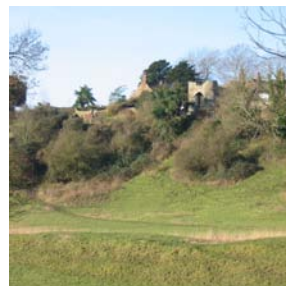




Rother District Council

Conservation & Design Advice

Conservation Area Appraisal : WINCHELSEA





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Adopted by Council
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Definition of Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas are defined in the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as

“areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (section 69(1)(a).)

It is the responsibility of individual Local Planning Authorities to designate and review Conservation Areas, using local criteria to determine and assess their special qualities and local distinctiveness. Once designated, Local Planning Authorities have a duty

“to formulate and publish from time to time proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas and submit them for consideration to a public meeting in the area to which they relate” (section 71)

and

“in exercising their planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area” (section 72)

Conservation Area status also places a statutory control, with certain exemptions, over demolition, works to trees and advertisement display.

1.2 Purpose of Appraisals

A Conservation Area Appraisal is a written and pictorial assessment of the special interest, character and appearance of a particular Conservation Area.

Adopted by the Council, an Appraisal serves as a basis for both the formulation and evaluation of Development Plan policies and as a material consideration in the making of development control decisions, also providing additional and specific support at appeal stage for such decisions. It can also heighten private sector awareness of the special character of place to help inform the planning and design choices of private and commercial owners.

The Appraisal itself is a factual and objective analysis, which seeks to enable the sustaining of the wider qualities of distinctiveness of place by defining and protecting those physical elements that contribute to the special character. It should be noted, however, that the Appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive, and that the omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

Additionally, an Appraisal can include management proposals to ensure the preservation or enhancement of an area by means of policies, action points, design guidance and site-specific design statements where appropriate.

In accordance with the aforementioned legislation, this Appraisal represents a review and extension of the designated Winchelsea Conservation Area, taking into account the changes in the legislative, social and environmental context since the previous Appraisal was prepared in 1969.

2.0 Winchelsea Conservation Area

Winchelsea Conservation Area was originally designated in September 1969 by East Sussex County Council, and was extended by Rother District Council in March 2008.

2.1 Description

Winchelsea, officially a town, appears today as a large village, though was once a major urban settlement and one of the principal naval ports of the country, a centre of royal shipbuilding contributing to the King's fleet. It is a town of immense historic and archaeological interest and value, and an outstanding and rare example of early medieval town planning.

The settlement we see today occupies about one third in the north-eastern corner of the 150 acres allocated by Edward 1 in the late 13th century for the erection of a new town, following severe coastal erosion of the original site, which now lies submerged below Rye Bay. It was designed as a planned town, comparable in form to the French 'Bastide' model, that is a squared plan within an irregular boundary, and the basic grid pattern which Edward's commissioners set out in the 1280s has formed the framework for the town to the present day.

The historic core of the town extends from the steep escarpment facing the Brede valley to the north, to include the remaining built core of gridded streets to the south, bounded by Rectory Lane and Robert's Hill to the west (now classified as the A259), which acts as somewhat of a 'by-pass' to the 'inner town', protecting it from an amount of through-traffic. Beyond this road, to the west, lies reasonably level rural pasture with sporadic buildings, though the legacy of the once-developed street grid here is still visible through earthworks and field boundaries. Similarly, to the south, the built, developed grid structure disintegrates one block south of Back Lane, to become the parkland setting of Grey Friars, though again, the historic street pattern is still visible through earthworks, lines of mature tree planting, and the remaining Monks Walk. To the east, the town is once again bounded by the steep cliff escarpment, itself skirted by the remains of medieval town walls, the whole overlooking the lowlands of the Pett Levels stretching far out to the sea.

Beyond this core, to the north beyond the cliff escarpment, lies the historic Strand and Harbour areas and the historic Ferry Bridge area.

The Conservation Area boundary is shown in Annex 2: Map of Conservation Area.



Fig 1: Ariel Photograph of Winchelsea

2.2 Location & Geographical Context

Winchelsea is situated at the eastern end of Sussex, between the High Weald and the Brede Levels, and is now some 2 miles inland, and 3 miles to the south-west of the ancient town of Rye. (see Map contained in Annex 1). It is located within the High Weald area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Today, the settlement, positioned atop the eastern extremity of a Wealden sandstone ridge, is a visual focal point for many miles around, particularly from Rye, Romney Marsh and Rye Harbour. It is bordered to the north by the steep escarpment falling away to the river Brede, while to the east a long cliff falls steeply away down to the Royal Military Canal and the Pett Level which stretches out to the sea. However, early maps show a physical landscape much different from today's, with Winchelsea sitting as a port at the mouth of the river Brede.



Map of Sussex by John Nordon and John Speede 1616

This location plan shows Winchelsea in a prominent harbour position

However, in spite of the recession of the sea, through drainage of the surrounding salt marshes to provide additional agricultural land, the town still today presents the appearance of an island rising on cliffs above the low-lying countryside.



Winchelsea's geographical position has also been responsible for its historic economic prosperity as a port, while today its location on the A259, a major trunk road linking Hastings, Eastbourne and Brighton to the west, with the ports of Folkstone and Dover to the east, brings a high traffic flow through what now presents itself as a rural village.

2.3 Historical Development

Much has been written about the history of the town of Winchelsea. Most recently, and significantly, English Heritage selected Winchelsea as the subject for an Extensive Urban Survey as part of their research programme into the archaeology, topography and historic buildings of England's historic towns. The resulting publications, including *'New Winchelsea, Sussex: A Medieval Port Town'* David & Barbara Martin provide a rigorous archaeology-led academic study into the physical and socio-economic development of the town. It is not intended to repeat at length the content of these publications within this Appraisal, but rather to give an overview of the historic context in which the town has developed over the last three-quarters of a century.

In 1292, when the rent roll was drawn up, the 150 acre site allocated for the 'new town' of Winchelsea had been divided up into 39 blocks, known as quarters, for buildings, in addition to those reserved for churches, a market square and the Grey Friars. A considerable part of this formal grid structure of historic street pattern is still clearly legible today and is the singularly most important contributor in defining the town's character. Interestingly, street names were only first referred to in the 16th century; medieval documents refer to properties by the quarter in which they sit. In total the new town comprised 802 plots; 723 on the hill, and 79 harbour plots flanking the Brede Estuary.

As a trading port, the new town of Winchelsea thrived in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, its prosperity based largely on the import of wines from France and their onward distribution. The importance of the wine trade is illustrated by the construction of a large number of stone-vaulted cellars for wine storage, a large number of which survive today.

However, a combination of extensively destructive attacks by the French in the 14th and 15th centuries, and the recession of the sea and the decay of the harbour and the shift in maritime activity in the 16th century, put the town into economic decline, resulting in its physical contraction; during the late 14th century the southern end became less densely populated, and by the 15th century the focal point of the settlement had become the eastern end of High Street, much as we find the place today. It was also around this time that the western approach into High Street became the principle route into the town, taking over from the original more southerly route in. It should however be noted that during the 14th and 15th centuries the town was still vibrant enough to be considered an urban centre of local importance, and during this time many houses were undergoing substantial expansion and reconstruction. It was not until the late 16th and 17th centuries that the redundant streets were sold off by the town and subsequently merged into adjacent fields, many of which are still visible today by earthworks.

The defences necessary to protect a town of this economic and military ship-building importance are still to some degree present in the town today, both in the highly visible town gates, and in the substantial section of early 15th century retaining wall which skirts the clifftop on the eastern side of the town. Indeed the three surviving town gates, two at important 'entrances' to the town today, namely Pipewell Gate (also known as Land Gate) at the north-western entrance to the town, and Strand Gate on the eastern side, together with New Gate some ¾ mile to the south of the town today, are a visual legacy of the town's fortified past.

Though there was extensive remodelling and refacing of those remaining properties in the 18th Century, 19th and 20th century development has largely been limited to infill development within the confines of once-developed but latterly empty plots, which has served to reinforce the powerful characteristic of the grid pattern. The town has retained a compact built footprint, its distinctive topography helping it to importantly avoid sprawling outlying development which would have diluted its critical form.

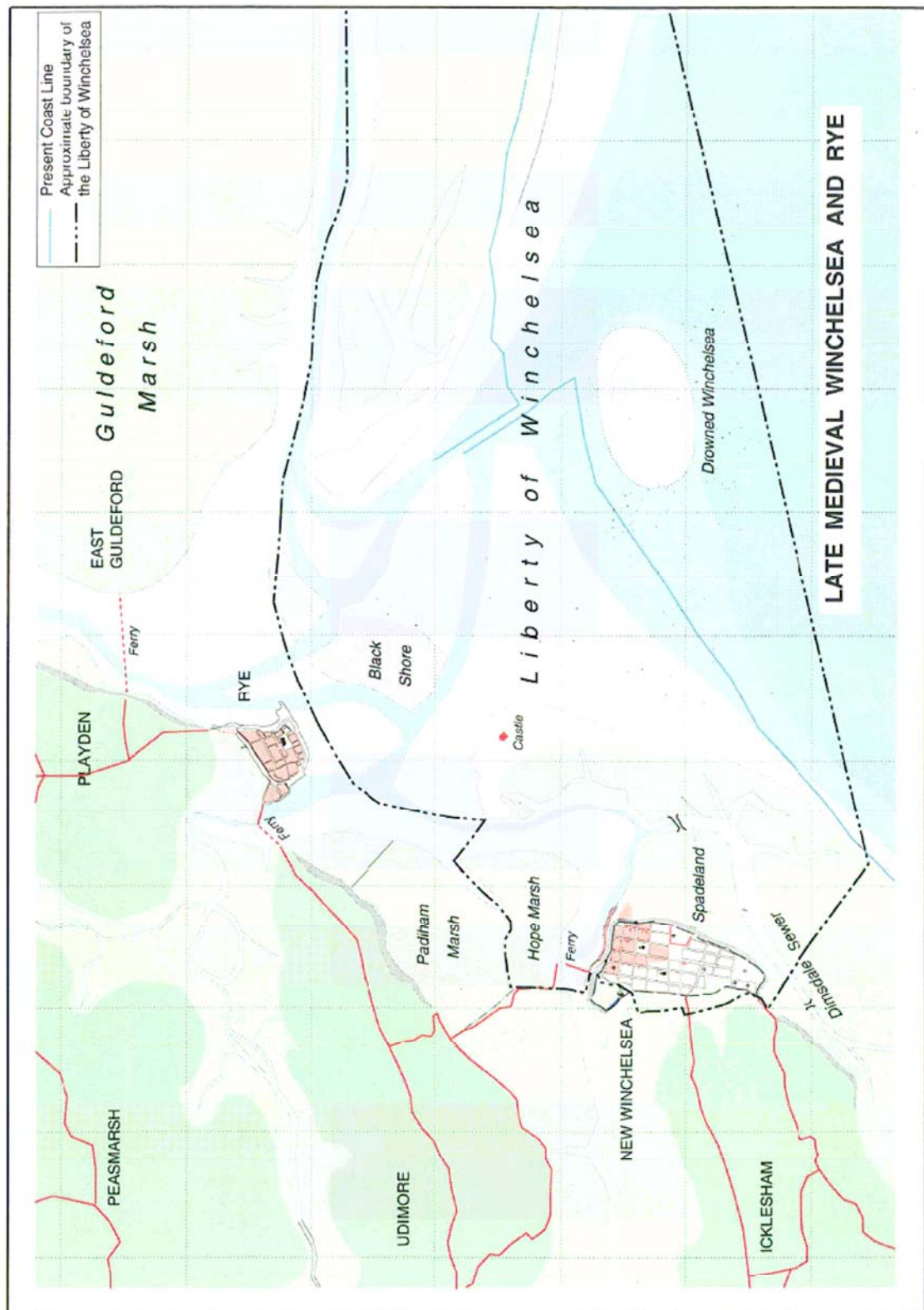


Fig.2: 16th C Plan of Winchelsea showing its relationship with its harbour and with the neighbouring town of Rye (note access to north via the Ferry, and road access out to the west).

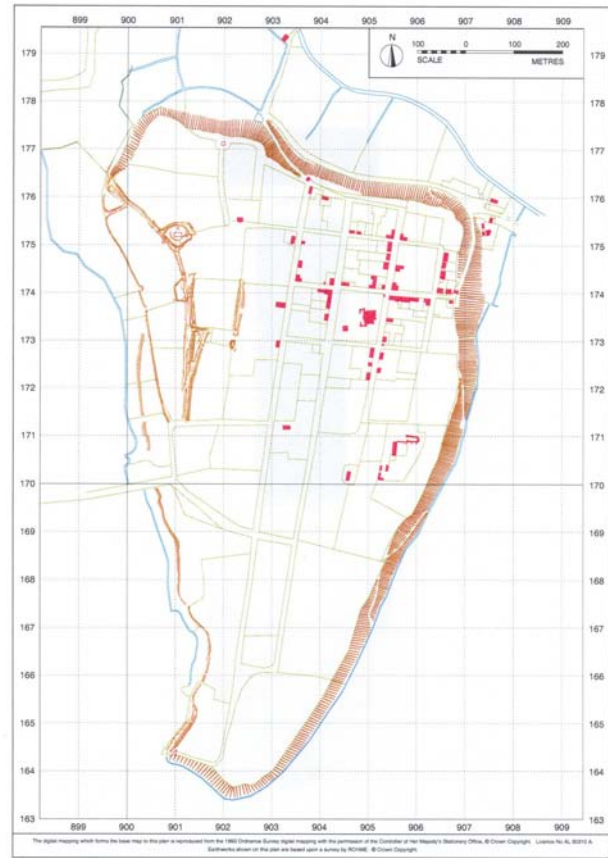


Fig 3: The town in 1292, showing rents from different plots Fig 4: The built town in 1763
(Figures taken from 'New Winchelsea, Sussex: A Medieval Port Town' David & Barbara Martin



Fig 5: Map of Winchelsea 1843-1893



Fig 6: Map of Winchelsea 1904-1939

3.0 Character Appraisal

3.1 Setting of the Town

Like its neighbour Rye, the distinctive and important landscape setting of Winchelsea is a function of its topographical and geographical situation.

Now devoid of its immediate maritime setting, the settlement nevertheless enjoys the legacy of this in terms of landscape setting, sitting perched atop the steep cliff escarpments rising above the low-lying marshes, and vertically separated from the surrounding open and exposed plain, particularly when the town is viewed from the north and east.

However, unlike Rye, the settlement of Winchelsea gives far fewer clues as to its built riches within, since the densely wooded cliff-slopes provide high visual containment as a ‘natural town wall’, and allow only glimpses of rooftops and stone defences.

From Ferry Bridge and Winchelsea station, remotely sited to the north of the historic town due to the topography of the area, the settlement is masked again by the strong tree belt over cliffs, and the impression is again of a heavily wooded hill-top.

Likewise from the east, from the settlement known as Winchelsea Beach, the view is similarly wooded and provides a stark contrast in levels. However, in winter, with the deciduous trees having shed their leaves, some of the built form of the town, particularly the Church, is visible though heavily veiled.

Significant views into the town are indicated in Annex 3 to this Appraisal, ‘*Character Analysis Map of Winchelsea Conservation Area*’ and include that from the southern edge of the nearby town of Rye, looking south, Winchelsea Road, looking south, and Station Road looking southeast. These views show the most significant definers of the character of the setting of the town to be the legibility of the profile of the hill, against the surrounding flat land, and the visible sides of the hill.

Meanwhile this setting also provides for important long countryside views out from the settlement, these are described in detail within Section 4 of this Appraisal ‘*Streetscape Character Analysis*’ and again are indicated in Annex 3, ‘*Character Analysis Map of Winchelsea Conservation Area*’.



A distant Winchelsea viewed from Rye, across the low-lying Brede Valley



Winchelsea from the north



The eastern escarpment of Winchelsea, viewed on approach from the north-east



Winchelsea from the east, across the Brede and Pett Levels



View out eastwards from Winchelsea

3.2 Approaches to the Town

Approaching Winchelsea from the north, from Rye, on the A259 across the Brede Levels, one is faced with the heavily wooded and imposing cliff-face, atop of which sits the settlement.

There are two primary routes which traverse this cliff; Strand Hill is a narrow road that climbs steadily, flanked to the west by a long, high stone wall, and open to the east, offering expansive views over the valley floor far below, and out to sea beyond. The road finally enters the town through the pinched constraints of the ancient Strand Gate, providing a definite sense of arrival.

Meanwhile the long modern slope which traverses the north-west corner of the cliffs, known as Ferry Hill, provides a wider, more accessible route for the majority of traffic, the top of this road offering as it does a choice of either entering the town through the prominent Pipewell Gate (also known as Land Gate) or 'by-passing' the bulk of the settlement and heading south on the A259. However, this route has no provision for pedestrians, and is inhospitable for cyclists, due to the volume of large lorries using the trunk road, and the speed of approaching and descending traffic.

An additional pedestrian route into the town is via the steep Spring Steps, which traverse the northern escarpment, rising from Tanyard Lane below, up to the north-eastern corner of the settlement.

Approaching the settlement from the south, from Hastings direction, the land slope is a much more gradual one, through a rural landscape, and flanked by pasture and mature trees. The trunk road A259 is then 'absorbed' into the historic street structure of Winchelsea, and becomes Rectory Lane, to the right of which lays the present-day settlement, and to the left of which lays open countryside, punctuated with a number of sporadic buildings, and playing fields. The primary access eastwards into the town from this road is by High Street, though each of the east-west streets within the town has a junction with the A259. A further option to enter the town from the south, parallel with Rectory Lane, is via Monks Walk, past the ruined remains of the medieval St John's Hospital. This road continues northwards, bound on the eastern side by the wooded parkland of Grey Friars, before becoming German Street

Topographical constraints prevent the town being approached from the east.



Approach on the A259 from the north-east



Approach via Strand Hill



Approach via Ferry Hill



Spring Steps



Approach on the A259 from the south



Approach northwards via Monks Walk

3.3 Townscape & Architectural Character

The defining streetscape and architectural character of Winchelsea is the historic grid pattern of north/south and east/west streets, which sets up a distinctive strong and controlled overriding structure to the place, within which a less formal variety of architectural styles flourish.



The historic development of the squares, and the orientation of plots within, has led to a clear hierarchy of streetscapes, with some frontages having more urban characteristics with dense built development fronting the roadway, while others are more clearly 'backs' or 'sides', with only sporadic buildings, garden walls and hedges lining the roads, which consequently take on a more rural character.

Within this grid pattern, a now central square is occupied solely by the Church of St Thomas and its surrounding churchyard. As such, the Church acts as an important orientation device within the town, providing an important reference point.

Interestingly, the recent archaeological research undertaken as part of the Extensive Urban Survey has identified that the width of the streets as set out within the town varied according to the perceived importance of each street, with the streets running north/south either side of the Churchyard the widest, and evidently considered to be the most important, next the other north/south streets, then the streets running east/west either side of the Churchyard, and lastly the other east/west streets. As previously mentioned this defined hierarchical approach is still apparent in the town today and informs the character of the place.



Typical 'backs'



Typical 'fronts'



Church of St Thomas

There are, however, a number of common architectural themes and historic features throughout the town, which help give a satisfying continuity and define its special character, and these can be summarised as follows:

- Intimate village feel yet structured and spacious with wide, expansive streets and punctuated with architecturally imposing buildings.
- Strong identity of vernacular materials, particularly Tilgate stone, natural clay or white-painted brick and clay tile-hanging or white-painted weatherboarding, under predominantly hand-made clay-tile roofs.
- Strong building line along many of the street frontages, with continuous runs of walling of both buildings and garden walls.
- Long vistas along streets, often out to open countryside beyond.
- Wide expansive views from the edges of the town out over surrounding low-lying marshes to the north and east.
- Strong landscape setting with pasture and parkland
- Visible socio-historic features such as many entrances on streets or pavements to older cellars below buildings.
- Highly visible roofscape, with the undeveloped centres of the squares allowing views across to the rear roofslopes of properties.
- Highly tangible archaeological features and fabric, including town gates and remains of town walls and older buildings.
- Numerous crossroads as a result of the gridded plan, usually well-defined by buildings and walls and creating an almost playful 'hide-and-seek' quality to the streetscape.
- Quiet atmosphere, with little vehicular traffic within the core of the town itself.
- High stone and brick garden walls, often with doors, windows and gates set into them.
- High quality and varied historic pavements in brick and stone, together with wide grassed verges in the more rural streets.



3.4 Streetscape Character Analysis

The western side of the Churchyard is bordered by **German Street**. On the opposite side of the road to the Churchyard, a terrace of white-rendered houses of various heights and styles, many with dormer windows in their clay-tiled roofs, forms a striking composition. Meanwhile, south of the crossroads with Back Lane, the formal and imposing Mariteau House, set back on the western side of the road, is well set off by the careful positioning of a formally designed mid 20th century terrace, Trojans Platt.

At this point, the built development abruptly ceases, and German Street becomes **Monks Walk**, flanked to the east by the mature trees of the Greyfriars parkland. At its southern end, Monks Walk turns west to join the A259, while the original street grid continues southwards by way of a narrow rural lane into the countryside, eventually to join the ancient New Gate at the southern extremity of the Conservation Area.

Beyond the cluster of commercial activity at its crossroads with High Street, German Street becomes **Hiham Green**, and latterly **School Hill**, where the road slopes down to frame a significant vista out across the Brede Valley and marshland over to the Udimore Ridge and the town of Rye to the north.

The scale of buildings in this street diminishes in parallel with the topography, from imposing 3 storey structures near the junction with High Street to more village scale properties to the north. A number of the buildings in this street date from the 20th Century, and are set back off the road behind generous well-kept grass verges and planted forecourts. An amount of old walling is retained with visible archaeological value, behind which the more modern buildings have been constructed.

Hiham Green is linked to Robert's Hill by a narrow pedestrian laneway that bisects one of the original Bastide squares, flanked with garden walls on the southern side, and on the northern side with the interesting and picturesque row of single storey buildings known as Hiham Bungalows.



German Street



Mariteau House



Hiham Green



School Hill



Hiham Lane



The north side of the Churchyard is bordered by **High Street**, which stretches across the entire remaining built core of Winchelsea in an east-west direction.

This street feels more urban in character than others in the town, particularly at its eastern end, partly as a function of the dense, tight-knit building pattern, with frontages sitting tight on the pavement, partly due to the more imposing architectural styles and elevations here, partly due to the commercial presence on and around the street, generating much activity here, and partly due to the treatment of its 'public realm' – the street is defined by good brick pavements, limited street lighting is in evidence, and the red K2 phone box is located here.



High Street



High Street paving treatments

The eye is drawn towards the east, initially to a view of distant countryside beyond, and then to the more immediate 'reveal' of Strand Gate, as the road curves gently round and down to this historic entrance and defence for the town. There is also a good long view out to the east over the low-lying marshes to the sea beyond.



Meanwhile, the western section of the street is more residential in character, with largely twentieth century buildings sited behind an older stone wall on the northern side. It still feels urban in character, with brick pavements and modern road markings. The street is terminated to the west by its junction with the A259, but the view continues on over grazed pastureland to the west.



St Thomas's Street, (formerly Friars Road) borders the eastern side of the Churchyard, and here the stone walling of buildings and gardens sits tight on the road edge, with the recessed Rectory providing an inconsistent and unfortunate break in the strong streetscene here.

Beyond the crossroads with Back Lane, the road now known as **Friars Road**, takes on a quiet, more rural and private character, with less formal vernacular residential buildings sited slightly further back from the road with an elevated grass verge on the western side, and gravel open forecourts to the larger scale Victorian buildings on the eastern side. At its southern end, Friars Road frames a vista down into the parkland approach to the ruined remains of Grey Friars Monastery and to The Friars.

To the north, beyond its crossroads with High Street, St Thomas's Street becomes **Castle Street**, whose western side is defined by a 'wall' of tight-knit buildings stretching out along the street, mostly two storeys in scale, with roofs punctuated with dormer windows. Meanwhile the eastern side of the street is more generous and spacious, the buildings enjoying being set to the rear of wide grass verges. The centre section of this side is defined by the presence of The Armoury and its impressive gardens with mature trees, and by the adjacent Town Well, fronting the street. The walled open gardens within the 'quarter' here give good visual exposure across to the impressive rear roofslopes of Barrack Square.

There is again an important vista out to the north along this street, but the flatter topography and positions of buildings makes this feel more remote than that from the parallel Higham Green. At the northern end of the street, the building known as King's Leap leads the eye on and round to the beginning of **North Street**, extending westwards.

Meanwhile the southern side of the Churchyard is bounded by **Back Lane**, aptly titled as the road, stretching the full east-west width of the village, has a rural character, with no pavements, and is built-up less densely than others in the village, with a number of 'backs' of properties, garden walls, and glimpses into heavily planted gardens beyond, together with sporadic front elevations, forming the character of the streetscene. At its western end, Back Lane provides a good elevated view out to the countryside to the west, framed by the lane's grass verges and stone walls. Meanwhile, at its eastern end, Back Lane meets the southern end of Rookery Lane, the important corner site being occupied by an active allotment area, further 'greening' the lane.



St Thomas's Street



Friars Road



Castle Street



Back Lane



As a function of the town's grid pattern, two further streets traverse the town in an east-west direction; **North Street** runs from Pipewell Gate at the west, along the top of the steep embankment at the northern edge of the town, and so, together with the inherent topography of the place, forms a strong and defining boundary to this side of the town. However, the easy circulation around the town is terminated by the absence of any pavements at the junction of North Street with Robert's Hill, Ferry Hill and Pipewell Gate, prohibiting pedestrian travel here southwards.

As the built squares of the historic grid pattern here exist only to the south of the street, so the buildings, some Victorian in age and character, and some more modern, are all located on its southern side, overlooking the low ground below, out across to Rye. These buildings do not present a solid building line to the road as elsewhere in the town, but instead sit individually in plots, in a villa character, often with visible front gardens. A number of these properties have additional gardens situated across the road on the northern side, before the cliff falls steeply away below.

A particularly important group of buildings, the Five Houses, marks the corner of North Street with School Hill.

Meanwhile **Mill Road** runs parallel with, and one block to the north of, High Street, forming crossroads with Castle Street and Hiham Green. This road is much more of a rural lane in character, the road is narrower than others, and flanked by wide grass verges, with no pavements or road markings, and only short sections of granite sett kerbs.

There is a prevalence of garden walls and planting here, giving the impression of being sparsely built up, partly as a result of the street historically being the 'sides' to squares of development whose main frontage was onto other streets.

In its centre section, the street is more densely built-up with historic buildings, but the vegetation and absence of pavements ensure the lane character is still strong.

To the west, the road frames a vista over the A259 (Robert's Hill) and across on up the lane leading to Mill Farm, while to the east is one of the least satisfactory visual vistas within the town, terminated as it is by half a house.



view over gardens in immediate foreground over the Brede valley towards Rye



North Street (westwards towards Pipewell Gate)



The Five Houses



centre section of Mill Road, looking west



centre section of Mill Road, looking east



view west



view east

Similarly, a further street runs north-south, parallel to, and to the east of, St Thomas's Street/Castle Street.

The upper part of the street, running northwards from High Street, is known as **Barrack Square**, which actually specifically relates to a fine, important terrace of buildings on the western side of the road, with an imposing tile-hung elevation enjoying an elevated position overlooking the Strand Hill embankment and over the marshes to the east. The western side of the street here also possesses a fine stretch of high, stone garden walling. However, the eastern side of the street is densely developed too, with the building line set back behind neatly mown wide green verges, formal tree-planting and gravel forecourts. Overall the street has a private residential character to it. Off the north-east corner of the street leads a narrow footpath which heads northwards past the Queen Elizabeth Spring and transcends the cliff slope down a series of narrow steps to Tanyard Lane below. Also at this corner leads off a curious recessed modern courtyard of buildings, which sits uncomfortably with the urban grain of the town.

At this point, Barrack Square turns west into Mill Road, where very obviously the 'backs', the less prestigious and non-public face of the Barrack Square terrace, with garden walls, outbuildings and rear-accesses, all help to contribute to this road's lane-like character, as do the wilder grass verges.

Meanwhile the lower part of this north-south street, running southwards from High Street, is known as **Rookery Lane**, and is quite different in character. Being developed only on its western side, with countryside and then the dense trees of the Strand escarpment to the east, it again forms a strong visual boundary to the town. At the lane's junction with High Street, the buildings still retain urban scale and architectural characteristics, but the character quickly changes into that of a quiet rural lane, and the remainder of buildings are some of the smallest in scale in the village; often only one storey with dormer windows in the roof set back behind wide grass verges with no pavements.



Barrack Square



Mill Road looking west



Rookery Lane



Rectory Lane, becoming **Roberts Hill** at its northern extremity, have already been mentioned as a means of approach to the town, but should be noted for their streetscape characteristics. They form a strong and highly legible boundary to the western side of the town, since the only present day squares of development lie to the east of the road. Significantly, the trunk road presence, with inherent volumes, types and speeds of traffic, makes this street a much less hospitable and pedestrian environment, despite the buildings being of a scale and style comparable to others within the town.

On the west of Robert's Hill, the positioning of Mill Cottage and surrounding gardens gives clues as to the historic extent of the original town 'quarter' squares.

To the west of Rectory Lane lies open green pastureland, with a sporadic farm and other buildings dotted along the roadside and odd structures further afield. The presence of various amenities in this area, including the cricket ground and pavilion, and the Village Hall, help this area to feel connected with the rest of the settlement, and goes some way to overcoming the physical barrier presented by the road. This area has high visible archaeological significance, with standing remains and earthworks delineating the historic street pattern that once existing here. Recent archaeological research has improved understanding of the significance of this area in the town's historic form and development, and consequently the Conservation Area boundary has been extended in this direction.

To the north of the hill-top town, below the cliff slopes, **Tanyard Lane** runs in an east-west direction, with a cluster of buildings facing the cliff at the eastern end of the road, and largely undeveloped fields to the west. Recent archaeological work has highlighted the socio-historic importance of this area as the historic harbour for the medieval town, with, from the 16th Century, daily fish markets, also trading in other bulk commodities, operating from the quayside here rather than the main market square. This explains the historical development of buildings here, and also highlights a potentially rich marine archaeology around this area. Meanwhile, and further north, the group around Ferry Bridge again reflect the development of the town as determined by its historic topographical context, with the landing area of the ferry being the vital transport link northwards over the water to Rye and onward to London. For this reason, this area has been included within the designated Conservation Area.



Rectory Lane / Roberts Hill



Mill Cottage



The Strand & Tanyard Lane



3.5 Architectural & Archaeological Value

Winchelsea is fortunate in possessing a highly visible and tangible archaeology, both in street patterns and morphology, and in physical built fabric. As such, archaeological legibility plays a large part in defining the character of the settlement. However, the archaeological interest extends beyond the present built core; most significantly to the south and west to sections of the original planned town, where earthworks in the pastureland give clear delineation to the old street pattern, and to the north to the medieval harbour area. This is reflected in the fact that large areas of now open space within the Conservation Area are designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument, while the whole Conservation Area (plus some adjacent areas of land) is designated an Archaeologically Sensitive Area at County Council level.

Detailed archaeology research and recorded data is available through the publications associated with the recent English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey.

The importance of many of the historic buildings in the village is recognised by their inclusion in the Statutory Lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Of particular note are the Church of St Thomas, the ruins of the Church of Grey Friars Monastery, The Court Hall and Town Museum, Pipewell Gate (also known as Land Gate), Strand Gate and New Gate, all listed Grade I, the latter two also being Scheduled Ancient Monuments due to their archaeological significance. A number of exceptional houses are also listed Grade II*, including those at Barrack Square, The Armoury, Periteau House, The Five Houses, and No's 1 & 2 Strand Platt.

Much of the architecture within Winchelsea is medieval or Tudor in origin, with a large amount of Georgian re-modelling, such that a later appearance prevails. However, there are a substantial amount of buildings dating from the 1910s to the 1930's, many of which are built over the historic medieval cellars. Many of these cellars are themselves Listed Buildings, highly valued for both their architectural, socio-historic and archaeological interest, and are marked on Fig 8 overleaf.

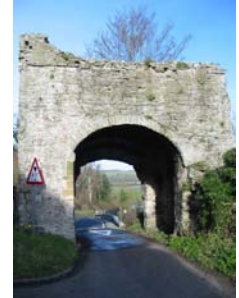
Annex 3 to this Appraisal, '*Character Map of Winchelsea Conservation Area*' highlights the Listed Buildings within the Conservation Area as well as those additional buildings which it is felt play a particularly strong role in informing the character of the street scene, identified as key un-listed buildings.



Church of St Thomas



Strand Gate



Pipewell Gate



The Armoury



No's 1-10 Barrack Square



The Five Houses



The Court Hall

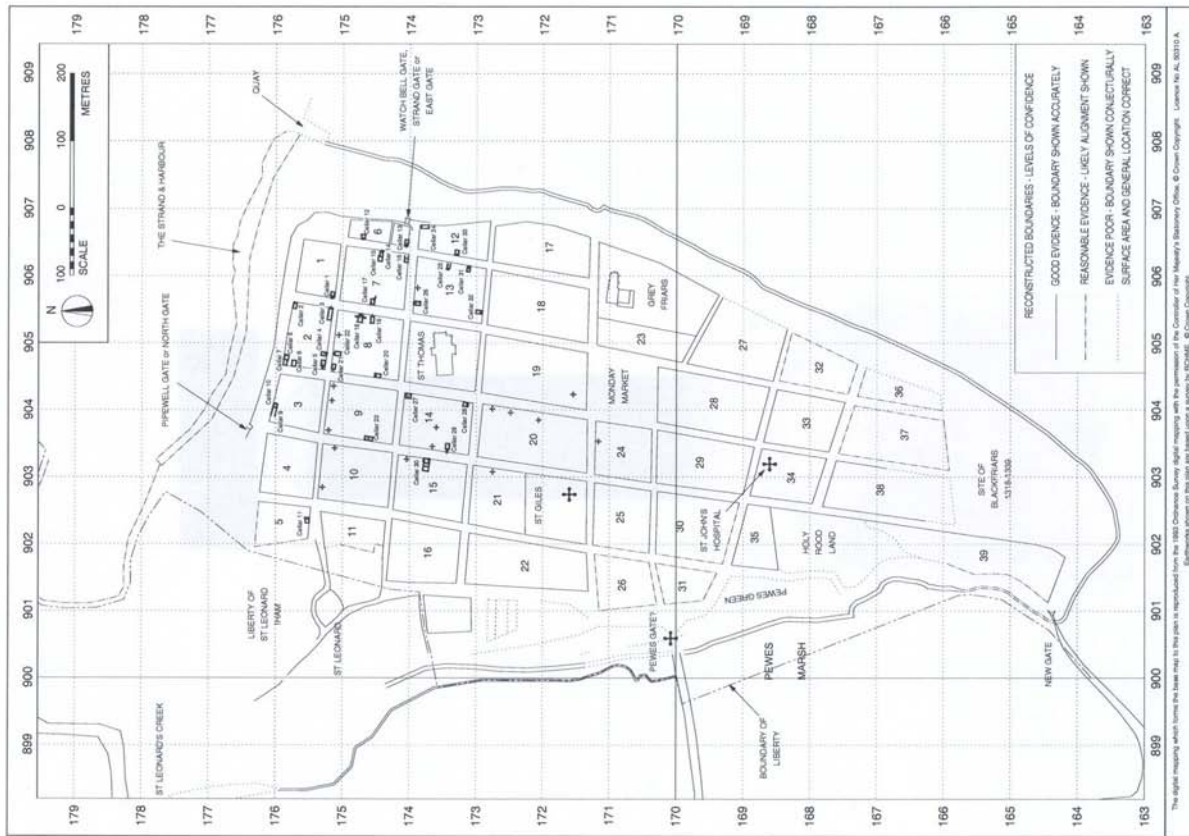


Fig 8: Location Plan of Vaulted Cellars



Fig 7: Location Plan of Principal Monuments
Figures taken from 'New Winchelsea, Sussex: A Medieval Port Town' David & Barbara Martin

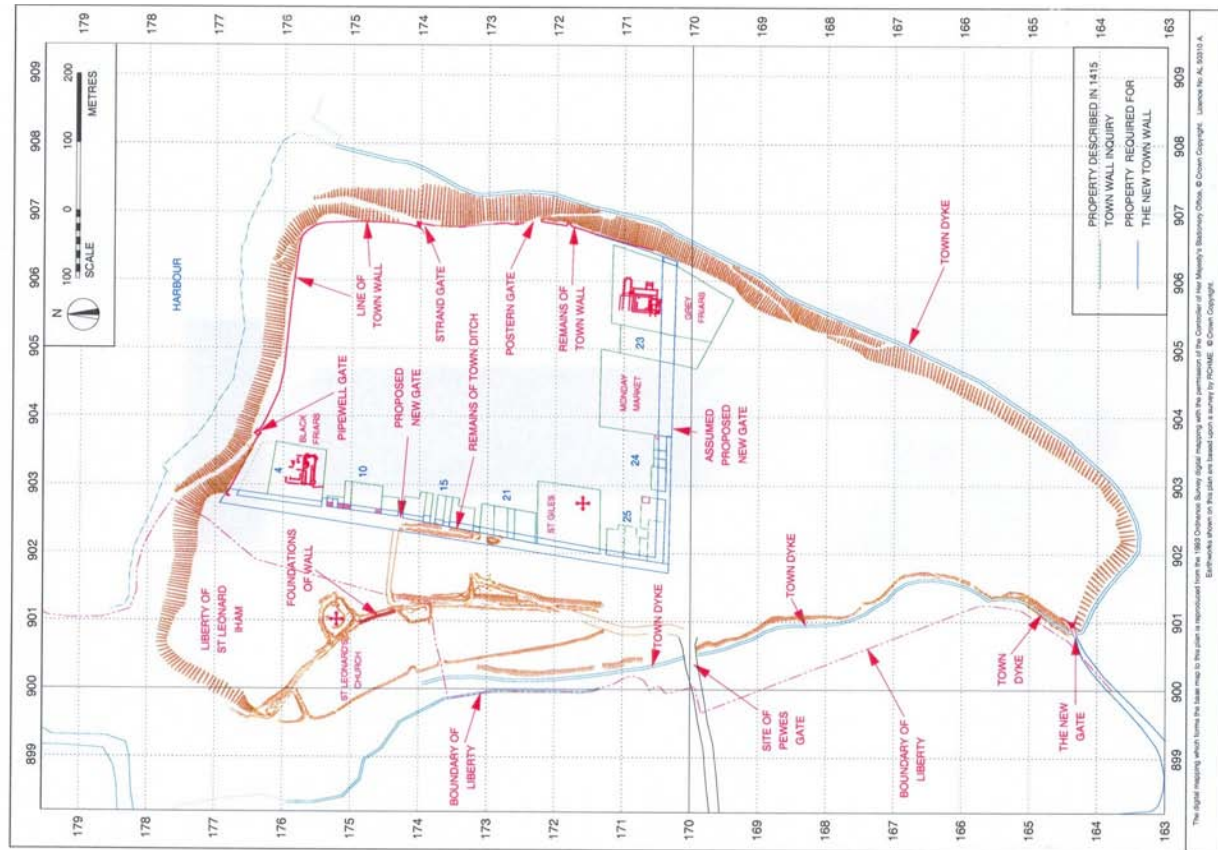


Fig 10: The Town Defences

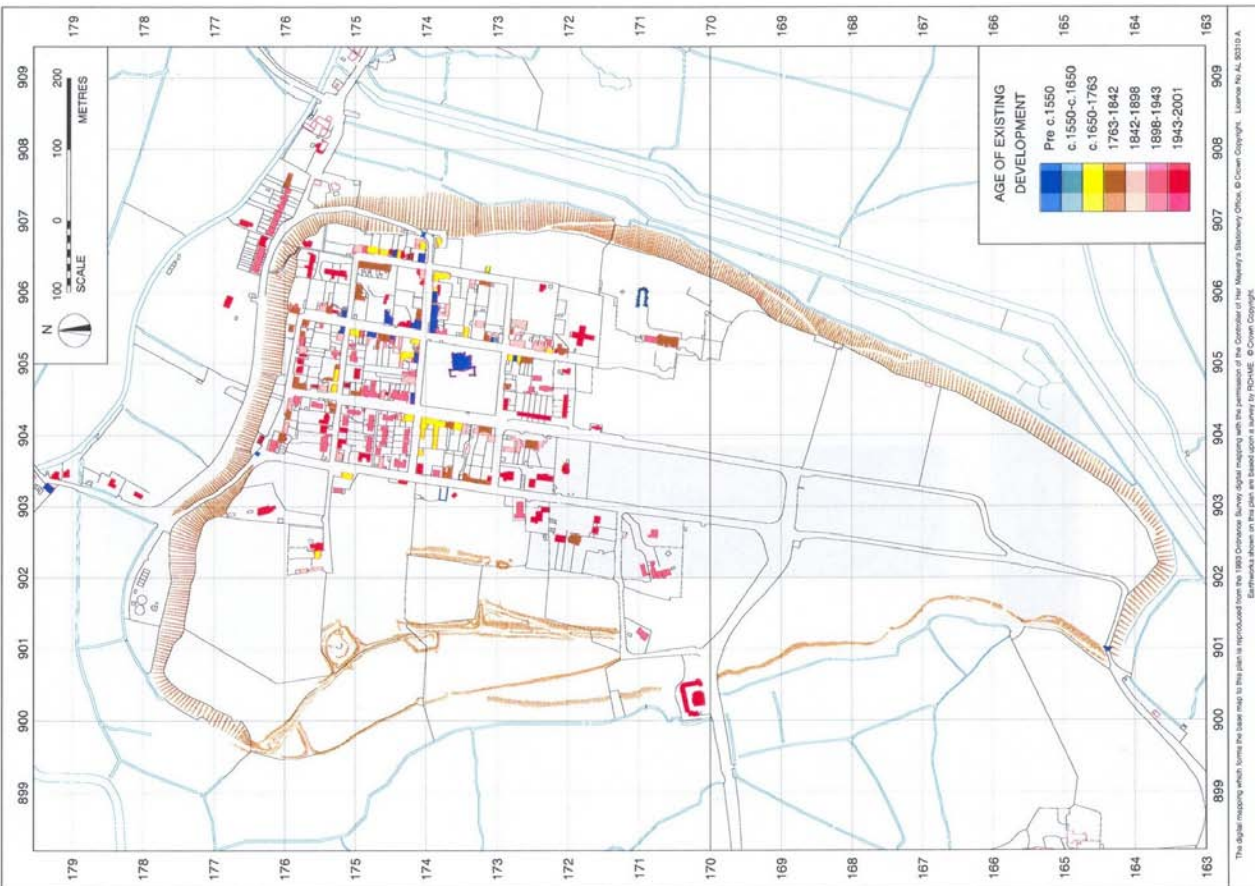


Fig 9: Winchelsea, showing the Ages of the Existing Development

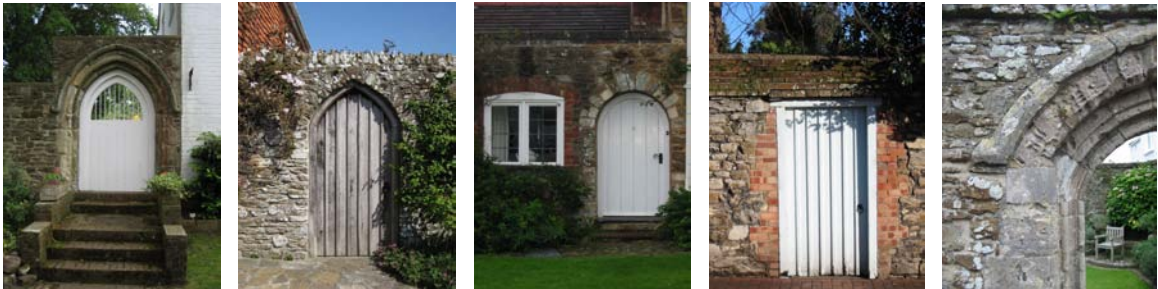
3.5 Materials & Architectural Detail

The visual delight of the built fabric of Winchelsea is largely created by the cumulative effect of a rich variety of historic architectural features and materials set within a strongly defined framework.

Windows



Doors in Garden Walls



Walls



Cellar Entrances



3.6 Shopfronts & Advertisements

There are only a very small number of commercial premises within Winchelsea, and those that do exist have been inserted into historic dwellings in such a way as their domestic character has largely been retained, with limited enlargement of openings. There are a couple of exceptions where Victorian shopfronts have been inserted into ground floor elevations, but even these are simple and discreet in character.

Meanwhile signage and advertisements are non-corporate, discreet and reasonably domestic in scale and character, usually in wood with hand-painted lettering.



3.7 Landscape Features

Landscape is critically important to the character of Winchelsea in a number of ways.

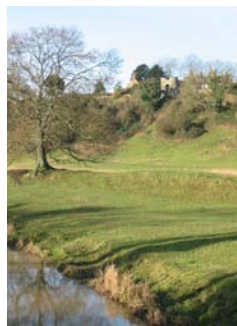
Firstly it defines the setting of the settlement, as previously discussed in this Appraisal, by way of densely wooded slopes up to the town itself and a surrounding low-lying, undeveloped marshland. This is important in defining views both into and out of the town. Significantly, being a medieval landscape setting, the landscape in this respect has both historic and visual quality.

Secondly, within the settlement itself, are a number of open green spaces. Historically these open spaces occupied the 'left-over' spaces around the edge of the hill beyond the regular grid boundary, and to a large degree this pattern still occurs today, for example the allotment area to the south-east of the core of the town gives a strong landscape contribution, exacerbated by the green field opposite, and brings the scale of the town here to a very domestic, human one. A further important area of open space is the Churchyard with large grassed areas and attractive ornamental trees.

Green verges and grass 'pavements' help define the hierarchy of streets and reinforce a rural character.

Meanwhile the domestic vegetation of large undeveloped gardens and trees within the 'quarters' is always visible, often over the tops of long garden walls, and is important in 'greening' the character of the place.

The character analysis map in Annex 3 indicates particularly important landscape features, green spaces and areas of trees, though it should be noted that this is not intended to highlight individual trees of merit.



4.0 Conservation Area Management

Conservation Area status is by no means intended to imply prohibition of development, and Conservation Area Management is therefore largely the management of change, to ensure that local distinctiveness and the special character of place are respected and responded to in a positive manner.

4.1 Development Plan Policies

The primary means by which the Council ensures the preservation or enhancement of the character of the Conservation Area is through policies in the Development Plan, which comprises the saved policies of the South East Plan (adopted May 2009) and the Rother District Local Plan (adopted 2006). These policies generally seek to ensure that, in the granting of any planning permissions, the special character and appearance of the area will be maintained.

The South East Plan (adopted May 2009) outlines its strategic aim in this respect in Chapter 12: Management of the Built Environment. Of particular relevance are the following policies:

POLICY BE1: MANAGEMENT FOR AN URBAN RENAISSANCE

Local authorities and their partners will use opportunities associated with new development to help provide significant improvements to the built environment. They will:

... v. promote and support design solutions relevant to context and which build upon local character and distinctiveness and sense of place, including the sensitive reuse of redundant or under-used historic buildings...

POLICY BE5: VILLAGE MANAGEMENT

In preparing local development documents (LDDs), local planning authorities should positively plan to meet the defined local needs of their rural communities for small scale affordable housing, business and service development, taking account of changing patterns of agriculture, economic diversification, and continued viability of local services. LDDs should define their approach to development in villages based on the functions performed, their accessibility, the need to protect or extend key local services and the capacity of the built form and landscape setting of the village. All new development should be subject to rigorous design and sustainability criteria so that the distinctive character of the village is not damaged. To assist this, local planning authorities should encourage community-led local assessments of need and action planning to inform decision making processes.

POLICY BE6: MANAGEMENT OF THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

When developing and implementing plans and strategies, local authorities and other bodies will adopt policies and support proposals which protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the historic environment and the contribution it makes to local and regional distinctiveness and sense of place. The region's internationally and nationally designated historic assets should receive the highest level of protection. Proposals that make sensitive use of historic assets through regeneration, particularly where these bring redundant or under-used buildings and areas into appropriate use should be encouraged.

The Rother District Local Plan (adopted 2006) contains the following advice on Design & Respecting Local Character:

5.18 Rother District is fortunate in the legacy that exists in terms of the quality of the built environment. Towns and villages have grown up over time and display a special relationship with their surroundings. The pattern, form and appearance and use of buildings and spaces are peculiar to each location and contribute to the unique sense of place and cultural identity.

5.19 Good design should respect the character of its setting, whether urban or rural, and can make a positive contribution to reinforcing local distinctiveness. This should still allow room for imaginative design solutions that respond sensitively to the site and setting. Particular care needs to be taken to ensure that developments do not create an alien, cramped appearance or, in some locations such as rural settings, an equally inappropriate suburban

appearance. Where an area has a well-defined and distinctive character, particular care should be taken to maintain it.

The Plan also contains the following policy of which section viii relates to development affecting Conservation Areas:

- Policy GD1** All development should meet the following criteria:
- (i) it meets the needs of future occupiers, including providing appropriate amenities;
 - (ii) it is in keeping with and does not unreasonably harm the amenities of adjoining properties;
 - (iii) it provides for adequate and safe access by all modes of transport, including appropriate parking provision;
 - (iv) it respects and does not detract from the character and appearance of the locality;
 - (v) it is compatible with the conservation of the natural beauty of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - (vi) it respects the topography, important views to and from the site and retains site features that contribute to the character or amenities of the area;
 - (vii) it protects habitats of ecological value and incorporates, wherever practicable, features that enhance the ecological value of the site, with particular regard to wildlife refuges or corridors, or fully compensates for any necessary loss;
 - (viii) it does not prejudice the character, appearance or setting of heritage features, notably scheduled ancient monuments and sites of archaeological importance, listed buildings, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, the registered battlefield at Battle, or other buildings and spaces of historic importance;
 - (ix) the infrastructure and facilities necessary to serve the development are available, or suitable provision is made as part of the development, in accordance with Policy GD2;
 - (x) it provides adequate and appropriate means for foul and surface water drainage, with suitable alleviation and mitigation measures where necessary;
 - (xi) it is compatible with deterring crime, including maximising opportunities for natural surveillance of public places;
 - (xii) it promotes the efficient use of energy and water through the layout and design of buildings.

4.2 Design Guidance

The Rother District Council Planning Handbook contains generic design advice which recognises that the inherent underlying character and visual qualities of the District as a whole should not be spoiled by inappropriate development, and highlights the need for good design and appropriate materials. It specifically contains guidance on *A Guide to Householder Development* as well as generic guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

4.3 Archaeology

The recent English Heritage Extensive Urban Survey of Winchelsea has raised awareness of the rich historic legacy that the town possesses. Rother District Council are working with the East Sussex County Council Archaeologist to develop an appropriate method of consultation on applications for development within the Conservation Area, and of creating and monitoring archaeological conditions on planning permissions, to ensure that the special archaeological character of the town is protected. Meanwhile the County Council is currently actively involved in setting up a Historic Environment Record to disseminate information and to be used as a valuable data resource in furthering our understanding of the history of the place.

4.6 Highways and the Public Realm

Whilst over-arching responsibility for works to the highway and public realm lies with the County Council, the District Council is actively engaged in a number of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of the Conservation Area.

Meanwhile at a more detailed level, the Council is in the process of adopting the guidance manual 'Streets for All – South East' published jointly by English Heritage and the Department for Transport, which seeks to promote good practice in the designing and maintaining of the public realm, with particular reference to the historic environment, and addresses issues including street surfaces, highways lighting, signage, furniture and street clutter.

Alongside this, East Sussex County Council are currently preparing a Highways Handbook to set out standards for designing and maintaining highways and the public realm.

This will be particularly pertinent within the Winchelsea Conservation Area, since the Appraisal highlights the important role the historic street paving surfaces and grass verges play in informing and positively contributing to the distinctive character of the place. Meanwhile the Appraisal also highlights the 'rural' qualities of the streetscape as informed by the frequent absence of modern street-lighting, pavements and street furniture, the minimal signage clutter, and the quantity and positioning of trees. Mismanagement of any of these aspects of the public realm would severely erode the positive characteristics of the Conservation Area.

4.5 Article 4 Direction

The status of a Conservation Area, and consequently the ability of the Local Planning Authority to protect its special character, can be enhanced greatly by an Article 4 Direction. Without an Article 4 Direction, even with a Conservation Area, many alterations to private dwelling houses can be carried out as Permitted Development; that is to say they require no Planning Permissions. Such alterations can have a tremendous impact on the very special character of a Conservation Area, and even relatively minor changes could lead to a dilution of the qualities of the historic town.

An Article 4 Direction removes specified permitted development rights. This means that anyone wishing to carry out any such work must first obtain planning permission from the Local Planning Authority. Where proposed development would require Planning Permission *only* by virtue of the removal of Permitted Development rights under an Article 4 Direction, such applications attract no fee.

Within the Winchelsea Conservation Area, an Article 4 Direction currently exists, removing certain permitted development rights within certain areas of the historic core. It is proposed to issue a new Article 4(2) Direction, which would apply specifically to dwellinghouses, to cover the whole of the proposed extended Conservation Area, and extended in scope to respond to current classes of Permitted Development.

The particular classes of Permitted Development within Winchelsea Conservation Area that are proposed to be removed by virtue of the new Article 4(2) Direction are set out in Annex 4 of the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Annex 1 – Location Plan of Winchelsea



Annex 4: Article 4 Direction

This Direction, made under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, in accordance with Article 4(2), removes Permitted Development rights within the Winchelsea Conservation Area highlighted on Annex 1 – Map of Winchelsea Conservation Area, for the following categories of development:

- **Class A of Part 1 of Schedule 2, consisting of the enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwellinghouse.**

This includes window or door replacement or removal, the provision of new external openings, and the blocking-up of existing external openings

- **Class C of Part 1 of Schedule 2, consisting of the alteration of a dwellinghouse roof.**

This includes the alteration of roofing materials and the insertion of rooflights

- **Class D of Part 1 of Schedule 2, consisting of the erection or construction of a porch outside any external door of a dwellinghouse.**

- **Class E of Part 1 of Schedule 2, consisting of the provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of any building or enclosure, swimming or other pool required for a purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse as such, or the maintenance, improvement or other such alteration of such a building or enclosure.**

This includes garages, car-ports, garden sheds, glasshouses, summerhouses, and garden structures such as gazebos, pergolas and arbours

- **Class F of Part 1 of Schedule 2, consisting of the provision within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse of a hard surface for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of the dwellinghouse.**

- **Class H of Part 1 of Schedule 2, consisting of the installation, alteration or replacement of a satellite antenna on a dwellinghouse or within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse.**

- **Class A of Part 2 of Schedule 2, consisting of the erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure.**

- **Class C of Part 2 of Schedule 2, consisting of the painting of the exterior of any building or work. This is to apply only to the painting of hitherto unpainted surfaces, or to works consisting of a change in paint colour.**

N.B. Permitted Development Rights under Class B of Schedule 1, consisting of the enlargement of a dwellinghouse consisting of an addition or alteration to its roof, are already removed by virtue of the area concerned being designated a Conservation Area.

This direction has been made to coincide with the extension of the Winchelsea Conservation Area. In order that it can be made without the prior consent of the Secretary of State it only applies to dwellinghouses and only to the extent that the development fronts a highway, waterway or open space.