



Rother District Council

CONSERVATION + DESIGN ADVICE

Conservation Area Appraisal : Rye





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Adopted by Council
26th November 2006

Article 4(2) Direction made 23rd February 2007
confirmed by Council 2nd July 2007

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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, as well as public sector design decisions.

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 of, and proposes an extension to, the existing designated Rye Conservation Area, taking into account the changes in the legislative, social and environmental context since the previous Appraisal was prepared in 1974.

2.0 Rye Conservation Area

Rye Conservation Area was first designated in 1968 and subsequently expanded in 1974 to include additional areas of the town at Bridge Place and Military Road.

2.1 Description

Rye is an ancient citadel town of national historic importance and high architectural value.

The historic core of the town extends from Strand Quay and South Undercliff to the South, to include Town Salts and Middle Salts to the East, the Landgate to the North, and Cinque Ports Street, parallel with, and just outside of, the line of the old town wall, to the North-west. This core forms the present extent of the designated Conservation Area.

An important part of the character of the town is the mixture of uses which has developed in close proximity to one another, as a function of the physical constraints of the town. The southern part of the Citadel, that is south of High Street, is in mainly residential use, while the buildings on both sides of High Street and part of the Mint are used as shops and business premises as well as residential. This mix of uses also occurs in Cinque Ports Street and Landgate. North of Cinque Ports Street, outside the present Conservation Area boundary there is an area of residential property up to the railway, as well as the vibrant market area. West of the Citadel at Strand Quay, there is a fine group of warehouses in mixed use. On the eastern side of the town are the low-lying Middle Salts and Town Salts which are recreation grounds and public open spaces, while the 'ring road' which drops south alongside the Salts, and then west along South Undercliff, a mainly residential street, protects the Citadel from through traffic.

As a result of the analysis contained in Section 3 of this Appraisal, the existing Conservation Area boundary has now been extended to the north and east, to include Rope Walk and Eagle Road, and an area north of Landgate Square, and areas to the west, to include the junction of Cinque Ports Street and Ferry Road.



2.2 Location & Geographical & Topographical Context

The town is situated at the eastern end of Sussex, where the High Weald ends and the marshland Levels begin, and is now some 3 miles inland. The town itself is not located within the High Weald area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, though much of the surrounding countryside to the west is. Much of this adjoining land also lies within the tidal floodplain (2002).

Today, the town sits at the confluence of 3 rivers, the Rother, Brede and Tillingham. However, early maps show a physical landscape much different than today's, with Rye sitting as a port at the mouth of the river Rother.



Fig 1: Location Map of Rye today in its inland situation.



Fig 2: Map of Sussex by John Nordon and John Speede, 1616
This location plan shows Rye town in a prominent harbour position.

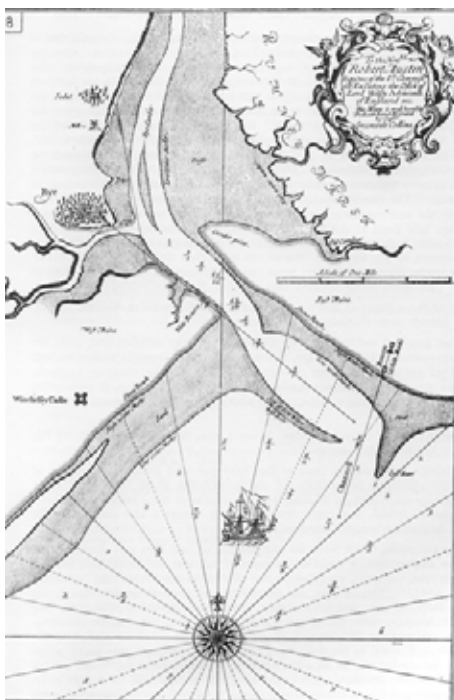


Fig 3: Harbour of Rye (1682)

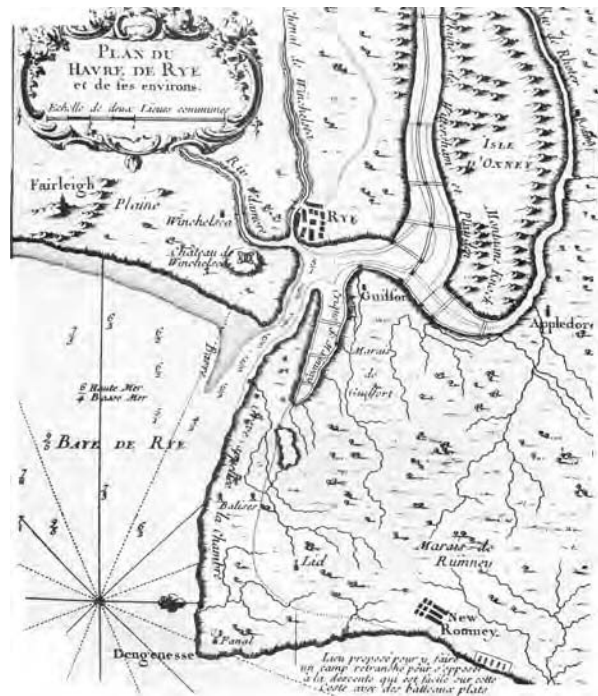


Fig 4: Havre De Rye (1764)

The visual appearance of the town of Rye is almost entirely a function of its unique geographical and geological situation. Positioned atop a rocky sandstone outcrop, the historic core of the town, generally known as the Citadel and defined by cliffs and remnants of the town wall, overlooks the flat level marshland that surrounds it to the north-east, east and south. Consequently the town possesses a distinctive outline in silhouette and is a focal point for many miles around, particularly from the neighbouring settlement of Winchelsea, and the low-lying areas of Romney Marsh and Rye Harbour.

In medieval times on the highest tides Rye became an island, an almost 'moated' medieval site. In spite of the recession of the sea, through drainage of the surrounding salt marshes to provide additional agricultural land, it still presents the appearance of an island rising on cliffs above the low-lying country. From some view points, this characteristic is modified to the appearance of a peninsular where it looks as though it projects from a 'mainland' on its northern side.



Fig 5: 'A Race Against the Tide', J. M. W. Turner



Fig 6 Rye viewed from the south, from Winchelsea, today.



Fig 7: Rye Town painted as seen from the river (view from the east)



Fig 8: Rye viewed from the south-east today.

Rye's geographical position, a highly defensible location with good access to the sea, has also been responsible for its economic prosperity. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Rye enjoyed immense wealth based on thriving international trade at the 'new' port created by the changed course of the River Rother, together with associated shipbuilding industries and inshore distribution of goods via the river systems, with its inherent associated smuggling industry. In later centuries, as harbour trade declined due to changing physical conditions inhibiting navigational possibilities, so the town shifted from a busy trading port to a prosperous market town, still drawing on its maritime economy through the fishing industry. From the late 18th century, stagecoaches ran from Rye to London, dramatically improving communications, and this was complemented by the arrival of the railway in the mid 19th century.

Today one of the main economic functions of Rye is as a destination for tourists and visitors. The architectural character and quality of the place, including the abundance of historic buildings and narrow streets and the integrity of the historic core, is the main attraction for most tourists.

2.3 Historical Development

In 1336, as a reflection of its importance, economically and geographically, Rye became a full member of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports, with associated obligations and privileges. Defence of such a valuable town was a priority, with the French attacking and ransacking the town frequently in the early medieval period, hence the development of the town as a fortified settlement. An abundance of defences is still visible today, namely the old town wall, Ypres Tower, and the later Camber Castle built in the 16th century out on a shingle spit amid the salt marshes to command the entrance to the port. By the more stable 18th century, parts of the town walls were demolished and the stones incorporated into new churchyard walls.

The constriction of the town's site, with strong physical boundaries defined by the town wall to the north and west, and high cliffs with unstable salt marshes below to the south and east meant that for centuries all development took place on the rocky outcrop, creating a compact and cohesive historic built core.

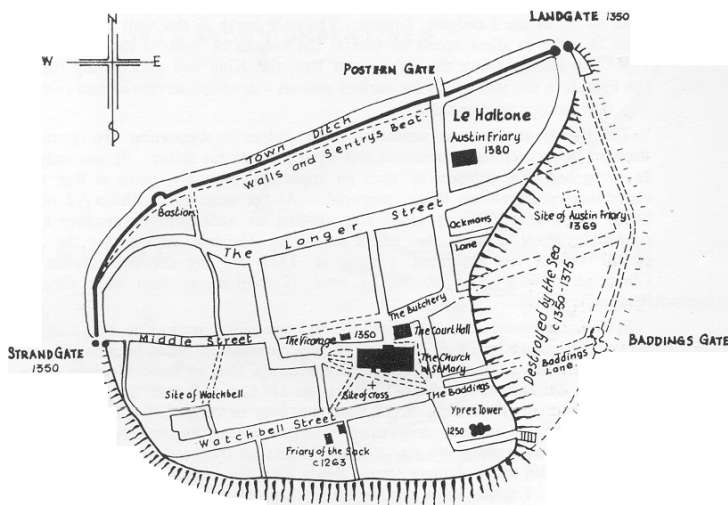


Fig 9: Conjectural map of the town of Rye circa 1350

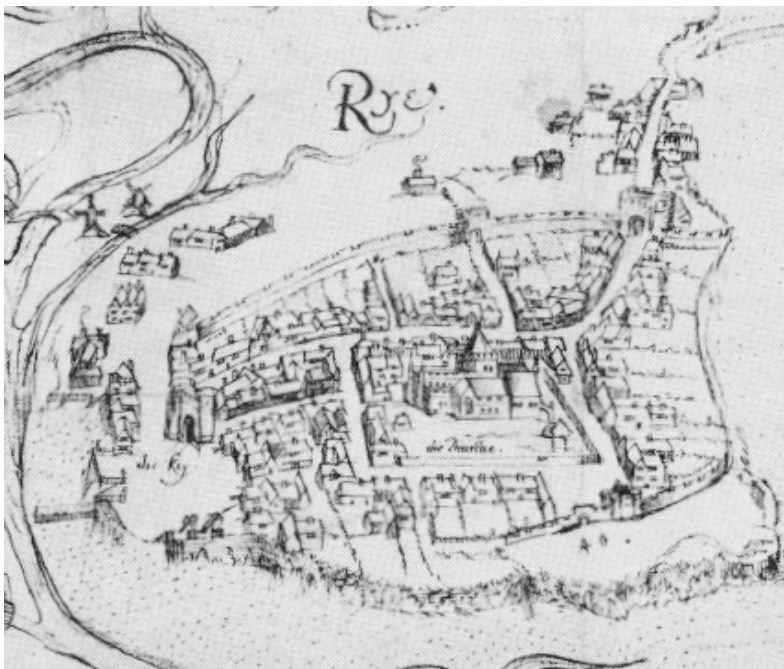


Fig 10: Town of Rye (16th Century)

This drawing clearly shows the positions of Land Gate to the north, Strand Gate adjacent to the Quay to the west, and Ypres Tower and today's Gun Gardens to the south-east.

The next significant phase of development in the town was led by the arrival of the railway in 1851, giving a new northern 'edge' to the town, on a line parallel with the old town wall, but some distance further away to the north east. This opened up both land and a market for new housing during the Victorian period, which is clearly seen today at Rope Walk, Eagle Road and Bridge Place to the north, and along Ferry Road to the west.

As a result of the physical constraints of the site, modern twentieth century expansion of the town has taken place even further away from the citadel core; to the west around Gibbet Marsh and along the Udimore Road, to the far eastern side of the River Rother along New Road, and in a number of estates built off Rye Hill to the north.



Fig 11: Map of Rye (c.1843-1893)

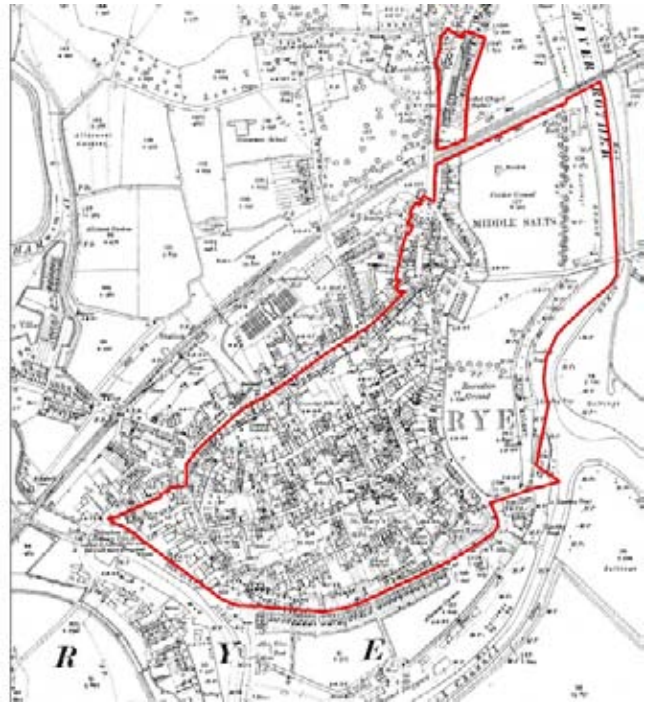


Fig 12: Map of Rye (c.1904-1939)



Fig 13: Aerial Map of Rye, late 20th Century

Character Appraisal



3.1 Setting of the Town

The surrounding landscape of open and exposed character, with a wide sky and a sense of remoteness, provides a poetic setting for the ancient hilltop town of Rye. This landscape aids the perception that the core is a citadel, sitting on a hill rising above the marshes, and vertically separated from the surrounding plain, particularly when the town is viewed from the southeast and southwest. Meanwhile the tidal rivers and estuary enhance Rye's maritime character.

Significant views into the town are indicated in Annex 2 to this Appraisal, 'Analysis Map of Rye Conservation Area' and include that from Camber Road, looking west, Rye Harbour Road, looking north, Winchelsea Road, looking north-east, and from Rye Hill, looking south. 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, its contrast with the back-cloth of open green land, the visual and physical prominence of buildings and landmarks on the hill, and the visible sides of the hill.

The town's topographical and landscape setting is a fundamental part of its architectural and historic character. Its distinctive form and strong silhouette, sitting as a tight-packed mound of ancient buildings topped by the short pointed spire of St Mary's Church, is in striking and absolute contrast to the dead flat marshland that surrounds it.

Its composition of distinctive forms, building up over a mosaic of pitched roofs to the climax of the church tower, is artistically satisfying, architecturally well composed and historically unique.



view from Rye Harbour Road, looking north



view from Winchelsea Road, looking north



view from Udimore approach, looking east



3.2 Approaches to the Historic Town

From the north, the town is accessed by a steady descent down from Rye Hill. This is a densely wooded approach, and in summer the leafy trees disguise long views on approach, until the town is suddenly revealed at the Railway Bridge.



Once over the bridge, the focal point of the medieval fortification of Landgate acts as a visual draw to the town beyond, whilst a pleasant green open space, defined by an 'L' shaped group of buildings, is found at Landgate Square, immediately on the right hand side.



From the south, along Winchelsea Road, the arrival is signified with the onset of the more gritty face of Rye, a number of light industrial and commercial units still lining the Quay, giving an appealing busy and active feel to the area. Over the Quay, the distinctive black-weatherboarded historic warehouses of the area known as Strand Quay present a characterful and imposing 'edge' to the town, which is, as from the north, again entered over a bridge.



From the east, the town is approached on the A259 over the flat levels of Walland Marsh, and consequently as one draws near, the town looms in an imposing manner above the steep East Cliff. There is a small amount of modern 20th century development before one reaches an ugly bridge over the river Rother, but this crossing clearly defines a sense of arrival in the historic town, albeit into the area known as The Salts, and outside of the Citadel. The approach is, however, visually marred as one nears the Citadel, by the prominent and incongruous single storey show-room with its strong horizontal fascia adjacent to the garage structure which faces the road junction.



From the west, the approach from Udimore follows higher ground, gradually descending through a residential area developed in the early part of the 20th century which serves to provide a feeling of enclosure and prohibits longer views of the historic town beyond. The eventual crossing of the railway line, following an area of small domestic character with a collection of attractive late 19th century buildings, including the fine, imposing Rye Pottery building, provides again the strong sense of arrival into the town itself, as the distinctive stepped silhouette of the old town is revealed.



The approach by railway is wooded, with limited views of the historic town. On leaving the Station building, the view presented is a disappointingly bland and anonymous one, though again the visible Church Spire provides crucial orientation and direction towards the Citadel.



3.3 General Townscape & Architectural Character

The distinct setting and Citadel configuration of the town of Rye makes for a strong feeling of enclosure within the centre of the historic core, with a distinct and appealing contrast between a physically inward-looking town and one which provides for long views out over the surrounding countryside below, views which are revealed as visual 'treats' from selective and strategic positions in the town. The most significant of these views are indicated in *Annex 2 – Analysis Map of Rye Conservation Area*. A key factor in the perception of space and place within the Citadel is the frequently revealed contrast in heights and levels provided by the underlying topography.

Rye possesses a townscape of strong visual character and high visual quality, informed by both the cohesion of the medieval architecture, with its predominantly domestic scale and informality, and the good state of repair of both public and private realm. The core has a compact density and tight urban grain with compact massing of buildings. The architectural and historic character of each of the different streets within the Citadel could broadly be regarded as "variations on a theme", the theme being a summary of its townscape qualities, and comprising:-

- a medieval pattern of narrow streets with most of the buildings lining the footways; the occasional recess by way of court or garden providing an interesting contrast and giving variety to the streetscene.
- partially revealed 'glimpse' views created by the curve or slope of many of the streets or by passageways.
- buildings largely of two or three storeys with pitched roofs in which there are often dormer windows.
- a high number of timber-framed buildings, with the more formal work of the medieval period being represented in the few buildings of stone.
- a restricted palette of materials, prevalent ones being brick, handmade clay tile (for roof or tile hanging), weather boarding, painted render and slate.
- good historic street surfaces including several streets that are paved with cobbles.
- a highly visible and important roofscape of jumbled historic clay-tiled roofs, its impact heightened by the topography of the town

Within this theme each street differs from the others by variations in the proportions of the building plots, the width and surfacing of the roadway, the apparent age of the various buildings and their appearance, while each building possesses its own individuality by more subtle variations in design details of windows and doors and materials.

With this in mind, the historic core of Rye can be defined by a number of 'character areas', indicated in *Annex 3 – Character Areas Map*.



However, the architecture of the individual buildings of Rye is a key contributor to the character of the town as a whole. Much of the architecture within the Citadel itself is medieval in origin, with a substantial amount of Georgian and Victorian re-facing and modernisation to reflect changing tastes in a prosperous town, and inserted shopfronts in the High Street.

The main concentration of architectural and historic interest occurs within the Citadel, in particular in Church Square, Watchbell Street, Mermaid Street, High Street, and the smaller East Street, Market Street, Lion Street, West Street, and Conduit Hill. The importance of many of the buildings in this area 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 Mary, the Old Grammar School, Ypres Tower, and Landgate, all listed Grade I, and the Water Tower, listed grade II*. A number of exceptional houses are also listed Grade II*, including No. 1 East Street, No's 3, 4 & 5 Market Street, The Town Hall, Market Street, Hartshorn House, Mermaid Street, Lamb House, West Street, No. 16 West Street, and Bank Chambers, High Street.

Annex 1 to this Appraisal, *'Boundary Map of Rye Conservation Area and Statutory Designations'* highlights the Listed Buildings, structures and streets within the Conservation Area, while those additional buildings which it is felt play a particularly positive role in informing the character of the street scene are identified as 'key groups of un-listed buildings' in *Annex 2 – Analysis Map of Rye Conservation Area*.

3.4 Entrances to the Citadel

There are a number of ways by which the Citadel itself may be entered, by stepped or sloping footpaths and by narrow roads, just passable for vehicles. The physical challenge of entry to the historic core of the town posed by these, serves to reinforce the character of detached seclusion enjoyed by the town centre, as a protected "world within".

From the North, the pinched entrance through Landgate emphasises that Rye was once a fortified town. Another steep, cobbled street, Conduit Hill, leads up from Cinque Ports Street past the remains of the town wall and the Monastery, into High Street in the Citadel.

Meanwhile from the East, a wide footpath winds its way up Hilders Cliff, from The Salts, to the forecourt of Landgate, while further along this cliff, a narrow passage with steps leads up from Fishmarket Road past Ypres Castle Inn, providing a 'secret' pedestrian entry into the Citadel.

From the South, a narrow and steep flight of steps, know as the Green Steps, rises from Strand Quay up the cliff face, leading direct up to the base of Watchbell Street. Mermaid Street, rising from Strand Quay, introduces immediately the typical street scene of a variety of historic buildings set within a tight-knit framework.



Hartshorn House



Lamb House



St Mary's Church



Old Grammar School



3.5 Townscape Character Analysis

The Citadel

Church Square

St. Mary's Church is the visual climax of the town as seen from the surrounding country and is the focal point of many views above and along streets within the Citadel, where it acts as an important orientation device, peeping above the jumble of historic roofslopes.

Church Square is an area of exceptional historic character and value; the quadrangle being formed of tight-knitted facades mixing a variety of architectural styles and materials within a common palette. The churchyard itself is the largest open space within the citadel and with its trees and shrubs provides a welcome contrast in an otherwise closely knit array of buildings.

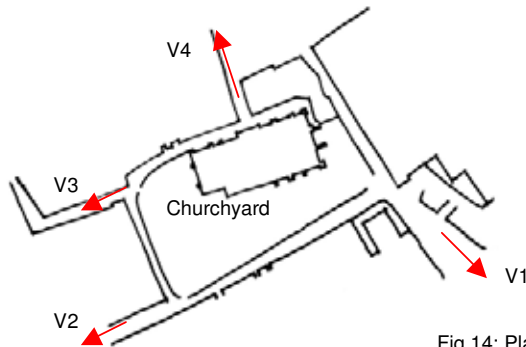


Fig 14: Plan of Church Square

Narrow streets lead away from Church Square to the North, South and East, as indicated on Fig 14 above, each giving crucial views as the line of buildings leaks out in these directions.

- V1 The wide opening at the south-eastern corner gives views over the River Rother towards the sea and the foreground here is dominated by the Ypres Tower (c.1250) and the Gun Garden, providing extensive views to Winchelsea and Camber Castle in the west and Romney Marsh in the east. There are also a number of impressive dwellings here set back from the cobbled street by lawned forecourts.
- V2 Watchbell Street leads from the south-western corner of Church Square framing an important view of the surrounding countryside.
- V3 From the north western corner of the Churchyard, West Street leads a short distance towards Lamb House. In many ways this view is characteristic of the townscape of Rye in that the street quickly turns a sharp corner; there is no attempt to line the street through in a formal composition with Lamb House, only a part of which is seen from the Churchyard.
- V4 To the north, at the North Porch, the main entrance to the Church, the view down Lion Street is closed by the Old Grammar School.



views of Church tower around the town



V1



V2



V3



V4

Three sides of Church Square, the eastern, southern and western, are characterised by a strong building line tight on the pavements, creating an absence of 'front gardens'. This starkness serves to heighten awareness of the hard landscaping here, and the cobbled streets with stone pavements play an important role in setting-off the buildings. Meanwhile the northern side, being separated from the churchyard by only a pedestrian path, (Vicarage Lane), exploits its situation with an abundance of garden planting in the narrow strip of land in front of the buildings here, creating a lush, scented walkway.



The eastern side of Church Square, known as Pump Street, contains buildings of two storeys of predominantly local vernacular character and materials; weatherboarding, hanging-tile, mathematical tiling and exposed timber frame, of black posts and beams and white plaster infill panels. To the south the buildings continue with brick walls and Georgian windows but not in a formal composition. Finally in this group Church House has a more formal symmetrical Georgian elevation with tile hanging. On the opposite (western) side of the road there is the Water Tower (c.1735).



On the southern side of Church Square the two storey scale is continued but with an occasional three storey building. The buildings combine to form an excellent group in spite of their contrasting historical periods. There are a number of timber-framed buildings some with jettied first floors. Further to the west an unusual building, "Friars of the Sack", gives every impression of being a medieval Church with pointed Gothic arches and decorated tracery in the window. Towards the western end of this group there is a white painted boarded house with a pitched tile roof and simple windows which suggest recent changes or rebuilding. It suggests one approach to the problems of designing new buildings to fit successfully into their historic context. Hucksteps Row occurs on the south side of Church Square. Starting as a narrow passage under a low ceiling, it opens out a little to frame a view of the countryside. The ambience is distinctly medieval.



On the western side of Church Square there are a number of brick and mathematical tile Georgian buildings of two storeys, but more majestic in style and stature than their counterparts on other sides of the Square, contributing to give this side a more formal character. No.60, the Old Custom House, has an ornate canopy over the door supported on elaborately carved brackets, while "Saint Anthony" is an imposing timber-framed building.



On the northern side of the Churchyard, the narrow footpath leads past rendered buildings, including No.66, The Old Vicarage, and their gardens, to a range of cottages with brick ground floors and tile hung upper floors, and on to the northern entrance of the Church. There is a glimpse of the Water Tower and the backs of the buildings facing Market Street are revealed.



Watchbell Street

The eye is drawn down Watchbell Street by virtue of the natural vista of the open view at the far end, and the gentle slope of the cobbled street down towards this.

The majority of the buildings in this street have a very small amount of forecourt space between themselves and the pavement, and this is usually either planted or cobbled. This continuous row of buildings lining the back of the footway is broken periodically by walled gardens, courts and recesses such as the courtyard front at "The Store House" on the southern side, and at No's 1 & 2 on the northern side, which provide interest and visual relief in the street scene. A similar feature occurs further to the west along the street, still on the southern side, where the continuity of buildings is again broken this time by what was once a walled garden, and has now been developed to the rear of the site.

On the northern side of the street the buildings are of two and three storeys. The range of materials includes brick, some of it painted, tile hanging, and exposed timber framing, all under steeply pitched, clay tiled roofs. Many of the buildings have steps up to the front doors, with railings. Occasionally there are openings in the otherwise continuous facades, some of which are wide enough for a car, enabling a solution to the problem of providing off street parking for the car which would otherwise be kept in the street and so interfere with the appreciation of its architectural quality.

On the southern side of the street, many of the buildings are Georgian in character (though not always formal and symmetrical) and often three storeys in height, and this side of the street has a resultant more imposing character than the northern side. Many of the buildings are rendered and painted, with high parapet eaves. The Church of St. Anthony of Padua introduces an interesting contribution into the street scene. Though dating from 1927, its design appears to have been based on Byzantine prototypes from the Mediterranean, and, though starkly different in style, its scale, materials and massing combine to make it sit comfortably in the street.

At the end of the street is a paved open space from which one can appreciate the panoramic view which opens out here of the Brede Valley. In the distance the view includes Camber Castle and the nearby settlement of Winchelsea on its hill, while in the foreground, Strand Quay and the lower end of Mermaid Street are overlooked, although this view is compromised by the overgrown vegetation in the foreground.

To the north, at this point, lies an expanse of tarmac paving, which, through poor design and quality of railings and surfacing materials, lets down the character of this key space. Steep steps lead down the 'cliff' to Strand Quay, while a narrow sloping footway, Traders Passage, itself lined with tight-knit buildings, leads down towards the lowest end of Mermaid Street, offering views to the south-east over the roofs of the Strand Quay warehouses.



Market Street

A short distance down Lion Street from the Church, Market Street opens towards the east. This is a very quiet, tranquil space, with little through-traffic.

At the eastern end, the strong enclosure formed by the tall, statuesque, three storey buildings in close proximity to one another, makes the space feel like a market square.

Elsewhere, the scale of the street varies from two storeys with dormers to an occasional three-storey building. A considerable proportion of the buildings have rendered or painted surfaces, mainly white, some exposed timber frames, and an amount of tile hanging and brickwork. Many of the roofs here are punctuated with dormer windows.

One significant building is the Town Hall, a substantial two storey Georgian brick building with a steep tile pitched roof surmounted by a lantern. Its arcaded ground floor heightens its spatial connection with the street in front of it, and emphasises its presence as a civic building.

Pump Street gives a glimpse view of open country to the south and on the south side of "Chequer" a narrow vertical slot between buildings reveals a hint of Romney Marsh beyond.



East Street

East Street leads from Market Street down towards the north and High Street. Here again the characteristic mixture of styles and materials occurs with a mainly Georgian character of façade disguising some older medieval timber-framed buildings.

A number of shops are sited in the buildings here, though it retains a quiet, small-scale commercial atmosphere, and the plethora of traditionally designed and proportioned hanging signs sets up a pleasing rhythm in the streetscene.

On the eastern side of East Street, Ockmans Lane, a short, cobbled, pedestrian way lined with buildings, frames a magnificent view over the Salts below, and the wider Romney Marsh beyond and lends interest to the townscape.



High Street

High Street is a thriving and bustling shopping street, displaying buildings of varying periods, designs and materials, all largely maintaining the characteristic qualities and scale of Rye, with a high proportion of inserted shopfronts at ground floor level. The buildings here are largely three storeys in height, often with dormer windows inserted in the roof, and a number of projecting bays at first and second-floor level. Many of the buildings, though medieval in origin, appear Georgian in elevational character as a result of re-facing and remodelling in that era, hence the street displays a pleasing variety of parapet and sloping eaves.

Along High Street, at a staggered crossroads with East Street, **Conduit Hill** falls away steeply to the north. Conduit Hill is a cobbled street and has one or two large buildings, the most substantial being the former Augustine Friary, now Cinque Ports Pottery, clearly medieval in character with a flight of stone steps leading up to an entrance and a pointed arch in the west wall. An important visual glimpse is provided down Conduit Hill, out to green fields and trees in the distance beyond.

Approximately two-thirds of the way down Conduit Hill the tight-knit urban grain disintegrates, and the St John Ambulance Station on the west, and Community Centre on the right, sit as isolated buildings, with poor streetscape context.

At the eastern end of High Street the magnificent view widens out over the River, Salts and Romney Marsh, providing a stark reminder of the town's wider, commanding, landscape setting, and indeed its raison d'être. Following the road, the eye is drawn northward down to **Hilders Cliff** towards **Landgate**. Immediately before Landgate, and just within the Citadel, is a pleasant group of cottages, mostly brick, two storey and Georgian in style, and even those in commercial use retain a simple, quiet residential character, with limited signage and domestic scaled windows.

On the eastern side of Hilders Cliff there are views of Romney Marsh over trees, on the western side buildings tight to the pavement, or with walled gardens. There is a very steep drop down to **Fishmarket Road**, which runs below as a 'ring-road' on the eastern side of the town at the foot of the cliff.

From this eastern end of High Street part of the east elevation of the Citadel can be seen, illustrating well the characteristic land form here, with its stark topographical drop at the edge of the town.



Further westwards along High Street, and leading off it, **Lion Street** frames a view of the Church and affords a glimpse of part of the Town Hall. This street retains a slightly higher degree of commercial activity than the parallel East Street.

Opposite Lion Street is Old Rye Grammar School, built by Thomas Peacock, 1636.

A further notable building on the High Street is the George Hotel, an imposing brick and mathematical-tiled building of three storeys, pitched roof, dormers, extended to west with bow windows. The appearance is Georgian but the building behind the elevation is of an earlier period.

From the High Street, **Market Road** drops northwards down to Cinque Ports Street again framing a view of fields and trees. This street maintains the two-storey scale of Rye, though part of the way down this street the density of urban grain begins to disintegrate. Rye Literary Institute, established 1867, now the Rye Club, is a little too large and formal in its overall size with windows broken up into units which are too small, particularly at first floor level.

High Street becomes narrower where it joins **The Mint**, which descends in a gentle curve towards the south. The quality of the townscape improves as other uses become more frequent between the occasional shop fronts, themselves providing good examples of how such features can fit into the historic street scene by being of minimum intervention in scale and design, often simply utilizing Victorian window openings. A fork of narrow passageways lead from the southern side, one to the Mermaid Hotel and the other is **Hylands Yard**, and their medieval character, domestic scale, and 'hidden' architectural delight adds good visual quality to the street scene. There is a high concentration of white painted, rendered and weather-boarded buildings here, which lightens and brightens the street scene considerably. The buildings are of two and three storeys with pitched roofs and dormer windows. At its southern end, The Mint becomes residential in character, and feels more open, with some buildings set back from the footpath behind gardens and trees. The narrow width of the road here restricts the speed and impact of the considerable amount of traffic that leaves the High Street by this route, and helps maintain the pedestrian quality of the street.

At the bottom of The Mint, the streetscape becomes more commercial in character, with historic warehouse buildings forming the edge of the old trading port are here. A large blank stone wall deflects the road towards its junction with Mermaid Street, while the view opens out onto the fine group of eighteenth and nineteenth century warehouses of **Strand Quay**.



West Street

On the southern side of High Street, parallel to East Street and Lion Street, **West Street** is a cobbled street, largely residential and quiet in character, with little vehicular traffic, which leads up towards **Mermaid Street** where the view is partially closed by "The First House" and finally terminated with the high brick garden wall at the sharp right angle corner at Lamb House.

The architectural style reflects the topographical nature of the street, with buildings strongly medieval at the lower end, rising to a commanding Georgian elegance at the top. The buildings on either side of West Street sit tight on the pavement, with no private forecourt space.



Mermaid Street

Mermaid Street is one of the finest and most interesting streets in Rye. It slopes steeply down from West Street to Strand Quay, is largely cobbled, narrow and contains buildings representative of a wide period of history from the medieval onwards, together forming an extremely picturesque streetscene. It is predominantly residential in character, the notable exception being the Mermaid Inn, made famous in local folklore as the smugglers' haunt during Rye's maritime hey-day.



There are a number of individually architecturally magnificent buildings in the Street, including fine timber-framed houses such as Hartshorn House, formerly the Old Hospital, fifteenth century, with its projecting gables. In between these great houses are attached buildings in a more vernacular cottage style. The scale is two-storey domestic with occasional three storey buildings, the roofline generally dropping in line with the considerable slope of the hill, while the roofscape is punctuated with many dormer windows and chimney-stacks.



The terracing of buildings provides a strong building line, the recessed Link House providing the only contrasting space amongst otherwise continuous facades, and in front of the buildings runs a very narrow strip of private curtilages, sometimes planted and often cobbled.



Mermaid Street is rich in architectural detail and character, the steep topography necessitating short flights of steps up to the front doors of many of the buildings, often with railings, with adjacent mini doors providing access for basement rooms below.



A short way up Mermaid Street, **Traders' Passage** leads off to the south up to Watchbell Street, again with a terrace of mish-mashed cottages tightly lining the pathway.

At the base of Mermaid Street, where it joins Wish Ward and The Strand, an inn, The Borough Arms, is built off the remaining section of town wall at Strand Gate.

Outside the Citadel

Strand Quay

Immediately south of the historic site of Strand Gate, at the bottom of Mermaid Street, lies an important and interesting junction, comprising the merging of The Mint and Wish Ward from the west, Mermaid Street from the north, and The Deals and the open space of Strand Quay to the south and west. A function of the town's historical topographical situation, and its relationship to surrounding waters, the area has a strong sense of place and an identity quite distinct of that of the Citadel core. The complex composition of buildings and spaces is made even more distinctive by the curiously curved buildings at the corner positions.

The group of buildings between Strand and The Quay comprises a fine set of eighteenth and nineteenth century warehouses. In height they range from three to four storeys, very obviously not a domestic scale. The upper floors are faced with black weatherboarding though one building is entirely of stone, while in many cases the ground floor walls are of brick. The pitched roofs are of tile or slate. The walls have few openings and of these many are large doors, as befits warehouses. The strong architecture is in the finest nautical tradition and is as much a part of the historical heritage of Rye as many of the town's medieval buildings. Their conversion to retail and restaurant use has been largely successful in maintaining their architectural and historic character by minimising new openings, by using shutters, which when closed restore the walls to their original appearance to a considerable extent, and by restricting external advertising, signage, lighting, extract flues and other paraphernalia. To maintain the distinctive industrial, maritime character of this area, it is important that the warehouses are preserved with as little outward change as possible and likewise any internal features of interest be retained, and any future uses should respect this.

The area, now largely divorced from its river frontage setting through a combination of 20th century flood defence works and the adjacent 'ring-road', is much frequented by tourists and shoppers, and has a bustling, lively quality. Use is made of hardstanding adjacent to the warehouse buildings for outdoor restaurant seating, helping to create a feeling of an open, urban public space, though the presence of extensive vehicular traffic, together with the modern utilitarian tarmac finish to much of the space here, does to some degree compromise the success of this, and opportunities do exist here for improving both the uses and appearance of the public realm.



Wish Ward

Wish Ward leads northwards from Strand Quay, following the line of the old town wall, sections of which are still visible in between the various buildings that line the street. At its southern end, the street has an industrial character, again reflecting the association of this area with the historic trading port. The historic warehouse-type buildings, still in commercial use, are built of brick and stand some three storeys high, creating a hard building line next to the pavement, and reading almost as man-made cliffs corresponding to the natural cliffs seen further around the southern edge of the town. The barrel-vaulted cistern is a notable historic feature here. Further along the street is an area of modern housing, which, through inappropriate scale, siting and landscaping, results in a poor piece of streetscene.



Cinque Ports Street and Cattle Market

From Landgate, to the west, **Tower Street** has an austere quality, with tall, mainly nineteenth century buildings, including a number of converted warehouses, sited tight on narrow pavements.

At its junction with the foot of Conduit Hill, this road becomes. **Cinque Ports Street**, and the urban grain and historic character disintegrate to some degree. Particularly weak pieces of townscape are the poor modern developments on the western side of **Station Approach**, which, by virtue of their scale and elevational treatment, contribute little to the character of the street, and the poor quality of the public realm at the western end of the Cattle Market area. The area to the rear of Cinque Ports Street is occupied by a supermarket and associated car-park, and a bleak and pedestrian unfriendly space is created with the main traffic distributor **Crown Fields** bordered by the railway track to the north, and an open expanse of space to the south.



As a result of the substantial lack of architectural character or historic interest, much of this area is not included in the Conservation Area. However, the area does retain a number of positive qualities, not least its close relationship with the historic core of the town, and the contribution the low-lying space plays in setting off the steep composition of the citadel, as well as permitting important long views both into and out of the town. Further, the market area is a vibrant and well-used space, contributing to the social character of the town, while the railway station is a building of architectural character, and forms a key vista down from Cinque Ports Street.



At the western end of Cinque Ports Street some of the tight-knit character of the town begins to return. Here **Ferry Road**, formed of an architectural mish-mash of nineteenth century buildings in poor repair, leads northwards towards the railway line, while **Wish Street**, in similar architectural style, continues down to the Strand Quay bridge, with a particularly poor area of townscape, comprising a modern single-storey block of garaging with associated yards and billboards, facing the junction with Wish Ward.



Rope Walk

Rope Walk extends northwards from Cinque Ports Street with attractive terrace housing, Georgian in date on the western side, Victorian on the eastern. The Georgian buildings remain largely unaltered and sit tight on the pavement, but the Victorian properties, with small, pretty, enclosed front gardens, have suffered from the insertion of PVCu double glazing destroying the elegance and window rhythm of the important front elevations. The urban grain disintegrates as the street approaches the railway line, and Cattle Market.



Eagle Road

Eagle Road, a quiet residential street, leads eastwards from Rope Walk, running parallel to and immediately adjacent to, the railway line, indeed, the Victorian terrace houses date from the coming of the railway. These buildings are generally two storeys with dormers, bay windows, and small, enclosed front gardens, and the terrace repetition sets up a strong rhythm in the streetscene, sadly broken towards the east by a modern, low monolithic building.



At the eastern entrance to Eagle Road, an open square leads off from Landgate, from which the Georgian Eagle House enjoys a commanding, recessed position. However, the formal quality of the forecourt space is unfortunately diminished by its current treatment as a tarmac parking area.

Landgate

Through the Landgate Arch, the street drops down to the north, affording a fine view over the railway bridge to the rising land beyond, with distant roofs and chimneystacks glimpsed over the treetops of the highly vegetated hillside. In the street, the two storey buildings are mostly shops at ground floor level, while the clay-tiled roofs are punctuated with dormer windows and chimneystacks.



Bridge Place

Bridge Place is somewhat tucked away under the railway-bridge embankment, only briefly visible on entry to and exit from the town to the north. A quiet, dead-end road, it comprises an attractive terrace made up of a variety of buildings and elevations, dating predominantly from the early eighteenth century, mostly two and occasionally three storeys, and brick or painted render in finish.



Military Road

On the east side of this road north of the railway the streetscape is composed of collections of small crescents and terraces of petite houses of Georgian character, constructed of brick or render, under slate roofs with dormer windows. This is an ordered architecture, relying on rhythm, repetition and uniformity to create its special character, punctuated by the originality of the Bethel Chapel, which makes a distinctive contribution to the street-scene. On the west side are few buildings, the street being dominated by the steep, wooded escarpment up to the road above.



Fishmarket Road

Fishmarket Road runs as a 'ring road' along at the foot of the 'cliff' down the eastern side of the citadel. It is flanked to the east by the wide open expanse of the Town Salts, and to the west by a combination of overgrown vegetation on the cliffs themselves, and nineteenth century terraces of domestic scale built into the cliffside, now sadly largely abandoned due to cliff erosion problems.

At its southern end, where it becomes South Undercliff, there occurs an area of particularly poor townscape quality on the eastern side of the road. Though the light-industrial warehousing here is an important legacy of Rye's commercial and maritime history, and a physical 'gateway' to the northern, industrial part of Rock Channel, the buildings on the roadside here are of poor design and placement, with garish signage, and create an inhospitable hard edge to the road, and a disappointing access point through to the land beyond.

South Undercliff & Rock Channel

South Undercliff embodies a more gritty and industrial character than the medieval Citadel, comprising nineteenth and twentieth century warehousing in active use, and a long, wall-like strip of Victorian terrace housing on the southern side of the road, which, together with the towering cliff on the northern side, provides for a tunnel-like effect on travelling along the road. On the northern side, a few scattered buildings are built off the cliff, and elsewhere the exposed weather-beaten surfaces of the rock upon which the Citadel was built can be seen. The character of the road is marred by the heavy traffic flow, creating an inhospitable pedestrian environment. To the south of the terrace houses is a mixture of open land and allotments, while a further strip of light industry, together with workshops, wharfs and moorings for fishing boats, and more residential, adjoins the Channel, a mixture of uses with cultural and historical significance in the development of the town of Rye.

Physically, like The Salts to the east, this area is cut off from the Citadel as a result of the town's distinctive topography, and is most closely linked to the Strand Quay area to the west.

The absence of substantial architectural character on this site itself means that it is not included within the Conservation Area. Rather, the area's particular special interest is the open foreground to the town when seen from the south across Rock Channel that it presents, and the stark setting it provides for the Citadel. The area provides a key and distinctive physical contrast between the sharp cliff face with the town atop, and the low-lying reclaimed land to the south-east. There are few buildings of special note in this area, and those structures on the site are characteristically low-lying, of simple shack form, and sporadic in their siting. This allows for good visual relief and physical distinction of the ancient Citadel, and of the cliffs on which it is built, in long views towards the town.



3.6 Materials & Architectural Detail

One of the joys of the historic character of Rye is the rich variety of architectural styles, materials and details displayed in the individual buildings, and so opportunity has been taken in this Appraisal to evaluate the fabric of specific and character areas street by street.

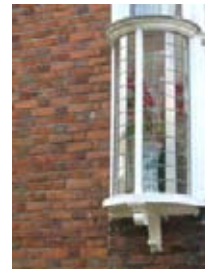
The visual architectural character offered is an eclectic mix between two ‘extremes’ – a grandiose and heavily embellished Georgian façade, oozing with proudly displayed wealth and opulence of the time, and a fine and well-preserved stock of late medieval timber-framed buildings in vernacular styles and materials.

The general palette of materials still draws on the Wealden vernacular, based on the Citadel’s medieval origins, i.e. timber frames, some still visible as hefty raw waxed oak sections, some tarred or coated with thick black paints, with lime-washed plaster infill panels, some now tile-hung over, or clad in mathematical tiling or with white-painted weatherboarding, and usually under sweeping clay peg tiled roofs. This aesthetic is supplemented with the extensive number of Georgian re-faced brick-fronted buildings, usually painted in pastel colours, and the later Victorian cottages and industrial buildings, whose massive brick elevations add to their harsher character, and are often finished with slate roofs.

There are a number of leaded-light windows in the medieval buildings, the individual diamonds and rectangles of historic glass reflecting light off so many facets, and thereby animating the elevational character of these buildings. The Georgian-faced and Victorian buildings typically have sliding sash timber windows, with the slender glazing bars of single-glazing, while in dormer windows, side-opening timber casements are often seen.

Similarly doors in the oldest buildings are chunky, panelled oak examples, weathered in appearance by the passage of time, while the stature of the 18th Century buildings is set off by impressive and formal timber or stone doorcases within which are set painted timber doors, in six or four panels, often with fanlights over.

The affluence and prosperity of the town is interestingly reflected in the abundance of quirky, ornate and skilful details and embellishments found on many of the buildings throughout the citadel, such as intricately carved timber-framing, or carefully worked brackets supporting the typical hoods over front doors, which substitute as porches in the absence of private forecourt space to the buildings.



3.7 Archaeology

As a medieval town, it is unsurprising that Rye possesses a high degree of archaeological interest, much of which can be seen above ground. As a reflection of their national significance, the Land Gate, Ypres Tower, the Austin Friars Chapel, the Water Tower and the remains of the Rye Town Walls, are all included on the list of Scheduled Ancient Monuments compiled by English Heritage. More detailed descriptions of these sites are included under the relevant entry in the Register. The presence of these structures, and the balance that exists between their integration into the built fabric of the town, and their revered distinction, adds to both the built quality of the town, and to its historical and cultural legibility.



Water Tower



Ypres Tower



Austin Friary Chapel



Town Walls

3.8 Streetscape and Public Realm

The relationship between buildings and public realm in Rye is important; there is a clear hierarchy of routes informed by the character of the street, that is to say the width of the road, its surfacing material, positions of buildings relative to the carriageway and footway where these exist, and the functions and uses of the buildings in the street.

3.8.1 Paving Treatments

Within the Citadel, a particularly unusual and distinctive feature of the streetscape is the good number of historic paving treatments that survive, largely narrow, cobbled streets, known locally as 'boulders'. The historic and archaeological importance and aesthetic value of many of these streets means they are included in the Statutory Lists of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic interest. These are indicated on *Annex 3 – Character Map of Rye Conservation Area*, and include the cobbled street around Church Square, the cobbled forecourts to a number of buildings on East Cliff, the cobbled lane west of the Old Bell Inn, Conduit Hill, Hylands Yard, Mermaid Passage, Mermaid Street, Needles Passage, Ockmans Lane, School Lane Traders Passage, Watchbell Street and West Street, all listed Grade II.

As well as making a valuable visual contribution to the character of the Conservation Area, the cobbled streets play a wider role in terms of helping to create a pleasant environment within the town, since they usually carry less traffic and have fewer parked cars than other streets. Their narrow widths play an important part in this and their cobbled surfaces may also discourage their use by traffic.



Historic paving in the Citadel

3.8.2 Open Spaces

Characteristic of a medieval town, Rye has no formal designed public open space, instead informal areas have developed and adapted over time to perform specific functions, including the Cattle Market, Market Street, the Churchyard, Strand Quay and the Salts, each quite unique in physical and functional character, and described elsewhere in the Appraisal.



3.8.3 Passageways

One of the legacies of a well-preserved medieval street layout is the abundance of narrow laneways and passageways that thread their way through the town today, creating an intertwining network.

Some exist as private rights-of-way, others are busy and valued routes, while a number lead simply into gardens or yards. Most, however, offer interesting views of buildings half hidden beyond, or glimpses into other streets, and, in some instances, to the wider countryside beyond, and for this reason represent successful pieces of townscape.



3.8.4 Boundary Treatments

As previously described, the majority of buildings on the various streets within the Conservation Area sit tight on the pavement with little private space to enclose, and consequently visible private boundary treatments are rare.

Occasionally a more prominent house might have iron railings enclosing the metre or so in front of its street elevation, and there are a few instances where high brick or rendered garden walls enclose parking spaces or gardens behind.



3.9 Shopfronts and Advertisements

The highest concentration of shopfronts within the Conservation Area lies within High Street, where they contribute to its vibrant and bustling atmosphere. The origins of the building stock in the street means that the shops generally occupy buildings of small width, and, in the main, shopfronts have been successfully designed so as to complement the proportions and scale of the building in which they are inserted. Indeed some are no more than enlarged domestic windows, with small glazing panes.

A large number of high quality historic shopfronts remain intact, providing an interesting and visually appealing lesson in the development of shopfront design over the last two centuries. Important retained historic features include glazing patterns, sizes and styles, demountable shutters, brackets, blinds and signage.

The fortunately few instances of large shop windows with unbroken expanses of plate glass and exaggerated fascias form an incongruous and obtrusive element in the streetscene.

A valuable feature of High Street is the number of buildings which retain their historic non-commercial facades and which remain interspersed among the shops. In townscape terms these buildings give variety and interest to the street scene, which would be eroded with further insertion of shopfronts. Fewer shopfronts are found as High Street becomes The Mint, and these tend to comprise simply enlarged windows rather than inserted shopfronts, such that the domestic character of elevations here is maintained.

Signage within the town centre is generally well-designed and well-sized and positioned to suit the scale and architectural character of the building. Those buildings with Victorian inserted shopfronts use typical fascia signage, in almost all instances hand-painted, gilded or carved, with a few exceptionally high-quality examples such as at Ashbee & Son, High Street. Older buildings generally avoid cluttering their elevations by deploying more imaginative forms of signage, including etched windows, signs fixed to door canopies, and hanging signs, usually traditional slim timber designs suspended from ornate iron brackets at low first floor level, which sets up an attractive rhythm of streetscene articulation.



3.10 Landscape Features

The Conservation Area possesses a number of landscape features of different scales and characteristics, each of which contributes considerably to the character and feel of the place, the appreciation of individual buildings and wider streetscapes, and the concentration of activity within the town, and each of which are important to preserve.

The primary landscape feature of the historic town is its setting in the landscape itself, especially in relation to the Levels that lie around the citadel, and to the wider surrounding landscapes of Romney Marsh, the coast and Winchelsea. With its town walls and wooded cliffs, Rye still appears to be separate from the broad open landscape that is its setting. The crucial maintenance of this relationship is a function both of the conservation of the town in relation to the surrounding countryside, and of the surrounding countryside in relation to the town.

A number of cliffs and grass banks can be seen in places from the road, especially around South Undercliff. These features are part of the historic scene and act as reminders that the sea was once much closer to Rye.

The Salts is a low-lying area of green public open space to the east of the Citadel which provides a visually satisfying foreground to the historic town. In addition to its historic value, it has important social and amenity value providing a variety of recreation grounds. The trees are important to the quality of space, while the river, fishing boats, and associated shacks are an essential part of the maritime character and history of Rye as a member of the Cinque Ports Confederation.

Within the Citadel, the placement of buildings so close to the pavement has resulted in streets devoid of tree planting. The few interruptions of this strong building line, as described earlier, together with the frequent distant green vistas, and softer climbing planting on walls, provide the only significant landscape features in the streetscene. Though aerial photographs indicate a reasonably well-vegetated town centre, in reality, much of this planting occurs in private plots which lay behind the built fabric, and is largely hidden from public view, except from views from the Church tower.

However, two important green open spaces do occur in the town centre; **The Churchyard**, which because of its relationship with its surrounding buildings, and its abundance of leafy trees, offers a tranquil sanctuary within the town centre, and the **Gun Garden**, whose perception of being an open space is rather superseded by the fine views it commands in its 'lookout' position over the low-lying marshland below.



4.0 Conservation Area Management

Clearly in a town possessing the important historical and architectural qualities of Rye the overriding policy should be to preserve and enhance those qualities. However, 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 the application of policies in the Development Plan, which comprises the East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan (adopted December 1999), and in the Rother District Local Plan (adopted July 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 East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan outlines the County's aims in Chapter 9 – The Environment, and generally seeks to protect the Plan area's stock of historic buildings, parks and gardens, from development or change that would damage them, as well as highlighting the importance of protection of the setting of historic sites, conservation areas and historic towns. The Plan also contains Policy EN1, which relates to design in the environment, Policy EN23, which relates specifically to development affecting sites and features of historical or archaeological importance, including Conservation Areas, and Policy S27 which relates specifically to development in and around Rye.

The Rother District Local Plan recognises that the District is fortunate in the legacy that exists in terms of the quality of the built environment, and that 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. It advises that 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. Where an area has a well-defined and distinctive character, particular care should be taken to maintain it. The Plan also contains Policy GD1, section (viii) of which relates to development affecting Conservation Areas. All the above policies are included in Annex 5 to this Appraisal.

In addition, the Plan includes the following general policy specific to Rye:

- Policy RY1** **Proposals for development and change in Rye should be compatible with and, wherever practicable, contribute positively to the following objectives:-**
- (i) to maintain the small market town residential and employment functions together with its character;**
 - (ii) to protect the unique historic Citadel and its landscape setting, particularly the levels surrounding the Citadel;**
 - (iii) to maintain and enhance navigation on the River Rother and the viability of the Port of Rye as a harbour;**
 - (iv) to enhance the commercial and tourism attractiveness of the Citadel and the wider area as far as is compatible with preserving their character and environment;**
 - (v) to promote economic regeneration, including further job opportunities at the Harbour Road employment area;**
 - (vi) to maintain a strategic gap between Rock Channel and the industrial development at Harbour Road.**

and includes the following advice on new development:

- 12.11 The location of development should respect the close relationship to landform and landscape setting. Much of the land that surrounds Rye is within a flood risk area and also, if developed, would severely detract from the setting of Rye. These factors constrain further growth and any extension of the ribbon development and other development on the levels needs to be resisted. The capacity of the town to take significant additional traffic is also limited in environmental as well as physical terms.
- 12.13 It is especially important to make best use of existing urban land in order to minimize outward encroachment either on to the levels or into the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and to protect the setting of the Citadel.

4.2 Development Plan Allocation – Land adjacent to Rock Channel

The Rother District Local Plan also identifies a development site to the south and east of South Undercliff. Outside of, but adjacent to the boundary of the Conservation Area, the site is important in the historic and visual legibility of the town; it forms a key part of the setting of the Citadel, and is particularly prominent in the distinctive long views to and on approach from the south and east. Any new development here must accord to the statutory requirement of preserving or enhancing the character of the setting of the Conservation Area. Key to the success of this site is the formulation of a coherent plan and design framework, within which the future development can take place in a structured and co-ordinated manner, to ensure the character of the historic setting of Rye is preserved. To this end, a separate Development Brief is being prepared for this site, which will be informed by, and make reference to, the content of this Appraisal. The Local Plan includes the following policy:

Policy RY3 Land between South Undercliff and Rock Channel, Rye as defined on the Proposals Map, is allocated for housing, open space and appropriate commercial uses. Detailed proposals will be formulated through a comprehensive Development Brief. This should provide for:

- (i) selective redevelopment that makes efficient and effective use of the land;
- (ii) high density housing, including 40% affordable housing;
- (iii) commercial uses that complement the town's tourism and marine functions together with suitable office uses;
- (iv) a riverside walk capable of linking to Strand Quay and the Fishmarket site;
- (v) a suitable alternative site for the allotments in the event of their relocation;
- (vi) improved access and parking arrangements, as well as pedestrian links to the town centre;
- (vii) the timing of development related to the completion of planned flood protection works.

Development proposals in this area will only be permitted where they accord with the above principles, form part of comprehensive proposals for its redevelopment and renewal, and be subject to further assessment of their regeneration benefits, environmental and transport implications.

4.3 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 *The Basic Principles of Traditional Design in Rother District* and *A Guide to Householder Development* as well as generic guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

In addition, the Council is in the process of preparing additional guidance on Shopfront Design and Advertisements in Conservation Areas, to be adopted and used as material considerations in the Development Control process.

4.4 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.

At a strategic level, in April 2003, East Sussex County Council adopted the Rye Local Area Transport Strategy. This Strategy aims to establish a framework within which to improve transport for the people of Rye over the period to 2012, to respond to the needs of residents, businesses and visitors, and enable the town's economy to flourish, whilst balancing economic, social and environmental considerations. The Strategy proposes a number of policies, schemes and measures aimed at improvements for pedestrians, public transport, cycling, parking, public realm, signage and traffic management. Of particular note in the short to medium term are projects at Landgate Arch, Strand Quay and Station Approach.

Meanwhile the Council is considering 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, addressing issues such as street surfaces, highways lighting, signage, furniture, street clutter and local distinctiveness.

Alongside this, the Council is currently assisting East Sussex County Council in preparing a Highways Handbook to set out standards for designing and maintaining highways and the public realm throughout the District, and exploring ways in which this might help preserve the distinctive character of Rye's streetscape and the historic relationships between buildings and carriageways.

4.5 Rye Town Initiative

The Rye Town Initiative was commissioned in 1993 by a consortium made up of East Sussex County Council, Rother District Council, South East England Tourist Board the Rural Development Commission and Rye Town Council, to provide a Tourism Management Strategy which established an acceptable balance between the needs of the local community, the needs of the visitor and the needs physical resources and qualities of the town to ensure long-term sustainability. The initiative is funded by SEEDA and Rye Town Council, and amongst other projects, was instrumental in creating new car-parking at Gibbets Marsh, to relieve parking in the town centre, and in the installation of fingerpost signs and orientation panels at key sites around the town.

The Strategy document is currently being evaluated by a steering group led by the Rye Partnership, who will also produce a new 10 year strategy for the Rye area for consultation.

4.6 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.

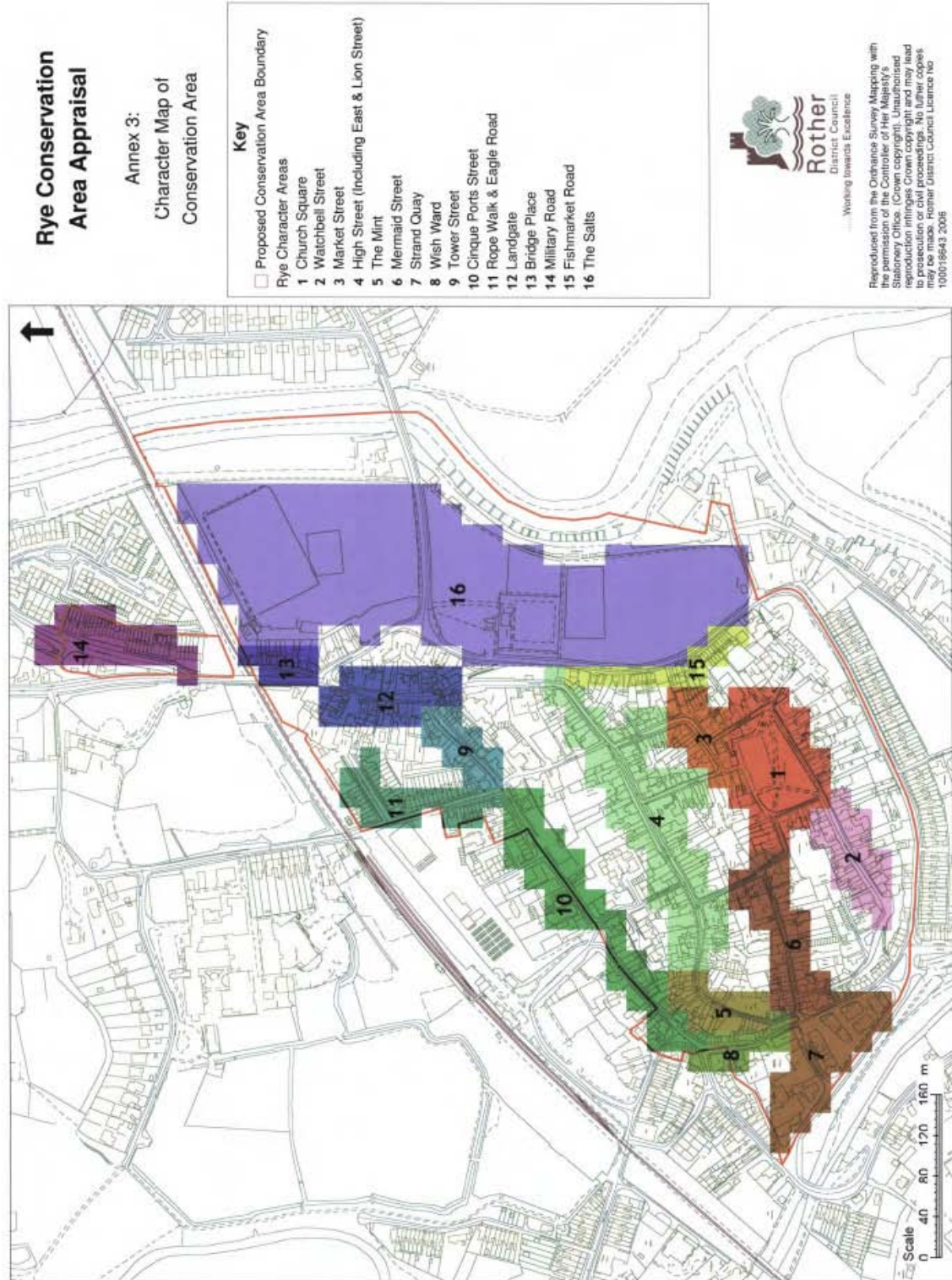
An Article 4 Direction removes specified permitted development rights. This means that anyone wishing to carry out any such work must first obtain planning permission from the Local Planning Authority. Where proposed development would require Planning Permission *only* by virtue of the removal of Permitted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

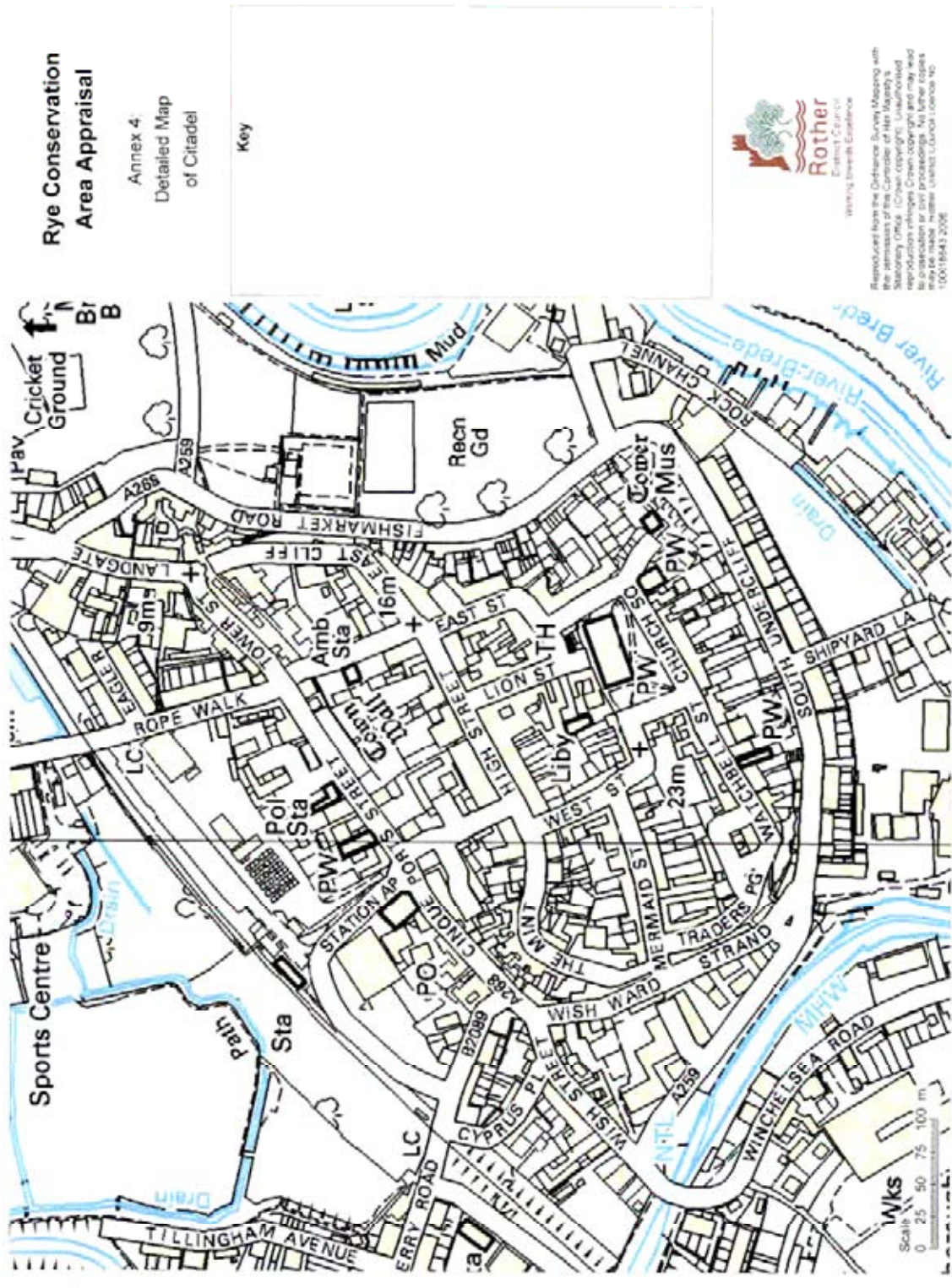
A number of Article 4 Directions currently exist on certain parts of Rye, removing such permitted development rights as installing satellite dishes, painting the exterior of a property, extending a property, or erecting a garage in the curtilage. A new additional Article 4 Direction has now been made, to cover the whole of the now extended Conservation Area, and extended in scope to respond to current classes of Permitted Development.

The particular classes of Permitted Development within Rye Conservation Area that are removed by virtue of the new Article 4 Direction are set out in Annex 6 of the Rye Conservation Area Appraisal.









Annex 5 Development Plan Policies

East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan

- Policy EN1 Development and change will be required to sustain, conserve and, where possible, enhance the character, local diversity and quality of the landscape and natural and built environment of the plan area including, where appropriate, the creation of new, equally good and distinctive local character. Features contributing to landscape character will be protected. A landscape assessment of the plan area will be carried out and advice provided as supplementary planning guidance for use in local plans.
- Policy EN23 Sites and features of demonstrable historical or archaeological importance and their settings, including ancient monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, battlefields and other historic features will be protected from inappropriate change and development.
- Policy S27 The role of Rye as a residential, local shopping and employment centre will be maintained. Its functions as a key service and major tourist centre will be developed as far as is compatible with preserving its unique historic character and high quality environment within the Rye Bay area.

Rother District Local Plan

- 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.

Annex 6 – Article 4 Direction

Rother District Council (Rye Conservation Area) Rye East Sussex Article 4 Direction 2007

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 Rye Conservation Area highlighted on Annex 1 – Map of Rye 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 Rye 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.

Earlier directions, applicable to the original Conservation Area only, apply to all buildings and remain in force.