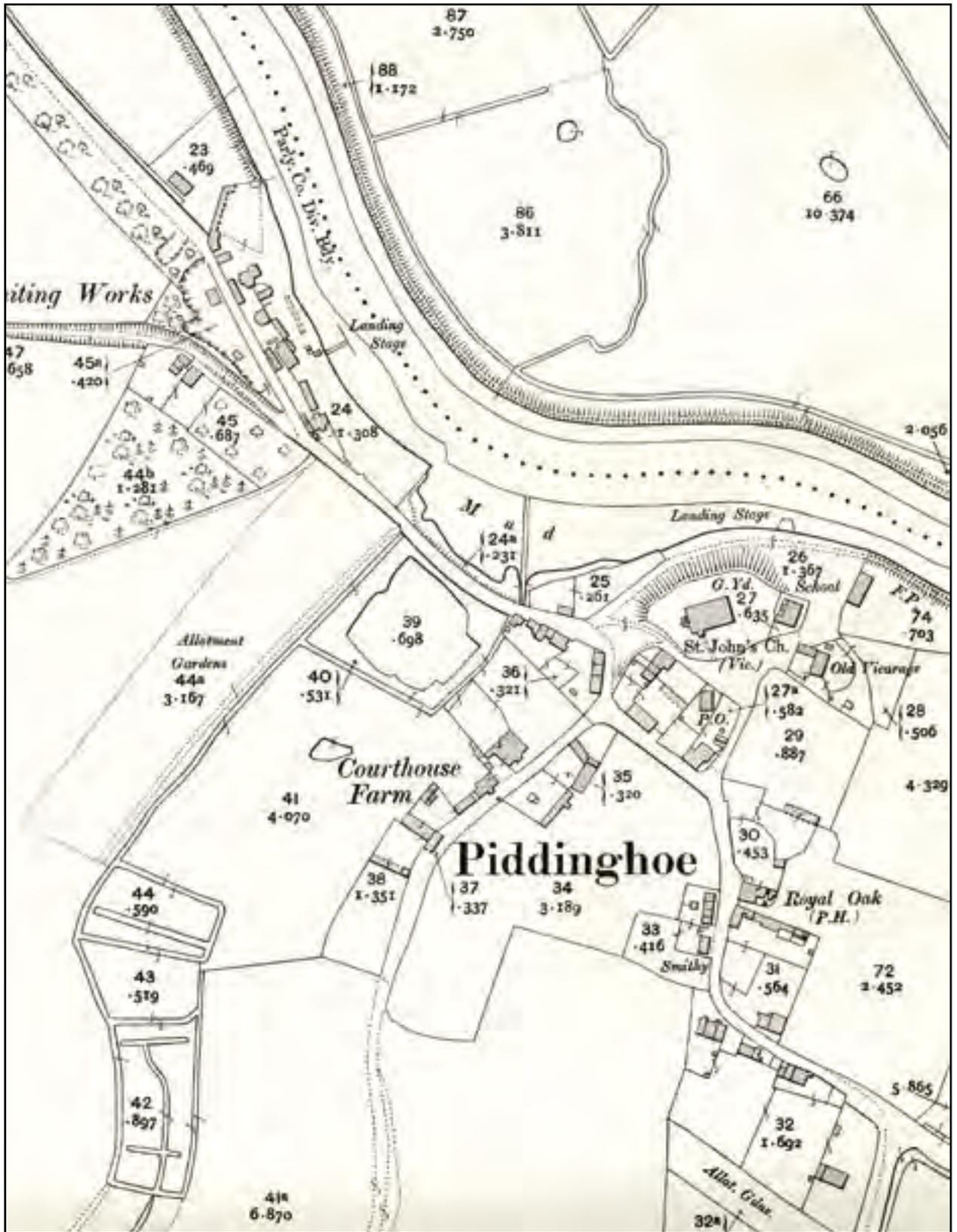
The Old Vicarage is the oldest house in the village



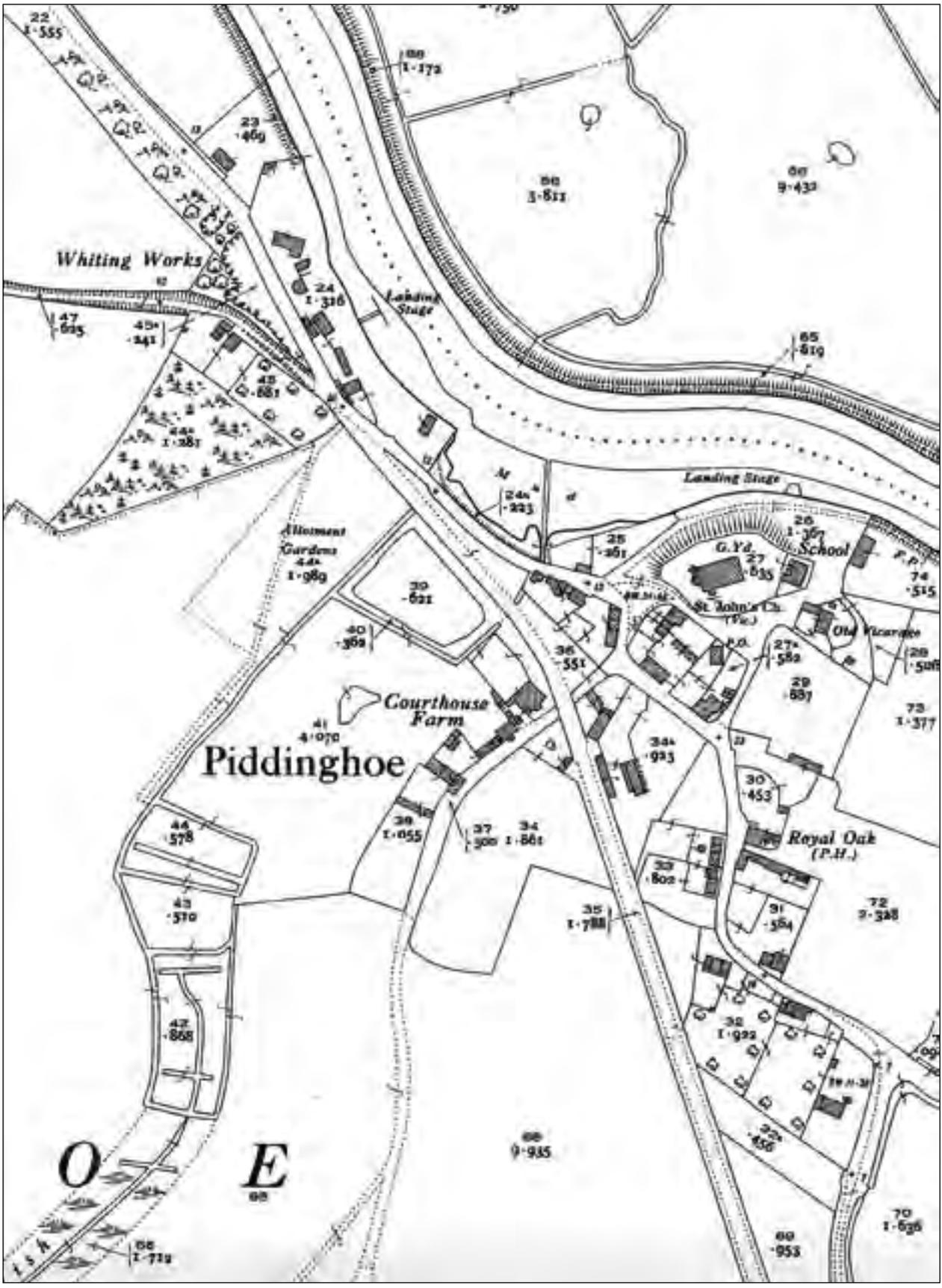
Deans Farm estate map 1806



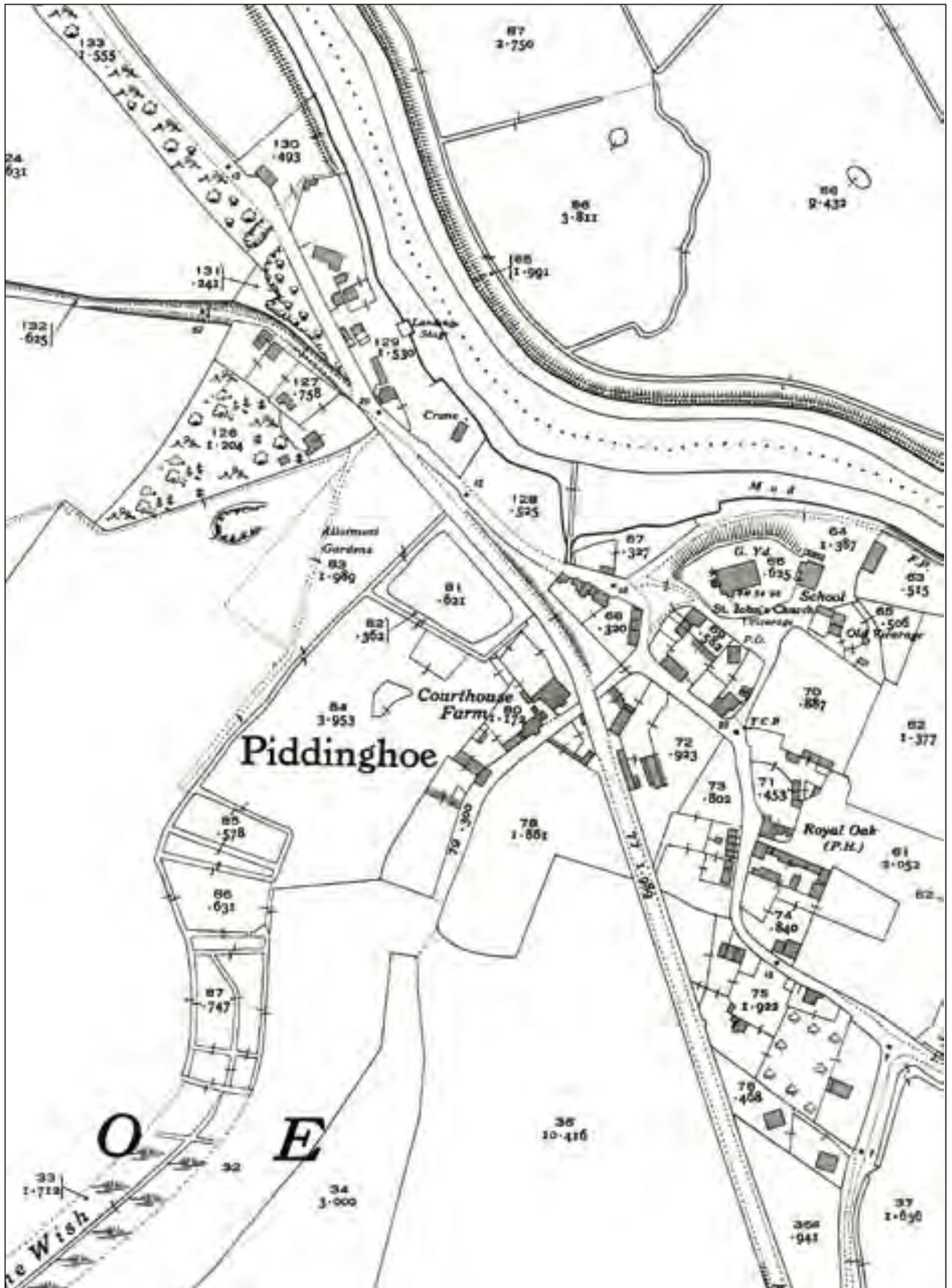
1897 Ordnance Survey



1908 Ordnance Survey



1929 Ordnance Survey



1939 Ordnance Survey

Piddinghoe therefore developed very slowly as a minor adjunct of the manor at Plumpton, with agriculture and fishing being the principal occupations. A map of 1806 confirms that the Earl of Chichester owned the land to the north of Piddinghoe, based on Deans Farm and Hoddern Farm. This map also shows the original route of the valley road which followed the higher land, avoiding the flooded valley of the river below. At this time, the Earl of Sheffield owned the land south of Deans, comprising the fields and buildings associated with Courthouse Farm.

The map of 1897 shows Piddinghoe as a small village surrounded by the fields of Courthouse Farm. Its northern end was marked by the quarry, kilns and sheds of the Whiting (formerly Brick and Tile) works. Notable buildings were the relatively new school (1879) and the Royal Oak Public House (1892), the shop and post office being located in old cottages. The majority of the men worked on the land, a small number at the Whiting Works (until it closed in 1913) and at the Navigation Board, the rest walking to Newhaven Docks and Railway.

In 1910 the land which was owned by Courthouse Farm, and which was located closest to the sea, was sold for development. This was followed,



Brookside

in 1912, by the similar sale of much of the land owned by Hoddern Farm. Together the land formed the new town of Peacehaven, which, given its own identity in 1929, halved the area of Piddinghoe parish.

In 1923 the Piddinghoe by-pass was opened, cutting off Courthouse Farm and Harping Hill from the rest of the village. Three new houses were built in the 1920s, including Brickyard House (later renamed Kiln Cottage) which became a guest house and tea room in the 1930s. At this time neither Piddinghoe or Newhaven could provide enough jobs for the increased numbers needing work, and so began an exodus of younger



The southern approach to Piddinghoe

men and women out of the village. Piddinghoe remained a rural backwater and electricity did not arrive until 1939, with mains drainage not being provided until 1962.

Change accelerated after World War II. In 1947 came the first substantial development, in Brookside, where the Council built ten houses and two bungalows for villagers whose old rented homes were in a poor state of repair. In the 1950s farm workers comprised only 23% of the working population, and the first 'outsiders' came to live in Piddinghoe. In the 1960s 20 new houses were built, mostly grouped on the three fields which still edged the village street. In 1952 the school closed, parents then having the choice of sending their children to either Rodmell or Newhaven. A sailing club started on the former clay pit, and a village hall was started but never completed due to funding problems. Deans Farm was sold and the various tied cottages in Piddinghoe associated with Deans went into private ownership. In 1966 the South Downs AONB was designated, and at about the same time the Newhaven Deep Sea Anglers Club began operating from Piddinghoe. A village hall was finally completed in 1973, incorporating a 19th century brick and flint cowshed. Further new housing was added in the 1960s - Court Farm Close and Shepherds Close. In 1982 the kiln on the northern edge of the conservation area was almost completely rebuilt using the original materials, and at about the same time, a modern house (Headlands) was built rather dramatically in the former chalk quarry on the opposite side of the road. In 1992 the Royal Oak Public House was partially destroyed by fire, and was subsequently rebuilt as a private house.

Today, Piddinghoe is a quiet, residential village with a strong sense of community, helped by the many activities which take place in the village hall and on the river.



Village Hall of 1973

4.2 ARCHAEOLOGY

Neolithic man inhabited the South Downs and there are remains of tumuli on the tops of the Downs overlooking the village. There are no Scheduled Monuments within the conservation area, although the area to the north of Headlands and Harping Hill House is a possible area of archaeological potential.



Headlands

5 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

5.1 PLAN FORM, SITE LAYOUT AND BOUNDARIES

The Piddinghoe Conservation Area is notable for the following spatial features:

- Buildings are loosely spaced along a meandering lane, with bends creating closed vistas;
- The churchyard and the green in front of it are the centre of the village, although they lie off the main street;
- A grass bank in front of Church Cottages is significant;
- The River Ouse forms a strong boundary defining the eastern edge of the village;
- The C7 forms a similarly strong boundary to the west;
- The Hoe Recreation Ground is the most important open space (currently outside the conservation area).

Mostly the historic buildings are detached or semi-detached, although some form small terraces. These buildings usually sit on or close to the road, with back gardens hidden by the buildings. By contrast, the 20th century houses sit back further from the street, with front gardens, and are arranged in a more regimented pattern. Sometimes this has allowed the creation of off-street parking and driveways to garaging.

Boundaries are created using local flint or hedging. The 20th century properties use a variety of timber fencing and walling made from concrete or brick, such as the entirely appropriate traditional post-and-rail timber fence which marks the driveway leading to the village hall and recreation ground.

5.2 LANDMARKS, FOCAL POINTS AND VIEWS

The conservation area provides a number of well detailed, attractive historic buildings which together form a cohesive whole despite 20th century intrusions. The principal focal building is undoubtedly St John's Church with its round flint tower and stumpy spire. This is visible from certain view points within the village, most notably along the grassy lane which leads from Courthouse Farm, across the C7, and into the village. The church sits on a slight hillock and this inevitably provides it with a high degree of visibility, especially when viewed from across the valley of the River



View northwards towards The Old Post Office



Outside Oak Cottages



Entrance to Village Hall



St John's Church viewed across the Village Green



Piddinghoe retains strong links with the sea (Newhaven Deep Sea Anglers Club)



The Village Green with The Old Vicarage on the right



Trees at the northern entrance to Piddinghoe off the C7



Entrance to the Village Green

Ouse from Tarring Neville. The lack of any “grand” house in the village also means that there is little visual competition for the church as all of the other historic buildings are relatively modest houses or cottages. However, the bends in the main streets do provide some short-range views, sometimes focussing onto historic buildings such as The Old Post Office.

Views into and out of the conservation area are many and varied, but of note are the views to the north and east from the churchyard, over the river, and along the river path towards Lewes or Newhaven. The boats in the Newhaven Deep Sea Anglers Club provide a picturesque focal point to the north of the village, best appreciated from the river path where it passes below the churchyard.

5.3 OPEN SPACES, TREES AND LANDSCAPE

There is no specific public open space currently within the Piddinghoe Conservation Area but the green in front of the church is highly significant despite being partially and very informally used for car parking. This space links through to the high grass bank in front of Church Cottages, leading northwards and passing the timber post with a golden fish, erected to mark the Millennium. To the east, the green also connects via a grassed footpath to the river bank and riverside walk. This walk continues in both directions, but there is no crossing point over the river so the land on the east side of the river remains tantalising inaccessible, although views over it are easily obtained, especially from the churchyard. The churchyard and the land immediately surrounding it are very important as they bring the countryside into the centre of the village and help to strengthen the rural character of Piddinghoe. Another wide grass verge, with a small pond, are notable at the southern entrance to Piddinghoe.

There are good clumps of mature trees around the churchyard, beyond Harping Hill House and Headlands, and around The Hoe Recreation Ground. This is a well used public amenity which it is suggested should be included within the conservation area. The most significant trees are marked on the Townscape Appraisal Map.

The village lies within the South Downs AONB and as such is surrounded by beautiful landscape, best appreciated from Lodge Hill above Piddinghoe, or from across the river valley from Tarring Neville.

5.4 PUBLIC REALM

There are no pavements in Piddinghoe apart from some at the northern entrance to the village and along the C7, where they are simply surfaced in black tarmac. These have narrow (150 mm) kerbs made from granite setts or from modern concrete. The blue paviors outside Old Cottage, presumably on private land, are an unfortunate intrusion, and there are other regrettable examples of this type of modern material on other driveways and front areas. There is some traditional brick paving in the churchyard. Grass verges are notable in a number of locations around the church and along the riverside walk.

Concrete seats facing the riverside walk are in poor condition. There is no street lighting in the conservation area but there are a number of timber telegraph poles at various locations, not obviously detrimental. On the C7 is a small timber boarded bus shelter. A bright red telephone kiosk is located opposite The Old Post Office, and adjacent to this is a small timber litter bin. Close by, there are two parish notice boards at the entrance to the driveway leading up to the village hall.



Telephone kiosk outside The Old Post Office



6 THE BUILDINGS OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

6.1 BUILDING TYPES

The village is almost completely residential so historic buildings types are mainly confined to modestly sized houses and cottages, which may be detached, semi-detached, or in short terraces. St John's Church is therefore the only building which particularly draws the eye. Opposite Court Farm Close, a former barn was converted into a house in the 1960s and this, along with the former boathouse by the river, represents the only example of this type of agricultural building in the conservation area. The kiln on the northern edge of the conservation area is an unusual survival of the industrial development of Piddinghoe in the 19th century.

6.2 LISTED BUILDINGS

There are 19 listed buildings or entries in the conservation area, all of them grade II apart from St John's Church which is listed grade I. This retains an early 12th century circular flint tower, with a short spire, and a later 12th century nave, although this has been heavily remodelled. The other listed buildings are all houses or cottages which divide into two types:

- Early timber-framed cottages, refaced in flint in the 19th century;
- 18th and 19th century cottages and houses, built originally in flint.

Of the first group, the earliest appears to be The Old Vicarage, which is mentioned in a document of 1258, and although it has been much altered, may retain some fabric from the 14th century. It appears to have been built as a two bay structure with a later cross wing being added. Another notable property is The White Cottage, a former hall house in which can be seen the remains of a late 14th century smoke hood. The building was altered in c.1600 and again in the 19th century. The Old Post Office and Rose Cottage are both "hall houses" which have been floored over, and as such must be earlier than the mid-16th century when such features became unfashionable. Dates of between 1400 and 1450 have been suggested for both. Jasmine Cottage and Roe Cottage form a pair which are the only example of exposed timber-framing in the conservation area. They retain a roof structure with drop ties typical of the early to mid-17th century. No. 1 Harping Hill Cottages has been faced in flint but the general



A former barn has been converted for residential use



The Old Post Office



Rose Cottage



Jasmine Cottage and Roe Cottage

form suggests a possibly 17th century timber-framed structure. Cobblers, listed as c.1830 (when it was probably refronted) encompasses a much earlier building, dating to the later half of the 16th century, whose steeply pitched roof can be seen from the back. Next door, nos. 1 and 2 Church Cottages have brick elevations with pleasing Georgian details, including sash windows and panelled front doors. The cottages were once one building, constructed in c.1700, and sub-divided in c.1828.

The second group of buildings comprise simple, rectangular flint cottages or smaller houses dating to the 18th and early 19th centuries. These include Blythe Cottages (nos. 1-4), Flint Cottage and St John's Cottage, South Green and Wharf Cottage. South Green dates to the mid-17th century and deeds exist to trace it back to 1676 at least.

Finally, the list for Piddinghoe includes the base of the former village stocks, located in St John's Churchyard, and the former brick kiln facing the C7, which was largely rebuilt in 1982.



Blythe Cottages (Nos. 1-4)



Wharf Cottage



Cobblers



The former Royal Oak Public House and malthouse



Nos. 1 & 2 Church Cottages



The Old Cottage



Courthouse Farm



The gablet in The Old Post Office can just be seen on the right



Rounded flints are used in the former threshing barn, since used as a boathouse



Hand made clay tiles are an important local material

6.3 POSITIVE BUILDINGS

There are a number of unlisted historic buildings in the Piddinghoe Conservation Area which make a *positive* contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. These buildings have been identified during the survey process and, as recommended in PPG15, are recorded on the Townscape Appraisal Map. There is a general presumption that positive buildings within the conservation area will be protected from demolition and the District Council will be especially vigilant when considering applications for alteration or extension.

The positive buildings vary but include Courthouse Farmhouse, a possibly 17th century building refronted in the early 19th century and sadly much altered since; the adjoining brick and flint barn, of the mid-18th century; Oak Cottages, a terrace of four cottages dating to before 1840 (when they are shown on the Tithe Map) but with details of c.1900; Old Forge, also of before 1840; Malthouse, noted as an ‘extensive malthouse’ in 1829, with its ruined premises behind; the former Royal Oak Public House, dated 1892; the Old Cottage, now much extended, which is also on the 1840 map; and the flint and brick former threshing barn, known locally as the boathouse, on the bank of the River Ouse.

6.4 BUILDING STYLES, MATERIALS AND COLOURS

The historic buildings in Piddinghoe have a variety of styles, according to date, but they are basically very simple as befits their rural location. There are therefore no examples of any “polite” buildings, such as formal terraces or set pieces, rather the character is of simple, vernacular buildings which were built to house farm workers (for both Courthouse Farm and Deans Farm) and the occasional farm owner or tenant in a slightly more prestigious building. What is of especial significance is the survival of a number of very early secular buildings, only some of which have been archaeologically evaluated and recorded.

These earlier buildings tend to be modestly sized, constrained by the length of timber which made up the original framework of the structure. Two or three bay widths are common. They have steeply pitched hipped or half hipped roofs, which may have originally been thatched, although they are all now covered in handmade clay tiles.

Occasionally they have gablets in the gables to allow smoke out, indicating an open hall (e.g. The White Cottage and The Old Post Office). This general form continued well into the 19th century although the material changed from timber with wattle and daub infill panels to flint and brick.

The only house of any pretension is nos. 1 and 2 Church Cottages, with its tall sash windows, almost symmetrical front, and timber porches supported on twisted columns made from terracotta blocks manufactured at the Piddinghoe brick and tile works.

The boathouse on the river, and the former barn to Courthouse Farm, now a house, represent the only buildings in the present conservation area which were obviously once in agricultural use, a surprising fact considering that the main occupation was farming. They are both built from flint with red brick dressings and steeply pitched roofs, the roof to the boathouse being partially covered in corrugated asbestos.

Flints are used for walls to the buildings and boundary walls throughout Piddinghoe, and this almost universal material gives the conservation area a very definite character. Knapped (split) flint, with red brick dressings to the quoins (corners), window openings and doors, are used for the majority of the listed buildings as well as many of the unlisted ones. Rounded flints, possibly from the beach, are used on the former boathouse next to the river. A number of the flint buildings have been painted, usually white, a somewhat regrettable feature. There is some painted weather-boarding, most of it modern and used on extensions or for alterations to historic buildings. Cobblers is unusually faced in Roman cement, a typical feature of the early to mid-19th century. In urgent need of repair, the new owner of Cobblers has agreed a schedule of improvements with the District Council and work is expected to commence soon.

Reddy/orange handmade clay tiles are used throughout the conservation area providing a pleasant undulation and unevenness to the

roofscape. Brick chimneys are usually located axially at either end of the building, or for the earlier properties, in the centre of the building, creating a lobby at the front (e.g. Rose Cottage).

Most of the cottages have paired casement timber windows with slim glazing bars, a typical vernacular detail. These are recessed well into the wall, with the windows sitting within their frames in the traditional way to create a flush surface, unlike the modern detail where the casement sits on the front of the frame. Some, such as The Old Post Office, open along horizontal grooves rather than being side hung (Yorkshire or Sussex sashes). Usually these are located immediately underneath the eaves, which tend to be very low. Taller sash windows are also used where the status of the building was slightly grander, such as for nos. 1 and 2 Church Cottages, which also retains two early 19th century panelled doors. Otherwise most of the front doors are modern copies of traditional boarded doors, and are usually painted without any glazing.



Varied windows on Rose Cottage



7 ISSUES

7.1 KEY POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS

This character appraisal concludes that the key *positive* characteristics of the Piddinghoe Conservation Area are:

- Location between the South Downs and the River Ouse;
- Small linear village based on a winding village street;
- St John's Church sits on a mound with a circular churchyard;
- Informal village green and gravelled car park and access road with grass verges;
- Concentration of historic buildings around the church;
- Interesting mix of cottages and houses, with no high status houses;
- Rural character reinforced by the flint walls, grass verges and open gardens with trees and planting;
- Proximity of the river with its fishing club providing links to the sea.
- Use of red clay roof tiles, flint walling and red brick;
- Stunning views over the River Ouse valley;
- 20th century housing development has not spoil the historic core of the village.

- Some inappropriate garaging (e.g. The Old Cottage);
- The poor condition of Cobblers, a grade II listed building (though work should commence soon);
- Poor condition of the former boathouse on the riverside;
- Painted brick and flint walling (e.g. Blythe Cottages).



Nos. 1 & 2 Church Cottages

7.2 KEY NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS

This character appraisal concludes that the key *negative* characteristics of the Piddinghoe Conservation Area are:

General:

- Busy traffic along the C7;
- Despite 20 mph zone in the village some traffic still goes too fast;
- Overhead cables in some locations;
- Radio communication mast on The Lair;
- Use of concrete blocks in wall at entrance to Kiln Cottage;
- Inappropriate modern paving materials on private land adjacent to the street;
- Poor condition of the public seating along the riverside walk.



Radio communications mast at The Lair

Buildings specific:

- Over-extension of a number of unlisted and listed buildings (e.g. Old Cottage);
- Some 20th century development of little merit (e.g. Saltings);



Saltings

7.3 ISSUES

The Piddinghoe Conservation Area encompasses an attractive rural settlement with few obvious threats to its character although incremental change could adversely affect the quality of the environment if not controlled properly. The buildings are generally in good condition and generally the area is clearly a desirable location in which to live. However there are a number of issues (which the District Council is mainly responsible for) which will need to be resolved if the conservation area is to be protected from unsympathetic changes. These are:

1 The quality of new development

The conservation area has already been subject to a large amount of infill development, mainly in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. There are no few obvious sites for redevelopment, although some of the houses do have large gardens which could be perceived as having development potential.

The over-extension of existing buildings, such as has already happened at the Old Cottage and Trenchards, is another issue. There are also some examples of unsympathetic garages in the conservation area, with flat roofs and/or metal doors, which do not fit in with the existing historic buildings.

2 The condition of buildings

Two buildings have been noted as being in poor condition. These are:

- Cobblers, a grade II listed building close to the church (though work is expected to commence soon);
- The former boathouse next to the river (unlisted but noted as *positive*).

3 Archaeology

It has been noted that there are several buildings within the conservation area which date to the late medieval period. These are:

- The Old Vicarage;
- The Old Post Office;
- Rose Cottage;
- The White Cottage.

Brief reports have already been prepared for The White Cottage, Roe and Jasmine Cottages, nos. 1 and 2 Church Cottages, Cobblers, Halyards and South Green by a local historian, Dr Annabel Hughes. A detailed report was produced on the Old Post Office by David Martin, of the Institute of Archaeology, London University, in 1995. Further investigation would be helpful.

4 Traffic management and the public realm

Traffic is always busy along the C7 and frequently traffic through the village exceeds the 20 mph speed limit, despite speed signs prepared by local children – a pleasing feature.

New public seating is urgently required along the riverside walk.

5 Conservation Area boundary review

As part of the appraisal process, the conservation area boundary was reviewed. It was considered that a few amendments could be made, as detailed in Chapter 8 *Recommendations*.



Trenchards



Northern entrance to Piddinghoe

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the various Issues identified in the preceding chapter, the following recommendations are made:

8.1 THE QUALITY OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

- The District Council should ensure that all new development in the conservation area adheres to Local Plan policies and to the spirit of advice contained in PPG15 about conservation area management. Generally, there should be a presumption in favour of retaining existing gardens and green open spaces;
- Applications for new garages and other buildings should only be allowed where the new building does not impinge on the existing street scene.

8.2 THE CONDITION OF BUILDINGS

- The District Council should ensure that Cobblers, a listed building, is repaired as soon as possible, and should open discussions with the owner of the former boathouse to see if an approved schedule of repairs could be agreed to be implemented as soon as is practicable.



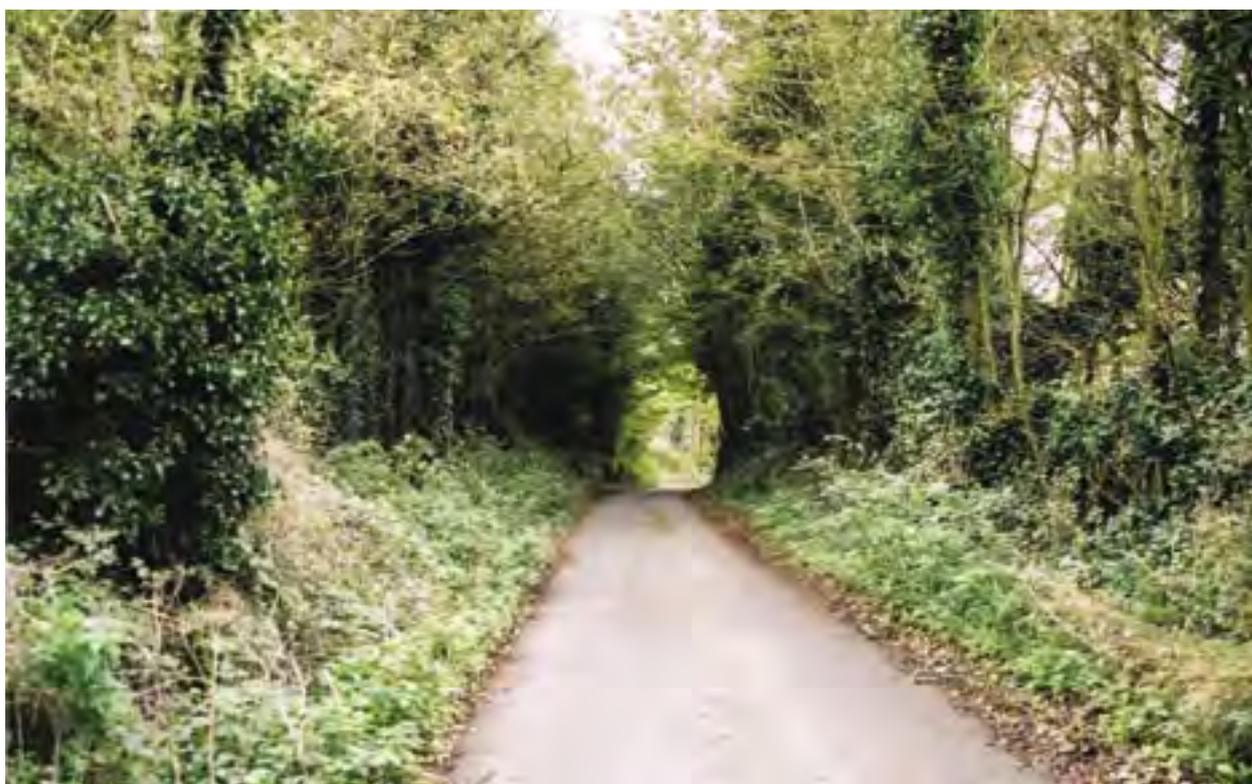
Flint Cottage, No.1 Harping Hill

8.3 ARCHAEOLOGY

- The District Council and Parish Council could discuss ways in which the owners of the older listed buildings in the conservation area could be encouraged to undertake an archaeological evaluation of their properties.

8.4 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND THE PUBLIC REALM

- The District Council and the Parish Council could consider ways of encouraging traffic to adhere to the 20 mph speed limit, perhaps by some low key traffic management features at each entrance to the village, which must be appropriate to the rural setting.



Harping Hill

8.5 CONSERVATION AREA BOUNDARY REVIEW

As part of the appraisal process, the conservation area boundary was reviewed and the following changes are recommended:

- Add properties along Harping Hill, and the fields beyond*.
 - This would encompass a listed building (no. 1 Harping Hill, also known as Flint Cottage and dating to the 17th century if not earlier) and the possible remains of earlier settlement to the north of Harping Hill House and Headlands. It would also include the mature trees which form a backdrop to Harping Hill House.
- Add Courthouse Farm and its stables and barn.
 - Historically these buildings once formed a very important part of Piddinghoe and were cut off from the rest of the village by the construction of the by-pass in the 1920s. The house retains the general form of a 17th century building although it has been much altered. The flint and brick stables and barns are both in poor condition but form an important group with the farmhouse.
- Add The Hoe Recreation Ground.
 - This is an open green area, surrounded by trees, which is an important part of the village and should be given special protection.

**Herbetinges* (Domesday spelling) is traced through *Herpeting*, *Harpeting*, etc to 19th century *Harping*. There are recorded references to the de Herpetings from 1140 to 1308. The earliest name for the Piddinghoe area is *Alnoth in Harpeting*, followed by *Nigel of Orleswick near Harbeting* and *Norman of Horcumbe* (now Halcombe).

Information provided by Valerie Mellor



An old lane, now a footpath, connects Courthouse Farm to the centre of the village (currently in the CA)



Historic barn at Courtyard Farm



Add The Hoe



Add this part of riverside walk

APPENDIX I

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE OUSE VALLEY

The development of the parishes of Kingston, Iford, Rodmell, Southease, Piddinghoe and Newhaven is intimately linked to the topography of the region, to the River Ouse and, especially in the case of the more northern parishes, to the economic and social magnetism of Lewes, the county town.

The early economic history of the area is exemplified by Southease, which was given to Hyde Abbey in Winchester by King Edgar in 996. The grant included Telscombe, which descended with Southease until 1546. This larger estate best illustrates many of the features which can be discerned from the later sources for the parishes in the valley. These linear estates, on an east-west alignment, enjoyed the widest possible range of the resources offered by the available topography: fish and water-transport from the river (and, in the case of Southease-Telscombe, the sea); grazing and hay-meadows on the low-lying riverside pastures or, in the local vernacular, brookland; rich arable at the foot of the Downs; and sheep-pasture and road transport on the high and well-drained chalk hills or Downs. What these territories lacked was woodland and clay, so these resources, which were essential for the exploitation of the rest, were obtained from the Weald to the north.

The Domesday record of 1086 provides a snapshot of these estates in a time of transition. Before the Conquest, much of the valley had been held as part of the enormous royal manors of Iford and Rodmell. With the creation of Rapes, large territorial divisions which also served as feudal baronies, the overlordship of the entire valley passed to the Warenne lords of the Barony of Lewes. It also removed most of the long-distance economic links of the southern parishes, and instead strengthened their connections with Lewes, the chief town of the barony, where many of the manors had houses. The Normans also began the process of sub-division of the larger Saxon estates, which were fragmented in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries, partly as a result of pious grants to Lewes Priory by the Warennes and their tenants.

Domesday records churches at Iford, Rodmell and Southease; Kingston had a church, possibly built by Lewes Priory, by 1095, and the fabric of the church at Piddinghoe suggests a date early in the 12th century. Parish formation in the Ouse

Valley was somewhat haphazard, and the medieval chapels recorded at Northease could easily have developed into independent ecclesiastical parishes under different tenurial circumstances. Although the pattern of early settlement is unclear, it seems that by the end of the medieval period most of the Ouse Valley villages were nucleated on sites lying on the 50-foot contour; that at Kingston seems to be planned, whereas the other settlements cluster around their churches in a more irregular manner.

The fully-fledged system of sheep-corn husbandry was described in detail by John Rowe, a lawyer-antiquary who acted as steward of one of the lords of the barony, in 1634. The system was still carried on through the means of common fields, called 'laines', divided into furlongs, which were themselves further sub-divided into strips. Although the strips were individually owned, each proprietor (or his farmer) accepted a common timetable of ploughing, sowing and harvesting, and a common rotation of crops. After the harvest, the arable was thrown open to the common sheep flock, which at other times grazed on the 'tenantry down', usually under the care of a shepherd employed in common by the tenants. It was folded by rotation on the tenantry arable, enriching the fields with manure, the flock acting as the 'moving dunghill' described by Arthur Young. Towards the river, the brookland was also held in common, each parcel being re-assigned every year by lot.

Although in the early medieval period the lands owned outright by manorial lords - the demesne lands - would have been interspersed with those held by their tenants, by 1500 such demesnes had been concentrated in blocks. Descending the valley, Kingston was held in Tenantry, Swanborough (a former Lewes Priory holding) in demesne, the northern half of Iford in Tenantry and the southern portion (with Northease) in demesne. Rodmell was largely held in Tenantry, and by 1808 most of Piddinghoe had been amalgamated into two large farms. The tendency of lords to purchase the interests of their manorial tenants, and of the larger tenants to acquire the property of their smaller neighbours, meant that by the end of the 18th century many of the open-field strips had been amalgamated into larger enclosures; but a sizeable acreage remained. In 1810, 690 acres were enclosed at Telscombe, 2527 acres at Kingston and Iford in 1830 and 758 acres at Southease in 1836.

The same process of engrossment tended to threaten the survival of the larger farmhouses, and to encourage both the conurbation of landless cottages and depopulation. By 1615 only one man remained at Iford who was deemed able to execute the office of constable, 'all the other inhabitants of any reasonable ability having removed to Kingston, where then dwelt at the least a dozen fit for that service'. In 1634 there were already 15 cottages in Rodmell and five in Iford. In 1676 the approximate population of the parishes of Kingston, Iford, Rodmell, Southease, Telscombe and Piddinghoe was 661, which had risen to 911 by 1801. After a mid-century peak of 1233 in 1841, by 1901 the total population had declined to 955, just below its level in 1811. By 1961 this figure had risen to 4742, but that figure is inflated by the inhabitants of Peacehaven within the boundaries of Telscombe; the figure without Telscombe is 1241, of which over 400 lived in the newly-expanded Kingston.

The economic importance of the River Ouse is clear from Domesday Book: the manor of Southease owed a rent of 38,500 herrings and £4 in respect of porpoises, Iford 16,000 herrings and Rodmell 3000 herrings. In the Roman period the river entered the sea at its present mouth, but by the early middle ages the growth of a shingle bar had driven it westwards to Seaford Head and created Seaford as the out port for Lewes. That harbour too was gradually effected by silting, and by the 1530s the meadows along the estuary, and indeed as far upstream as Sheffield Bridge, lay under water almost all the year. Even the two large islands of gault clay rising above the flood level close to Iford, were almost valueless because of their inaccessibility, and merely supported the rabbit-warrens of Lewes Priory. In the 1530s Prior Crowham of Lewes sailed to Flanders at his own expense and returned with two drainage experts. In 1537, when it was reported that levels 'lay in a marsh all the summer long', a water-rate was levied on lands in the level, which funded the cutting of a channel through the accumulated shingle below Castle Hill at Meeching. One of the earliest canalisations in England, it created Newhaven, which became the out port for Lewes and dealt a further blow to the miserable port of Seaford. At a stroke the flooding dispersed and water carriage along the estuary also improved. In 1556 Sir John Gage at Firle owned a barge of three tons and there was a barge-house at the Lord's Place in Southover. The new cut was perfectly timed to allow Lewes merchants to take advantage of

the development of the iron industry, much of whose product was floated downriver from the Weald to Newhaven and shipped to London and abroad. By the 17th century the harbour mouth at Newhaven was again impeded and, after half a century of inaction and ineffective solutions, a new harbour entrance was developed between 1733 and 1735. In 1766 John Smeaton produced plans for improvements to the Ouse, and by 1793 river barges could reach 23 miles up from the sea, and 29 miles by 1812. Nine barges and four boats working chiefly on the Ouse were based at Newhaven and three boats at Piddinghoe in 1804. Although described in 1823 as 'little better than a ditch', Newhaven Harbour was again improved in 1825, when the first steam-packet service was introduced. Until the creation of the modern A27 east of Lewes in 1817 and the turnpiking of the Newhaven to Brighton route in 1824, the only way north from Newhaven lay along the west side of the Ouse Valley through Southease, Rodmell and Iford.

SOURCES

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APPENDIX 2

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

The relevant document is the *Lewes District Local Plan* adopted in March 2003.

Policies relating to conservation areas and listed buildings are included in *Chapter 8 The Historic Environment*.

The relevant policies are:

- Stewardship of the Historic Environment – Policy H1
- Listed buildings – Policy H2
- Buildings of Local, Visual or Historic Interest – Policy H3
- Conservation Area Designation, Review and Enhancement – Policy H4
- Development within or affecting Conservation Areas – Policy H5
- Commercial Activities and Conservation – Policy H6
- Traffic in Conservation Areas – Policy H7
- Archaeological Sites – Policies H9, H10 and H11
- Areas of Established Character – Policy H12
- Parks and Gardens of Special Interest – Policy H13
- Parks and Gardens of Local Interest – Policy H14



APPENDIX 3

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