





English Heritage, has helped to restore some historic shopfronts in the conservation area as well as generally raising public awareness of the need to preserve these details.

Most of the better quality shopfronts are located in listed buildings where they are already protected, but a number are in unlisted buildings, often of Townscape Merit, where alterations or even removal may have been considered acceptable in the past. As recommended in para. 4.5, Buildings of Townscape Merit should be retained and unsympathetic alterations rejected, including the loss of historic shopfronts. This may affect proposals for change in streets such as Market Street and Fisher Street, where small shops struggle to survive and there is pressure for residential conversion.

Commercial advertising and signage is generally well controlled in the Lewes Conservation Area, mainly because the majority of the buildings in the commercial core are listed, although poorly detailed examples do remain, many of them of some years standing. However, usually most of the shops follow the design advice provided by the Council

and use hand-painted fascias and hanging signs, discretely positioned and sized. There are some examples of attractive painted hanging signs, such as the one on the front of Anne Clives House, and these should generally be encouraged. Internally illuminated signage is not allowed and there are only a few examples in the conservation area.

The best shopfronts can be found in the High Street and in Cliffe High Street. They are marked on the Character Area Townscape Appraisal maps.

## 6.6 PUBLIC REALM: FLOORSCAPE, STREET LIGHTING AND STREET FURNITURE

### *Floorscape*

Historic paving materials in Lewes are very varied, using local materials such as clay paviors, sandstone setts, sandstone kerbing, flint cobbles, and beach pebbles. There are some examples of Sussex marble, a very hard local stone. 'Imported' granite is often used for kerbing, either narrow (about 150mm) or wide (about 250mm). Sadly, much of the town centre has been repaved using inappropriate modern materials, including concrete slabs or modern clay paviors, which lack

the vitality and interest of the historic examples. Castle Gate was appropriately repaved in 1988 by Lewes District Council using granite setts, brick paviors and York stone. Less successful was the creation of the pedestrian precinct at the eastern end of the High Street, which used modern clay paviors and concrete slabs, or the more recent repaving of part of Pipe Passage. It has proved difficult to find a suitable modern replacement for the historic bricks, and Lewes is peppered with all sorts of unsuitable modern paviors which have been used for repairs. Fortunately the County Council engineers have now approved a modern handmade pavior as suitable for paving although it is a flat red colour without the changes in colour and texture which characterise the original

material. These have recently been used for sections of new brick paving in Ditchling with great success, although as the supplier has now gone out of business a new source will be needed.

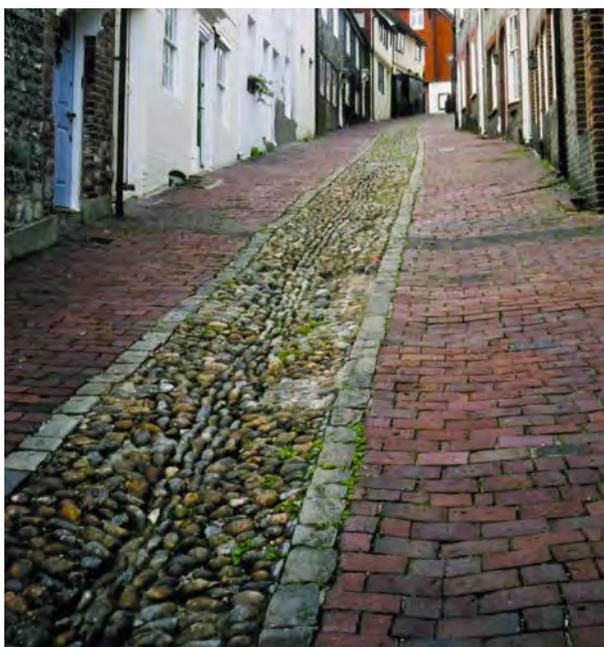
Lewes is notable for its clay paviors, most of which were installed in 1807-8 by a Mr Johnston of London as part of the street improvements set out by the Town Improvement Commissioners under the Act of 1806. Good examples of continuous paving can be seen at the western end of the High Street, along Southover High Street, and in St Martin's Lane. These paviors were made from red clay, somewhat impure, so they are not a flat colour or texture and contain small pieces of chalk and other debris which make the material



*Sun Street*



*High Street*



*Keere Street*



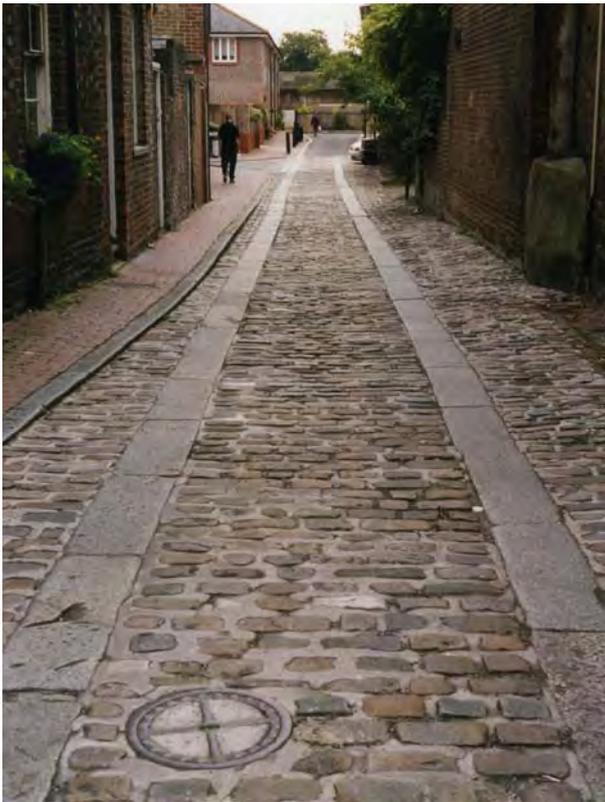
*High Street*



*Pelham Terrace*



*Chapel Hill*



*Foundry Lane*



*Rotten Row*

visually more interesting. Variations in the firing times also provided hints of blue or pinky-purple.

At about this time, Keere Street was also resurfaced, using an attractive mix of flint cobbles, sandstone setts, and clay paviors set in tar. Granite setts can be seen in Foundry Lane in Cliffe, where they supported the heavy carts which were coming out of Morris' ironworks. Silver limestone setts are notable at the junction of Rotten Row and the High Street, and throughout the conservation area, a variety of granite or sandstone kerbs can be found, all dating to the 19th century. Short (400mm) silver limestone kerbs can also be seen in many

locations, including Chapel Hill, where they are mixed with sandstone setts. In the Wallands Estate and along Rotten Row can be seen some interesting crossovers, made from stone setts and red brick, laid in alternate stripes.

Throughout Lewes there are reminders of the ironworks which were prominent in the town in the 18th and 19th centuries, usually marked with the name of the founder. These include bollards, kerb plates, drain covers, and coal holes. There are many scattered throughout the conservation area and regrettably are often surrounded by inappropriate black tarmac or concrete slabs or paviors.

Examples include:

- Criss-crossed cast iron kerb plate marked 'John Every Iron Founder Lewes' in South Street
- Cast iron gutter marked 'E.S.E. PHOENIX LEWES' and cast iron drain cover marked 'John Every Lewes' in Chapel Hill and Grange Road
- Circular cast iron coal holes, usually marked 'Thomas' or 'Every Phoenix Ironworks Lewes' – examples in St John's Terrace



### Street lighting

The street lighting in the conservation area is very varied and mainly of little merit because there is no special provision for more appropriate street lighting in the designated area. Lighting is therefore provided by a range of modern fittings with different lanterns, sometimes traditional in appearance, and a number of recycled former gas standards with electric fittings. Colour tones vary which provides a discordant effect. There are a few well preserved historic former gas lights, the most significant being the listed cast iron street light at the bottom of Keere Street.



Street light in Keere Street

The High Street is lit by tall steel light standards with a decorative support bracket and small circular fitting with a large bulb. Much of the rest of the town centre, and Southover and Cliffe, is lit by slender white steel standards with a small modern fitting. However, Albion Street and parts of Cliffe are lit by modern black standards based on a simplification of a traditional gas light, and the lighting in Grange Road is similar – a black metal standard with a 'traditional' modern light fitting on top. These modern light fittings are neutral in their impact and generally sit well within the overall streetscape, but further modern intrusions would be detrimental to the street scene. Lighting



*Modern street lighting in The High Street*

in the Wallands is disappointingly modern – concrete standards with a modern fitting.

#### *Street furniture*

For some time Lewes District Council has followed a standard specification for street furniture: signage, seating, and litter bins. Street name plates are cast aluminium, with black letters on a white background. Seats have cast aluminium ends, in the 19th century style, with slatted hardwood seats. These can be seen in Castle Precinct and Southover



*Old street name plate in The Pells*

Grange gardens. Litter bins vary, but the most expensive, which tend to be used in more sensitive locations, are cast aluminium and painted black. Other bins are made from black plastic (fairly innocuous but vulnerable to vandalism) or bright yellow (not suitable in a conservation area). In some parts of the conservation area, particularly the main streets and close to the various schools, discarded litter can be a problem.

#### *Overhead wires*

Throughout many parts of the conservation area, overhead wires supplying electricity and telephone lines are a detrimental feature, and where they have been undergrounded, for instance at the western end of Grange Road, the appearance of the conservation area has been greatly enhanced. Further undergrounding, throughout the whole conservation area, is required.



*The removal of telephone wires in Grange Road has greatly enhanced the conservation area*

## 7 IDENTIFICATION OF CHARACTER AREAS

### 7.0 INTRODUCTION

The Lewes Conservation Area divides conveniently into seven distinct 'Character Areas', each with its own unique topography, street plan, buildings and spaces. This section briefly considers

their historical development and summarises their principal features. Negative sites or buildings, and policies for their future preservation and enhancement are also included.

#### *The seven Character Areas are:*

- Area 1: Cliffe
- Area 2: Lower High Street (School Hill)
- Area 3: Lewes Castle and middle High Street
- Area 4: Upper High Street and Western Road
- Area 5: The Pells and West Street
- Area 6: The Wallands
- Area 7: Southover

#### *Each section includes:*

- Principal features
- Location
- Summary History
- Uses
- Topography
- Townscape
- Local features
- Issues

PRINCIPAL FEATURES

- High quality historic townscape, particularly in Cliffe High Street;
- Continuous terraces of varied listed buildings;
- St Thomas' Church (grade II\*) and church hall an important part of the local community;
- Jireh Chapel a significant historic building;
- Harvey's Brewery a major presence;
- Bustling commercial centre;
- Stunning views up to the South Downs and along the River Ouse from Cliffe Bridge in either direction.

LOCATION

Cliffe lies to the east of the River Ouse and is linked to the main part of Lewes by Cliffe Bridge. The area is closely contained by the towering chalk cliffs of the Downs to the east, and the River Ouse to the west. Malling Street and South Street create a T shape with Cliffe High Street being intensively built up, and lined with historic buildings. South Street and Malling Street contain some good groups of listed buildings, but have both been more affected by modern development. Chapel Hill leads steeply up the Downs to the Golf Club, providing stunning views over Lewes towards the castle.



View northwards from Cliffe Bridge



View southwards from Cliffe Bridge



Cliffe High Street

## HISTORY

- Historic ford (possibly Roman) in the vicinity of Cliffe Bridge;
- Small Saxon settlement in the area of Chapel Hill;
- Bridge is recorded over the river in 1159;
- St Thomas' Church was originally built in the late 12th century as a chapel-of-ease by the deans and canons of the Benedictine College established by the Archbishop of Canterbury in Malling shortly after the Norman Conquest;
- In c.1241 the Greyfriars established a new monastery on the western side of the river, close to Cliffe;
- A will of 1276 refers to eight houses in Cliffe and one on Cliffe Bridge;
- Market charters granted in Cliffe in 1331, 1345 and 1409;
- Medieval drainage ditches dug to prevent flooding;
- One medieval building remains - nos. 9-11 Cliffe High Street;
- Other early buildings include nos. 26-27 Cliffe High Street, nos. 39 and possibly no. 40 Cliffe High Street, and parts of nos. 4, 5, 6 and 8 Cliffe High Street (all 16th century);
- 16th century onwards - Lewes developed as an important inland port and Cliffe became the hub of commercial activity;
- 18th and 19th century Cliffe was important for river trade and industry;
- In 1727 Cliffe Bridge was rebuilt in stone;
- Late 18th century – Ouse river canalised to Newhaven, improving the flow of water and providing better access for boats to Lewes;
- In 1829 Cliffe High Street was widened and a number of buildings refronted;
- 1874 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows Cliffe as a highly industrialised area, with two iron foundries, a gas works, stores, malshouses, a brewery, a soap factory and a stone and slate yard;
- Morris Road built in 1891 following demolition of Morris' foundry;
- Early 1960s – Cliffe under water for nearly a week due to flooding;
- Phoenix Causeway built in 1969 over the site of the wharf to the east of the river;
- Lewes bypass and Cuilfail Tunnel built in the 1970s;
- 1997-2000 CAPS (Conservation Area Partnership) grant scheme in Cliffe;
- 2000 Flooding affects whole of Cliffe;
- 2001-2004 HERS (Heritage Economic Regeneration) grant scheme in Cliffe to repair flood damaged buildings;
- Plans under discussion to partially pedestrianise Cliffe High Street.

## USES

Cliffe High Street is a bustling commercial centre with a large number of antique shops as well as a variety of specialist suppliers including a fishing tackle shop and a pet shop. Some of the shops have residential flats above. Otherwise, residential uses are more prevalent in South Street and Morris Road. The large public car park on the northern edge leads into Phoenix Causeway and provides a useful facility for visitors and shoppers. A popular riverside walk connects through this car park, under Phoenix Causeway, to Tesco's supermarket. Various activities associated with the river are still important including a rowing club, located on what used to be an island. There are still some reminders of Cliffe's industrial past with the survival of Harvey's Brewery. A large builders' merchants (Chandlers) off South Street provides a commercial presence.

## TOPOGRAPHY

Cliffe lies on the flat former water-meadows of the River Ouse with Chapel Hill rising steeply up the South Downs to the east. Historically, Cliffe High Street was on a slight causeway above the surrounding land but this is not evident now. The modern Phoenix Causeway has been built on a much higher level and therefore overlooks Cliffe and the backs of the buildings on the north side of Cliffe High Street.

## TOWNSCAPE

Cliffe High Street provides a cohesive historic townscape, with a variety of mainly listed buildings, all domestic in scale apart from Harveys Brewery and St Thomas' Church. The buildings in the street sit tightly on the back of the pavement, and are generally two or three storeys high, and

varied in their form, with the earlier buildings, such as nos. 9-11, having gables facing the street. The road widening in 1829 provided new fronts to existing houses on the south side of the street in a uniform style, so nos. 41-46 display common details including parapetted roofs and shallow pilasters. At several points, most noticeably between nos. 38 and 39, can be seen the narrow gaps where the former Cliffe sewers ran.

South Street is more varied with only one building of any antiquity – no. 1, a timber-framed building of the 16th century which sits on the corner of Chapel Hill. Other listed buildings tend to be late 18th century or early 19th century in date, rendered, with Georgian details. There are also several groups of unlisted mid to late 19th century houses and cottages of merit, particularly nos. 36-40, part of a longer terrace but notable for their Gothic detailing including colourful polychromatic brickwork.

Malling Street has one long terrace of late 18th/ early 19th century houses including Pastoral Antiques, an 18th century former coaching inn recently repaired with a substantial CAPS grant. All of the buildings are positioned close to the back of the pavement apart from no. 21, an early 19th century villa which sits back from the street

with an attractive front garden. Nos. 25-29 are earlier, but much altered.

Materials for the historic buildings are very mixed – sandstone, flint, timber framing, timber boarding, chalk block, brick (red and grey), clay tile or slate hanging, and black mathematical tiles (no. 8 Malling Street). Roofs are either handmade clay tile, natural slate or modern equivalents. St Thomas' Church is roofed in Horsham stone slate.

#### LOCAL FEATURES

- Cliffe Bridge, rebuilt in stone in 1727;
- Plaque on no. 45 Cliffe High Street recording the street widening of 1829;
- Public water pump dated 1830 outside St Thomas' Church (not working);
- Public seat in Chapel Hill, decorated with the inscription "I will give you rest";
- Brick and stone paving in Chapel Hill, English Passage and Foundry Lane;
- Cast iron kerbs, gutters and coal holes, from Every's ironworks;
- Cast iron bollards at entrance to Harvey's Brewery and on Chapel Hill.



St Thomas' Church