

**CONSERVATION AREA
APPRAISAL**

SOUTH HEIGHTON

DESIGNATED 10.02.1976

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is a Conservation Area?

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 defines a conservation area as ‘an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’ Designation is the principal means by which local authorities apply conservation policies to a particular area. It introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve and enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define the special interest of an area.

Section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas within the District. Section 72 requires that in considering applications for development in a Conservation Area, attention shall be paid to the desirability of conserving or enhancing the character of that area.

1.2 The purpose of this Conservation Area Appraisal

Conservation Area Appraisals are an important part of the process of enhancing and conserving the character and appearance of designated areas. They play a role in making informed and sustainable decisions about the future of the area. This appraisal offers the opportunity to reassess the designated area and to evaluate and record its special interest. It has been carried out in accordance with guidelines set out in the English Heritage publication, *Guidance on conservation area appraisals (2006)*.

Features such as listed buildings, unlisted buildings which make a positive contribution, trees and important views have been recorded and indicated on a Townscape Appraisal Map. It should be noted the omission of any particular building or feature does not imply that it is of no significance.

2. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Adopted Lewes District Council Local Plan (2003) contains detailed policies relating to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. In particular, the policies detailed in Chapter 8 'The Historic Environment' are applied to development in or affecting conservation areas and planning decisions will be determined with consideration given to them. For this reason, anyone considering making an application for consent within a conservation area should consult these policies. The Local Plan is available from Lewes District Council offices or online at www.lewes.gov.uk. Pre-application advice can also be sought from Development Control and Design & Conservation Officers.

The Local Plan is currently under review and will be replaced with a Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF will consist of a portfolio of local development documents that set out the spatial planning strategy for the District Council area. Until this is in place, the Local Plan remains the statutory planning document.

In addition, broad policies relating to the consideration of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas are detailed in the South East Plan (2009). National planning policy guidance also covers these areas. In particular, Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15) – Planning and the Historic Environment, should be consulted.

3. SUMMARY OF SPECIAL INTEREST

3.1 Key Positive Characteristics

The following key features make a positive contribution to the special interest of the conservation area:

- The rural setting of the conservation area, which separates South Heighton from nearby Newhaven
- Numerous views of the surrounding open countryside, some of which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and proposed National Park
- The steep slope of Heighton Road, with its concentration of historic and traditional buildings, both listed and non-listed, and informal layout
- Use of local traditional materials, particularly flint, which is used for both buildings and boundary walls
- Heavy presence of trees which reinforces the rural character of the conservation area
- Significant open spaces preserving the setting of the conservation area
- Many traditional farm buildings, providing evidence of the settlement as a historic farming community

3.2 Recommendations

- That the quality of new development, particularly residential alterations and extensions, be better controlled through the planning process. It is suggested that an Article 4 Direction, removing permitted development rights, would allow the Local Planning Authority to have greater control over minor development
- That the semi-rural character of the conservation area be protected

4. ASSESSING SPECIAL INTEREST

4.1 Location and setting

Location and context

The village of South Heighton lies on the north eastern fringes of the town and port of Newhaven, East Sussex, and is located on the flank of the Downs on the eastern side of the Ouse Valley. The county town of Lewes lies approximately 7 miles to the north.

General character and plan form

The Conservation Area covers an area of 9.36 hectares, and is irregular in form. The main focus of the area is Heighton Road, which branches round from Denton to the south, towards the A26 Beddingham Road, which runs north to south between Beddingham and Newhaven. Despite its proximity to Newhaven, the general character of the area is that of a rural, downland hamlet, due to its setting within open fields and the agricultural nature of many of its buildings. Open space is included to the south of Manor Farmhouse, and the recreation ground and ponds to the north.

Generally, the conservation area is fairly tranquil, with little traffic passing through. Nearby Newhaven is audible from fields to the east of the conservation area, and the western boundary of the conservation area fronts the busy A26, but this has little impact within the historic core of the village which retains its peaceful character.

Landscape setting

The position of South Heighton on the flank of the Downs gives the settlement a varying topography, sloping down from higher ground westwards into the Ouse Valley.

Other than the modern development to the south-eastern corner of the conservation area, up to Badgers Hill and Glynde Cottage, the remainder of the conservation area lies outside the planning boundary. New development within this area is therefore strictly controlled. Policy CT1 of the Lewes District Local Plan Adopted March 2003 and any subsequent replacement should be referred to.

The conservation area is surrounded by, and lies partially within, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONBs are designated solely for their landscape qualities for the purpose of conserving and enhancing their natural beauty, which includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries.

The Lewes District Council Local Plan contains policies which protect the Sussex Downs AONB from inappropriate development and seek to enhance its landscape character.

The rural setting of the conservation area makes a significant contribution to its character. Views of the surrounding downland and the Ouse Valley are all regularly visible and provide important links between the settlement and its surroundings. The proximity of South Heighton to Newhaven is evident in views from the recreation ground and the west of the conservation area; and from the footpath to the north east of the settlement, yet the surrounding fields help to preserve its rural character.

The geology in and around the conservation area consists of upper chalk which contains white soft chalk with many flint nodules, and valley gravels and alluvium at the bottom of the valley.



The conservation area is set within a rural landscape

4.2 Historic development and archaeology

The origins and historic development of the area

South Heighton originated as an Ouse Valley farming village located on a slope of the valley side. The name Heighton means 'high farm or settlement', from the Old English 'heah' (high) and 'tun' (farm or settlement). This may be a reference to the village situation higher up on the Downs than the nearby settlements of Denton and Tarring Neville.

Many such villages grew up on the higher ground along the valley at points above the old flood plain, close to sources of fresh water. The settlement was ideally located to make use of the low-lying riverside pastures, and rich arable land at the foot of the Downs.

Historic maps show that the curve of Heighton Road, with buildings alongside, is historic and well-established. The 1778-1783 Yeakell & Gardner map of Sussex depicts South Heighton as 'Heighton', and shows a concentration of buildings around Heighton Road, set within a landscape of fields.

The historic core of the village is very much recognisable in the Ordnance Survey map of 1879. At this time the village remained fairly isolated within its rural landscape. The village had a school (now School House, attached to the village hall) and a smithy, located opposite the public house, which was at that time known as the Blacksmith's Arms. An independent chapel is shown on the site of South View Terrace, and the remains of a church are marked on the eastern side of Heighton Road (see *Archaeology*, below).

By 1899 the Ordnance Survey map shows the prominent terrace of Hampden Gardens, South View terrace, and what appears to be the detached house at Downs Villas. By 1911, the other semi-detached Villas have been constructed, and the public house was known by its present name, the Hampden Arms. The isolated rural setting was, at this time, largely retained. By 1938 the area immediately south of the conservation area had been turned over to allotments. This area was then developed from the mid 20th century onwards, linking the settlement with nearby Denton and the outskirts of Newhaven.

Archaeology, including scheduled monuments

Much of the settlement has been identified as the site of a medieval and post medieval village. This is designated by the County Council as an Area of Archaeological Interest. As a result, should this area be affected by development proposals a watching brief should be set up and rescue archaeology implemented in order to record details of the site.

St Martin's Church previously stood on the eastern side of Heighton Road, and in 2000 an archaeological investigation took place following the granting of planning permission for two new houses (Trusdale and Valley View). The

excavation uncovered flint and mortar wall foundations, which were interpreted as the west end of the church, which had previously been identified on historic maps. The line of the north wall was also noted, and deposits which were likely to be the remains of the church floor, as well as the font.

4.3 Spatial analysis

Character and interrelationship of spaces within the area

The conservation area has three distinct elements. Firstly, the buildings are grouped along either side of a narrow rural road which runs steeply upwards from north to south. The most significant built development is the agricultural groups to the north and south of Heighton Road. The second area is an open slope of uncultivated paddock to the rear and side of Manor Farm which is crucial in separating the historic hamlet from the modern expansion of Newhaven to the south and providing a setting for the grade II* listed building. Thirdly, a large, undeveloped area along the valley floor comprises the recreation ground and several ponds with significant tree cover. This space emphasises the rural, undeveloped character of the conservation area and provides shelter.

In this conservation area the open spaces play as important a role as the buildings themselves. The curve of Heighton Road is such that the built element almost encircles a large sloping field. The retention of this field in amongst the gradual spread of development along Heighton Road (and to the south) contributes to the spacious, rural character of this area, which would be lost were this field to be developed.

Heighton Road itself, with its unmade edges, scrubby grass verges and absence of road markings, street lighting and urban paraphernalia, contributes to the rural, tranquil and informal character of the area, particularly the section

which slopes steeply downhill from the public house between high wooded banks towards the farmyards.



Heighton Road, looking down the hill past Manor Farm

The recreation ground and ponds are important areas as they fulfil an amenity role in addition to forming tree-covered buffers from the A26 and an industrial depot, on the site of the former Sussex Portland Cement Works. The nature of these spaces again adds to the rural and spacious character of the area, as does the inclusion of a field associated with South Heighton Farm.

Key views and vistas

The valley side location gives a number of significant views and vistas, which have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map.

There are frequent glimpsed views of the rural setting of the village. A notable view point out of the conservation area can be found to the north of Glynde

Cottage, looking west across the Ouse Valley to the village of Piddinghoe, which lies on the western side of the valley and is clearly visible. A reciprocal view of South Heighton can be seen from Piddinghoe parish church, where the large field to the south of Manor Farm is of particular value in distinguishing the historic settlement from the modern extension of Newhaven to the west.

Views out to the west, across the Ouse Valley and to the Downs beyond, and to Newhaven to the south west, can be afforded across and from the recreation ground and the western boundary of the conservation area in front of the village hall.

South Heighton's proximity to the coast is evident in several distant views of the sea. The southernmost part of the conservation area, adjacent to South View Terrace, offers glimpsed views of the sea past modern development to the south; and from the footpath running south east from The Bridleway, the sea, Newhaven, and Newhaven Fort are clearly visible beyond the fields.

From The Bridleway there is a significant view across the fields behind South Heighton Farm towards Downs Villas and Tarring Neville Quarry beyond.

Views into the conservation area from the north are dominated by trees and hedges; for instance, down the lane towards the ponds, and from The Bridleway. Views in to the conservation area from the west are again mainly of trees, as the recreation ground is in the foreground, although the long terrace of Hampden Gardens is prominent when viewed from this direction. From the south, the views are more suburban, with the view up Heighton Road fronted by a Victorian terrace with modern residential development immediately beyond.

Within the conservation area itself, important views are from the bottom of Heighton Road eastwards up the hill; and the view down Heighton Road from Manor Farm, where there is also an excellent view of the surrounding rural landscape. The view along Heighton Road from the modern properties in the

south of the conservation area, towards the historic tree-lined core of the village, is also significant.

4.4 Character analysis

Activity and prevailing or former uses and their influence on the plan form and buildings

The settlement was, like most downland villages, centred on farming and agriculture. Now almost an outer suburb of Newhaven, South Heighton is mainly residential, although much evidence of its agricultural past remains. The number of former farm buildings and farmhouses provide evidence of its former function as a farming community set within a rural landscape. As is expected of a former farming settlement, the layout of the village is informal; and later Victorian and 20th century development is largely restricted to the outer limits of the conservation area.

The qualities of the buildings and their contribution to the area

There are six listed buildings within the conservation area. Five of the buildings are listed Grade II, and one, Manor Farmhouse, is listed Grade II*. The listed buildings are mainly located along the east-west stretch of Heighton Road as it slopes down towards the Ouse Valley.

Southdown Cottage and Badger's Hill form one entry on the statutory list and are located away from the other listed buildings on the eastern side of Heighton Road. This 18th century building is faced with flints, which are painted white on the roadside elevation but left exposed to the north. The building has a steep mansard roof of clay tiles. Badgers Hill has sash windows and red brick window surrounds to the upper windows, and red brick quoins left unpainted; these have been painted on Southdown Cottage and the windows here are casements. Both cottages have modern porches, and Southdown Cottage has two modern dormer windows.



Badger's Hill and Southdown Cottage

On the south side of Heighton Road, Manor Farmhouse occupies a prominent position overlooking the Ouse Valley. This L-shaped building dates to the 18th century and was probably the site of an earlier building as the chimney breast on the east wall is older. The front of the building is faced with flint with a stringcourse, window surrounds and quoins of pale buff bricks. The roof is of plain clay tiles and is hipped. The building has attractive multi-paned sash windows and the panelled front door is emphasised by a decorative fanlight and a porch with portico and columns. The side elevations are clad with clay tiles and the rear with black mathematical tiles, more typically found in nearby Lewes. Parts of the garden walls are also listed: the low red brick garden wall to the north, surmounted by iron railings with a brick pier at each end topped with a ball cap; and the taller flint retaining wall to the west.



Manor Farmhouse

To the north west of the farmhouse is an eighteenth century barn, faced with flints with red brick quoins. The barn has a slate roof; half hipped at the east end with a gable at the other. Unfortunately this was damaged by fire, but it has been repaired, which has greatly restored the character of this part of the Conservation Area.

Also on the south side of Heighton Road is Grange Farmhouse. This eighteenth century building is faced with flints with red brick window surrounds and quoins. The building has a half-hipped slate roof and a prominent rendered chimney stack to the front roof slope. The windows are sliding sashes; these are paired on the first floor and may be later replacements for earlier casement windows.

Opposite Manor Farmhouse is South Heighton Farmhouse. This eighteenth century building is stuccoed with a gabled slate roof with two dormers. The windows to the front elevation are multi-paned sashes, apart from those to the

dormers which have more modern casements and top-opening lights. The front door has an attractive trellised wooden porch with a tent-shaped canopy, and above it is a blind window which is probably evidence of the avoidance of window tax, which was not repealed until 1851. An extension to the rear is roofed with clay tiles and has modern windows without glazing bars.

To the north west of Manor Farmhouse, running parallel to the road, the remains of a long barn can be seen. This was an eighteenth century building faced with flints, with red brick quoins. Much of the building has been lost and it was de-listed in 1996. Only the front wall facing the road still remains and the doorways in this have been crudely infilled with breeze-blocks to create a wall which encloses a yard to the rear.

Unlisted buildings

In addition to the listed buildings, a number of unlisted buildings have been noted as being positive buildings, i.e. buildings that 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 by PPG15, are recorded on the Townscape Appraisal Map.

Buildings identified as making a positive contribution to the conservation area vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provide the conservation area with architectural and/or historic interest. This appraisal is not exhaustive; if a building or feature is not specifically mentioned this does not mean it is not of interest or does not make a contribution to the character of the conservation area.

Southernmost in the conservation area is South View Terrace. Although some of its character has been eroded through the loss of original features such as timber windows, and a number of satellite dishes, this Victorian terrace occupies a prominent position and has presence within the conservation area.

The Hampden Arms, the village public house, is another prominent building. Located on the eastern side of Heighton Road, this late 19th/early 20th century building is constructed from red brick at ground floor level and clad with clay hanging tiles above. Its roof has decorative terracotta ridge tiles and finials.

Bickleigh Cottage and Glynde Cottage form an attached pair of traditional cottages, constructed in flint with brick quoins and window surrounds. Bickleigh Cottage has casement windows whereas the windows of Glynde Cottage have been replaced with white uPVC, and both have modern porches. Nevertheless, they have character within the conservation area.

The Old Forge is situated at the junction of Heighton Road and The Bridleway. Constructed in flint with brick quoins and window surrounds, it has a later first floor extension which is clad in oak shingles. Whilst this property has been altered over time (for instance, it now incorporates a balcony), it is of traditional construction and in an important location on the outside of the bend in Heighton Road.

The Coach House, to the north of Heighton Road, is an attractive flint built building with buff quoins and detailing. The main building has a clay tiled roof while the smaller extension facing the road has a slate roof.

South Heighton Village Hall and The School House, the former village school, form a prominent building to the west of the conservation area. Constructed in flint, it has a decorative clay tiled roof.

Hampden Gardens is an imposing Victorian terrace of twelve houses overlooking Beddingham Road, brick built and clad in clay hanging tiles at first floor level, with dormers to the roof. The terrace has had some modern alterations, such as the replacement of original windows with uPVC, but still forms a prominent and characterful feature of the conservation area.

Downs Villas lie in the northern part of the conservation area and are fairly well screened by heavy tree coverage. These Victorian villas (two pairs of semi-detached houses and one detached house) are constructed in brick at ground floor level, with decorative random flintwork at first floor level, with red brick quoins and dressings. The original sash windows are retained to number 1 but have been replaced with uPVC elsewhere.

A number of outbuildings also make a significant contribution such as that to the west of South Heighton Farm, and the outbuildings adjoining the formerly listed barn to the north of Heighton Road.

As stated in PPG15, there is a presumption that positive buildings within the conservation area will be protected from demolition and the Council will only grant consent for applications for alterations or extensions to these buildings where they preserve or enhance their character and appearance.

Prevalent local and traditional building materials and the public realm

Flint is a prevalent traditional local material used for both buildings and walls throughout the conservation area. There are many different styles of flint work, and style and use of the flint can often reflect the affluence of the owner or the importance or prominence of the building or structure. Often fine knapped flints would be used on the main house, with less worked field flints used on boundary walls. In South Heighton it can be seen used on vernacular structures, such as high flint boundary walls, barns and outbuildings; and on more polite buildings, such as the knapped flints used to decorative effect on the front façade of Manor Farmhouse. Flint boundary walls are an extremely important feature of the conservation area and need to be retained. They are typically constructed of field flints bedded in a lime mortar.

Other materials commonly seen are brick, both red and buff, and clay hanging tiles. Roof coverings are typically slate or clay tiles.



Flint is a commonly used for walls and agricultural buildings

Road surfaces are generally tarmac, edged with small granite kerbs in places. Along the east-west stretch of Heighton Road there is a general absence of road markings, kerbs and street paraphernalia and a much more informal, rural feel.

Street lighting is unobtrusive and traditional in style.

The village bus shelter, located outside Grange Farmhouse, is traditionally constructed in timber with a clay tile roof, and is unobtrusive.

A traditional post box is situated on the wall east of the entrance to Grange Farm.

There is a traditional timber fingerpost sign located at the junction of Heighton Road and The Hollow.

The contribution made to the character of the area by green spaces and its biodiversity value

Open space makes a considerable contribution to the character of the conservation area, and is identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map. The recreation ground and ponds to the north west provide separation and screening of the village from the busy Beddingham Road. The field south of Manor Farmhouse has importance in preserving the rural character and open setting of the listed building. The open fields surrounding the conservation area enhance its rural character and provide separation from the nearby settlements of Denton and Newhaven.

Trees and hedges make a considerable contribution to the character of the conservation area, and those of particular note have been identified on the Townscape Appraisal Map. Tree cover generally increases the further north the conservation area extends. There are strong tree and hedge boundaries around the ponds, and around Downs Villas and South Heighton Farm. The recreation ground is also encircled by tree belts.

Of particular significance are the groups of trees to either side of Heighton Road, as it curves round to the north west, which give a more enclosed feel to this part of the conservation area compared with the more open area to the south. Also of importance are the trees surrounding the recreation ground and to either side of The Hollow.

Trees within the conservation area are protected, and prior to the commencement of any tree work the Local Planning Authority Tree and Landscape Officer needs to be notified.

The extent of intrusion or damage (negative factors)

A historic high flint wall opposite Manor Farmhouse is in a poor state of repair, and has collapsed in places. Its repair would be of benefit to the appearance

of the conservation area and would prevent further damage, ensuring its preservation.



Historic flint wall in need of repair

At the eastern end of Heighton Road, outbuildings are in use as a potter's premises. The front yard is highly visible from the road and is used for open storage of various items and materials. The buildings themselves are rather utilitarian in appearance. This group therefore detracts from the appearance of the surroundings and it is unfortunate that it occupies a prominent location on the corner of Heighton Road. If opportunities arise through the development control process, these should be taken to improve the appearance of this site, or to screen it from the road.

Overhead cables can have a detrimental effect on an area and along the north-south element of Heighton Road they are prevalent. Rationalisation of these would reduce their impact.

Many traditional buildings have lost their original windows and doors, which have been replaced with uPVC. Changes such as these gradually erode the character of the conservation area.

Similarly, satellite dishes placed on the front of properties can cumulatively have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the area (e.g. South View Terrace).

The existence of any neutral areas

Much modern development within the conservation area is screened by tree coverage or high flint walls and is therefore unobtrusive, or is of a relatively neutral appearance which does not actively detract from the conservation area as a whole.

There are a number of modern barns which are generally located behind more historic buildings when viewed from the road. Whilst these may be regarded as negative features within the conservation area, they do reflect the agricultural nature of the area and their utilitarian appearance does not necessarily detract from the general character of the area.

General condition of the area

Apart from the items mentioned above, the conservation area is generally in a good state of repair. Some of the former agricultural buildings have slightly ramshackle appearance but this is consistent with their use and is not detrimental to the character of the area. No buildings appear to be at risk.

Problems, pressures and the capacity for change

As previously discussed, the majority of the conservation area lies outside the planning boundary. Policies in the Lewes District Local Plan ensure that under most circumstances, development is contained within the planning boundary. This means there is a presumption against new development within much of the conservation area. However, the character of the conservation area may face pressure from alterations or extensions to existing buildings. An Article 4 Direction would further restrict permitted development rights to help prevent small, cumulative changes, which can be detrimental to the area's character and appearance. Whilst a conservation area should not be static, any change should be carried out sensitively with consideration to the special interest and character of the area.

The semi-rural nature of the conservation area makes a contribution to its character and further development or the loss of trees could harm this character.

5. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

An initial draft of the South Highton Conservation Area Appraisal was produced following a meeting in January 2008 with the area's District and Parish Councillors. The draft was posted on the Council's website and a press release sent to local newspapers to publicise the appraisal. Copies were also provided to the relevant District Councillors, and South Highton Parish Council. A consultation period of two months was given in order for comments on the draft to be submitted.

All comments received were then considered and any necessary alterations made in preparation for adoption of the document.

6. SUGGESTED BOUNDARY CHANGES

No changes to the boundary of the conservation area are proposed.

7. LOCAL GENERIC GUIDANCE

Advice for owners of properties in conservation areas on the relevant planning legislation which affects them can be found in the leaflet Planning Controls in Conservation Areas, available online at:

<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/environment/708.asp>

Further information on Listed Buildings can be found in the leaflet Listed Buildings: An owner's guide to alteration and repairs, available online at:

<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/environment/935.asp>

Further information on trees in conservation areas can be found online at:

<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/environment/5925.asp>

The above information is also available from the Planning and Environmental Services Department of Lewes District Council.

8. USEFUL INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

For further information and advice, please contact the Design and Conservation department at Lewes District Council:

Planning and Environmental Services

PO Box 166

Lewes

East Sussex

BN7 9EY

Tel: 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 website (www.lewes.gov.uk).

Historic records and Ordnance Survey maps of the area can be viewed at:

East Sussex Records Office

The Maltings

Castle Precincts

Lewes

East Sussex

BN7 1YT

Tel: 01273 482349

9. FURTHER READING

Guidance on conservation area appraisals, English Heritage, 2006.

Appendix 1
Townscape Appraisal Map