

Brighton & Hove City Council

Old Town Conservation Area Character Statement



February 2017

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Statement of Special Interest

i. Summary and Significance

The Old Town area has formed the economic, social and civic core of Brighton throughout its transition from fishing settlement to city. It still provides evidence of this process that has resulted in a distinctive character and identity.

The area has evolved as a focus for the development of Brighton as a tourism destination on the south coast, particularly during the period between the 17th and early 20th centuries. Brighton is one of a small number of exemplar resort towns in the country, documenting the development of the seaside holiday as a phenomenon in response to increased leisure time, disposable income and mass transport.

ii. Key elements of character:

Character feature	Contribution to significance
Street plan and distinctive hierarchy of streets.	The network of interconnecting intimate narrow streets and lanes are the hallmark of the Old Town and Lanes area. They illustrate the development of the Old Town from the medieval plotlands of the historic fishing settlement to the popular seaside resort of the 18th, 19 th and 20 th centuries. The busy commercial city centre grew out of the cardinal streets that define the area.
Key views, including long street views to the sea.	These provide the visual connection between the spaces of the Old Town and the sea, illustrating the historic drivers of the town and later city's development from fishing village to seaside resort.
Town houses.	Provide evidence of the Town Centre's role as the home of a residential community over several centuries. They provide evidence of evolving architectural styles relating to the history of the area's development. Many of the town houses have special architectural interest in their own right.
Hotels and guesthouses.	Converted houses and purpose-built hotels demonstrate the rising popularity of the centre

	as a visitor destination.
Buildings for entertainment.	A high density of music halls, theatres and cinemas competed to add variety to the visiting experience.
Buildings for religion.	A full range of churches, chapels and the synagogue was necessary to provide capacity for all the denominations of both residents and visitors.
Public buildings.	Buildings that have served a function as places of administration, public debate, ceremony or assembly illustrate the area's historic role as the administrative heart of the growing town.
Building materials.	A wide range of local materials is evident in the Old Town: clunch (chalk block) flint, brick, tiles, mathematical tiles, weatherboarding and painted stucco. Also, particular to Brighton, is bungaroosh, a concretion of mainly flint and brick bound with lime mortar. These materials reflect changing tastes and also the hierarchy of building status.
Architectural details.	Detail gives richness to the character of the area. Some details, such as bow windows, stucco motifs and historic shopfronts are particularly distinctive to Brighton.
Public realm.	The Lanes and smaller roads of the area are characterized by red brick paviers, distinguishing the historic core of Brighton from surrounding areas. The development of the King's Road as a promenade with unique street furniture was the defining element in the emergence of Brighton as a resort. The process of upgrading streets has continued up to the present.

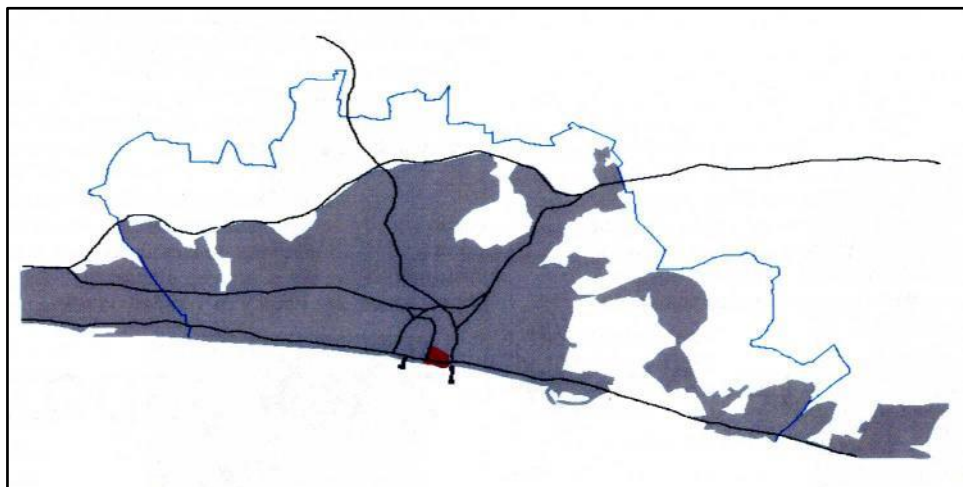
1. Introduction

Purpose

- 1.1 The aims of the Character Statement are:
 - to define the special architectural and historic interest that justifies the designation of the conservation area;
 - to sustain or enhance the significance of the area in planning decisions;
 - to identify those elements that contribute positively to the character and appearance that should be preserved or enhanced for the enjoyment of this and future generations; and
 - to identify issues that detract from the area's special interest, or affect its character, in order to inform the preparation of management proposals in future.
- 1.2 The Statement will also help to raise public awareness of the qualities that make the Old Town a special place.
- 1.3 By addressing the existing character of the area, the Statement helps to ensure that future changes respect its special interest. Issues that may affect the conservation of the Old Town are noted in Section 7 and they will be taken forwards in more detail into a separate management plan for the area.

History of designation

- 1.4 The Old Town Conservation Area was first designated in 1973 and extended in 1977. Conservation areas are designated in order to safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of an area.



The Old Town (red) in relation to the built up area of Brighton & Hove and the city boundary (blue)

Legislation and policy context

- 1.5 Conservation areas are defined as ‘*Areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.*’¹
- 1.6 The main consequences of designation are that:
- Planning permission is required for the demolition of buildings
 - Notice must be served on the Council where works to trees are proposed
 - The Council must pay special attention to the character of the conservation area when considering planning applications
- These points are explained in more detail in the Council’s Conservation Strategy.²

Public consultation

- 1.7 This document was commissioned by Brighton Hippodrome CIC on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council. The draft was informed by a Steering Group of local stakeholders.
- 1.8 The draft was subject to a formal six week period of public consultation and the comments received helped to inform the final document.

2. Landscape setting

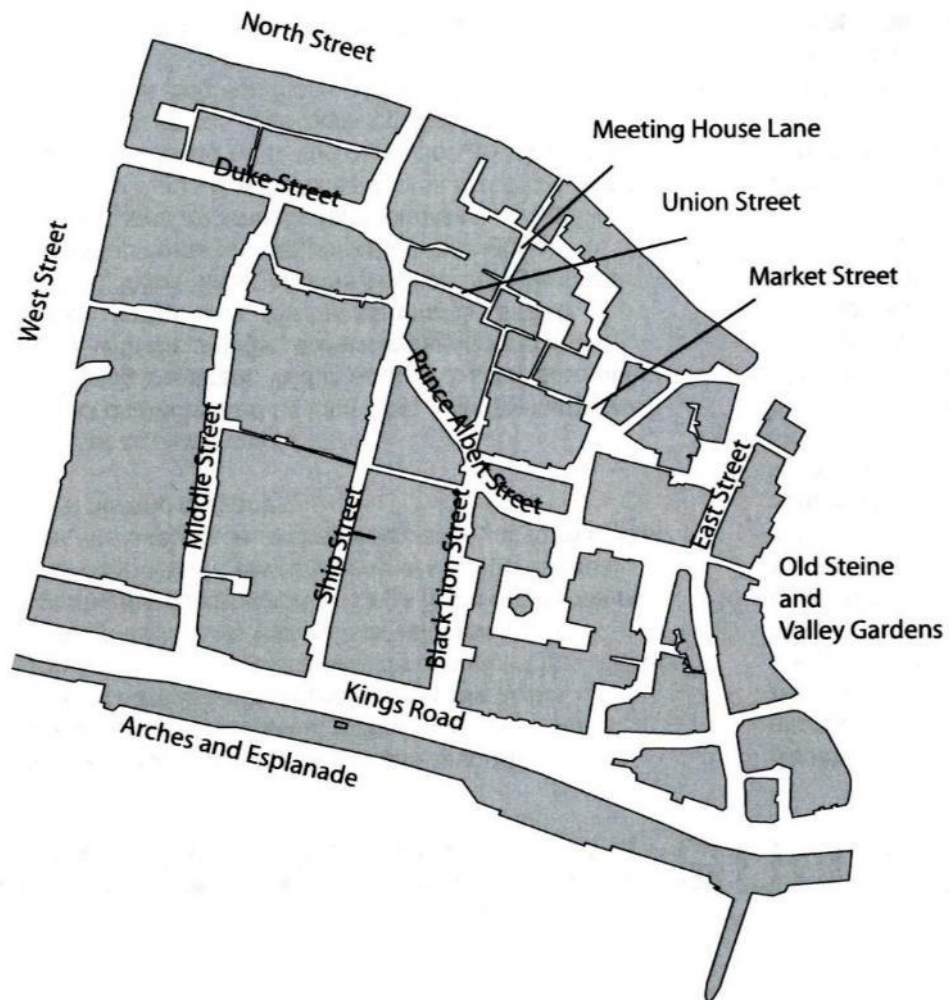
Location and activities

- 2.1 The Old Town Conservation Area lies at the heart of Brighton. It is defined by West Street, North Street and East Street and, to the south, by King’s Road and the beach down to the low water mark. The boundary follows the medieval extent of Brighton, then known as Brighthelmstone.
- 2.2 The area retains a residential population, served by a primary school and places of worship, as well as hotels, restaurants and cafés. While the use of larger entertainment venues has declined, the area retains both traditional public houses and more recently introduced bars and nightclubs that reflect a vibrant economy.

¹ Section 69 - Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

² <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/Conservation%20Strategy%202015.pdf>

- 2.3 In addition to catering for local residents and visitors, the Old Town also forms a part of Brighton's modern city centre, with civic and religious buildings serving the wider city community. The 'outer streets' are an integral part of the city centre's commercial area, while the 'lanes' are now distinctive as an area of independent and 'high end' shops, cafes and restaurants, which benefit from the attractive surroundings of small scale Victorian and Edwardian shop units.



B
Block plan of the Old Town Conservation Area

Geology and topography

- 2.4 Brighton is built on the clays and sands overlying the chalk of the South Downs. The Wellesbourne was a small stream that ran from the downs to the sea to the east of the Old Town along what is now known as Valley Gardens or Old Steine. It was enclosed in a culvert in 1793.

- 2.5 The area rises significantly from south to north and to the west from the valley of the Wellesbourne. While the southern boundary is literally at sea level, the northwest corner by the clock-tower is about 150ft (46m) higher.

Setting

- 2.6 The Old Town Conservation Area has an urban context except for its southern seaward aspect. To the east it is bounded by the Valley Gardens Conservation Area, which comprises the open gardens of the Steine and the buildings surrounding them including the Royal Pavilion and buildings on the north side of North Street.
- 2.7 The North Laine Conservation Area follows Bond Street to the north side of North Street. The remainder of the north side comprises relatively modern buildings up to the corner with Queen's Road. This junction is punctuated by the Jubilee Clock Tower of 1888.
- 2.8 West Street was widened in the 1930s, so the buildings on the west side facing the conservation area are largely of that period. The exception is St Paul's Church which had been built back from the earlier building line in the 1840s. South of the church, the buildings on the west side are modern. Then at King's Road and the beach, the western boundary of the Old Town Conservation Area is contiguous with the eastern boundary of the Regency Square Conservation area.
- 2.9 St Nicholas' Church, the original parish church serving the Old Town, dates from at least the 14th century. Surprisingly, it was built to the north-west well outside the medieval town. One explanation for this elevated site is that it was intended as a landmark for those at sea.

3. Historical development

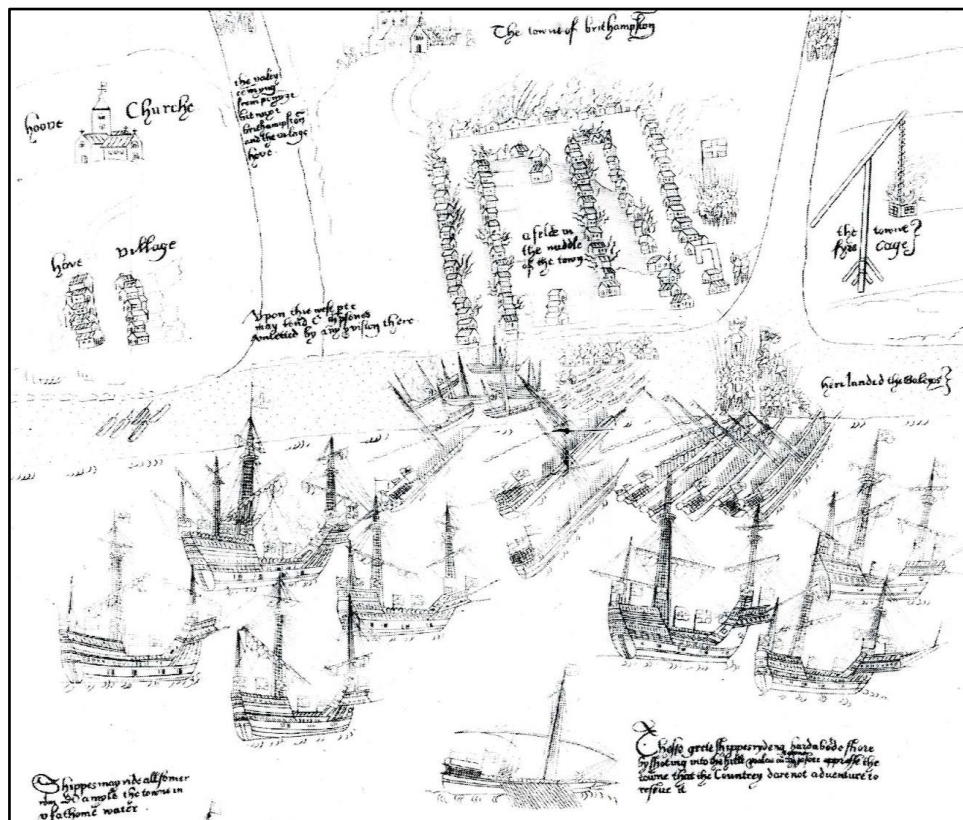
Overview

- 3.1 Historically the Old Town was a fishing settlement and a centre for an agricultural hinterland. Following the development of Brighton as a fashionable holiday resort in the late 18th century it became more densely built up with a mixture of housing, hotels and guesthouses and, as the resort developed, a focus for entertainment venues.

3.2 The Old Town also took on the role of Town Centre to the enlarged Brighton of the late 19th and early 20th century with the addition of banks and civic and religious buildings. It remained part of the expanded commercial heart of the town, with its outer main streets accommodating larger shop units, many of which were redeveloped during the 20th century. Within the Old Town, the dense network of streets retained the finer grain of smaller properties, which has allowed the development of a distinctive mix of mainly independent businesses, whilst retaining much of the historic residential character.

Brighthelmstone

3.3 The original fishing settlement of Brighthelmstone appears to have developed in Saxon times on the foreshore below a chalk cliff. This was known as the Lower Town and a church was recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086.



Map of 1520s (but dated 1545) showing the French attack on the lower town in 1515. The form of the Old Town is already established and the Hempshares is noted as 'a filde in the middle of ye town'.

- 3.4 The town expanded onto the higher ground above the cliff in the 13th or 14th century as a result of maritime erosion and destruction caused by French raids. A religious house had been established by the 12th century as an outpost of St Pancras' Priory in Lewes, and the parish church of St Nicholas was established to the north-west of the settlement by the 14th century.
- 3.5 The Lower Town became a working area for fishermen, while the Old Town developed the pattern of streets running north-south connected by alleyways or lanes that broadly survive today. This medieval plan was not densely developed: an open space at the centre, known as the Hempshares, was for the growing of hemp for rope-making and hops for brewing.
- 3.6 King Edward II granted a charter in 1312 for a Thursday market and an annual fair for St Bartholomew. Despite French attacks, the fishing industry flourished and, by the 16th and 17th centuries, Brighton's fishing economy had become one of the most important on the south coast. This prosperity was reflected in the consolidation of the town with a town hall (1580), a market house and a school (1665). The town seemed to be little concerned with the Civil War until 1651 when Brighton was the point where Charles II escaped to France after his defeat at Worcester.
- 3.7 In the early 18th century, however, there was a decline in the fishing industry and the population halved. The Lower Town and its defences were progressively destroyed by the sea and the potential for coastal trade was eclipsed by places with natural harbours, such as Shoreham. By 1744, almost three-quarters of Brighton's 454 houses were exempted from rates because of poverty.

Development of the resort

- 3.8 The fashion for taking spa waters and for sea-bathing had begun in the mid-17th century. Brighton responded with the gradual development of boarding houses, coffee houses, assembly rooms and a library, but it was the influence of Dr Richard Russell of Lewes that allowed the reinvented town to prosper. Russell published a famous dissertation in 1750 that advocated the drinking of sea-water as well as bathing.
- 3.9 As a result, Brighton became increasingly fashionable with visitors including Dr Johnson and the socialite writer, Fanny Burney. It was already the premier seaside resort by the 1780s when the Prince of Wales added royal patronage.

- 3.10 Under the Brighton Town Act of 1773, commissioners were appointed to oversee paving, lighting and street-cleaning. Road improvements reduced the journey time from London to about five hours and the town saw rapid expansion. This was characterized by a change from 18th century vernacular architecture to the more formal stuccoed terraces of the Regency style.



Budgen's map of 1788. The town is well developed but still largely constrained by West, North and East Streets

- 3.11 The commissioners widened the lane along the cliff-top to create King's Road, which became a fashionable sea-front parade. They also built markets and, in 1830, the imposing town hall. However, the major change came with the railway connection to London opened in 1841. This made Brighton accessible to day-visitors and a range of entertainments followed to cater for increased numbers – theatres and music halls were succeeded by cinemas and amusement arcades. The Hippodrome opened as an ice rink in 1897.
- 3.12 In 1842, Prince Albert Street cut diagonally across the established grid of the Old Town to link West Street with the market and town hall. Continuing pressure for commercial and entertainment uses

led to ever larger buildings, particularly on North Street, West Street and the seafront.

- 3.13 Developments in the 20th century have included the replacement of warehouses on East Street with the Regent Arcade (1961) and the creation of Brighton Square in the Lanes (1966). A large garage to the north of the Hippodrome became the Dukes Lane retail scheme (1979), linking Ship Street and Middle Street, Bartholomew Square was developed in the mid-1980s and the Nile Pavilions (1987) were inserted into the north side of Nile Street. More recently, Nos.11-13 Black Lion Street have been re-modelled by architect Piers Gough to form Moore House.

Archaeology

- 3.14 There is very little evidence of any pre-historic activity in the area, but evidence from the wider landscape indicates this area was heavily occupied and utilised from at least the Bronze Age period (c.1500BC). The discovery of a Roman cemetery at nearby Trafalgar Street, suggests settlement in the area, with the nearby Springfield Roman Villa indicating high status occupation. Although no evidence of early Saxon occupation has so far been identified in the Old Town, cemeteries, such as the one discovered at Stafford Road, and place names indicate some occupation of the Brighton area in the form of small agricultural settlements. Distribution maps of such evidence for early occupation show that the density of finds recovered within and near to the Old Town area is similar to the Downland and Coastal Plain elsewhere in the county.
- 3.15 No later Saxon sites have been recorded in the area, but the name *Brighton* is a contraction (first reliably recorded in 1686 and popularly adopted from the early 19th century) of earlier forms of the place name that developed from *Bristelmestune*, *Bristelmeston* and *Bricelmestune*. Variant spellings in the late 11th and early 12th centuries derive from a personal name, in Old English meaning 'Beorthelm's farm', strongly indicating there was a pre-Domesday settlement. As with other ports in the south-east, Brighton appears to have developed as a landing-place, and only subsequently saw seigneurial interest and development into a town. There is no suggestion in the Domesday Book, however, that Brighton was a town – the manors were inhabited by villagers and smallholders, not burgesses. The Domesday Book does record a church at Brighton, probably the parish church of St Nicholas.
- 3.16 During the medieval period the settlement developed into a market town, with a licence being granted by Edward II (this grant is likely

to have done no more than formalize customary usage). A dependent parochial chapel, dedicated by c.1185 to St Bartholomew, and with evidence of a substantial graveyard, was located within the heart of the later medieval town. This dependent chapel evidently served the town itself and appears to have been a typical foundation at the time of the creation of a new town. The Old Town covers the western part of the medieval and pre-1740 town, and includes the main north-south streets of West Street, Middle Street, Ship Street and Black Lion Street, as far north as Duke Street/ Prince Albert Street. As such it appears to have been densely occupied in the medieval period and more so during the fishing boom of the late 16th and early 17th centuries: the building of houses off the narrow lanes, or passageways, between the main streets may date from this period.

- 3.17 That the maritime economy of medieval Brighton was based on fishing rather than that of a more general port is evident from the absence of identifiable local merchants in the historical records. The coastal location would have made Brighton vulnerable to French raids during the Hundred Years' War. Some defences were in place at Brighton by the late 15th century, with 'the werke' (later called 'the Bulwark') and a sea-gate (possibly implying a wall along the low cliff-top) recorded in 1497. These defences were insufficient to repel an attack by the French in 1514.
- 3.18 Evidently, at the beginning of the 16th century, Brighton was still only a minor fishing town. The decayed state of key Cinque Ports, such as Hastings, Rye and Winchelsea, in the 16th century doubtless helped Brighton benefit from revival in the North Sea fisheries. Along with other south-coast ports, Brighton was involved in both the cod and herring fisheries. However the industry declined again in the 17th century, and although the trade continued to remain a visible feature of the town (with boats hauled up the beach), fishing thereafter was small scale and limited to local herring and mackerel.
- 3.19 From the economic low point of the early 18th century, Brighton recovered so that by 1780 the town had emerged as the nation's pre-eminent seaside resort. The concentration of listed buildings on Ship Street reflects the particularly good survival of 18th and 19th century townhouses on this street. Historic plot boundaries partly survive in the southern two-thirds of the Old Town, at right-angles to the main north-south streets, possibly suggesting survival of medieval burgage plots. However the Old Town has seen

- considerable change in the 20th century (principally through the piecemeal replacement of individual 18th and 19th century houses).
- 3.20 The redevelopment of the Old Town in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries means that earlier archaeological potential is moderate, although it is possible that pockets of pre-1700 archaeology may survive amongst the earlier buildings. The potential for later post-medieval archaeology is very high, especially relating to historic buildings. The Old Town can, therefore, be regarded as an archaeologically sensitive area and, indeed, most of the conservation area is within an Archaeological Notification Area.

4. Spatial analysis

General character and plan form

- 4.1 The character of the Old Town is more complicated than that of many places because it has an evolved history that partly reflects the social and economic consequences of boom and depression. This has left much variation in building heights, dates, styles and building materials, but the narrow internal streets have a rhythm related to the plots of the medieval layout.
- 4.2 There is also a strong north-south grain generated by parallel streets – West Street, Middle Street, Ship Street, Black Lion Street, Market Street and East Street. This pattern is interrupted by the diagonal overlay of Prince Albert Street and more recently by the creation of Bartholomew Square.
- 4.3 The streets forming the edges of the area, particularly North Street, West Street and King's Road have a much more urban scale, which derives from street-widening in the 19th and 20th centuries and redevelopment with buildings on a larger scale. In contrast, the east-west connections are tertiary in scale and often no more than narrow passages or lanes.

Open spaces and trees

- 4.4 The dense urban form of the Old Town, generally built up to the back of the pavements, makes little provision for formal open space. This contrasts considerably with the openness of the King's Road which, with its own suite of street furniture, has all the formality of a planned promenade overlooking the beach. The 1980s development that created Bartholomew Square was less successful partly because of the detailing of the buildings

themselves but more fundamentally because it cut off the connection of Market Street to the seafront.

- 4.5 Informal spaces are created by Market Street and Brighton Place where markets have been held in the past; by the loosely defined square on the west side of East Street, which is animated by café seating; and by the rather neglected area to the east of the Town Hall. More recently created are the spaces along the Esplanade below King's Road



The informal square on the west side of East Street

- 4.6 Less planned still are the spaces created by road junctions, such as the widening of East Street as it meets North Street to create Castle Square, or the junction of Ship Street and Duke Street that gives a setting to the Fabrica Gallery.
- 4.7 Private spaces also contribute to the character of the area. Principally the gardens to the Friends Meeting House on Prince Albert Street, but also the glimpses into access yards and gardens, such as the modern Avalon development at 19-63 West Street.
- 4.8 There is no historical precedent for trees in the area, so the few that do exist are all the more important. These include significant trees edging the square in East Street, trees in the gardens of the Friends' Meeting House, a large fig tree that punctuates Ship Street Gardens and more recent planting in the pedestrianized part of Duke Street.

Views, focal points, focal buildings

- 4.9 Within the Old Town, views are largely internal along the townscape of the narrow streets. The double curve of Prince Albert Street provides an unfolding sequence of views as one passes from Duke Street to Bartholomews. East Street provides an important view past the Indian Memorial Gateway to the Royal Pavilion.
- 4.10 The north-south streets give glimpses of the sea, providing evidence of the historical connection of both the historical fishing settlement and the resort with the beach and sea. Bursting out into the seafront panoramas of King's Road, views open up towards the Palace Pier and the remains of the West Pier, which further emphasise the 'holiday history.' These views are also punctuated by the larger buildings of hotels and apartments lining the seafront. Other prominent landmarks, outside the area but seen across it, include St Paul's Church, the Royal Pavilion, the Clock Tower and the i360 tower.



Ship Street leading to the sea

- 4.11 Historical focal points within the conservation area include the Town Hall, the Fabrica Gallery, the Hippodrome and the Old Ship Hotel, all of which were designed to be visually dominant in order to attract users or suggest status and respectability. Characteristic of the area is the added emphasis given to buildings at road junctions, such as Nos.17/18 Prince Albert Street (Food for Friends), by

rounding the corners. Key views are shown on the Townscape Appraisal Map in the Appendix.

Property boundaries

- 4.12 In such a densely built up area, boundary walls are less apparent. While brick is commonly used for walls, coursed beach pebbles are used to good effect for the boundaries of No15 Prince Albert Street and for the grounds of the Friends' Meeting House, making use of a distinctive local material and harking back to the Old Town's origins as a beach-side fishing settlement. This lower quality material is made formal by the use of stone copings.
- 4.13 In back yards, walls may be built using the Brighton speciality, bungaroosh, a conglomerate of brick snaps and flint bound by a coarse lime mortar and sometimes including stone, chalk or tiles.

Public realm

- 4.14 Historically, carriageways were no more than rammed earth and stone. Hence the need for boot-scrapers seen outside many of the Old Town's 18th and 19th century houses. Tarmac was applied to King's Road in 1910 and the other streets followed.
- 4.15 Pavements were typically of local brick, edged with granite kerbs that came by coastal trade from Cornwall. Several of the surviving kerb-stones are inscribed with the letter 'H' denoting either the craftsman or the quarry.
- 4.16 Further materials, such as coloured concrete slabs and bricks laid in herringbone patterns have been introduced in modern schemes of pedestrian priority, for instance in Duke Street (1985), Brighton Place (1989) and more recently in East Street. While they are not historic, these schemes enhance the character of the conservation area and reflect a longstanding and ongoing interest in reducing vehicular traffic in the Old Town.
- 4.17 Gas lighting was introduced to Brighton in the early 19th century. However, the



Windsor lanterns seen today in the Old Town are generally 20th century reproductions. Similarly, the liberal modern use of bollards has recycled historical designs. A known historical pattern is the listed post in West Street. The particular exceptions are the distinctive cast-iron street lights and railings along King's Road, which were purpose-designed in the 1880s and '90s and are now protected as listed buildings.

- 4.18 Traffic volume conflicts with pedestrian use of the area and has a negative effect on appreciation of its special interest. A survey in 2012 found that a significant proportion of traffic in the Old Town was through-traffic and concern was also expressed about the effect of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) on the historic character. Accordingly, a scheme of traffic management is being adopted. This will restrict vehicle movement in Ship Street and East Street, will limit the hours for HGV deliveries, and will promote further pedestrianisation.

5. The buildings of the Conservation Area

Historical uses and positive building types

- 5.1 In addition to the listed and locally listed buildings, there are those that make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area even though they are not specifically designated. These buildings, identified in the Townscape Appraisal Map (Appendix 1), are important components of the designated area and their conservation is a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 5.2 Identifying buildings as positive does not necessarily take condition into account. Where buildings have been neglected or altered, they are included if they have the potential for repair or remedial action to enhance their underlying qualities.
- 5.3 The Old Town has evolved from once being the whole of Brighton to its modern role as the centre for a much larger settlement. This means that residential uses, formerly in the majority, are now a smaller but nonetheless important minority. As a result, houses and non-commercial buildings from Brighton's Regency period, or earlier, are likely to contribute positively to the historic interest of the area, even where they may have undergone later alterations to accommodate new uses.

- 5.4 While the parish church of St Nicholas is outside the conservation area, as is St Paul's Church in West Street, the Old Town was also served by the former Holy Trinity Church, built as a chapel of ease for the area in 1817. This is now the Fabrica Gallery at the upper end of Ship Street. This building illustrates the growth of Brighton's population in the early 19th century as well as the continuing residential character of the Old Town at that time.



The Fabrica Gallery is a landmark in Ship Street

- 5.5 Further ecclesiastical buildings include the non-conformist Elim Tabernacle in Union Street, built in 1825 to replace a meeting house of 1688 that gave the adjacent Meeting House Lane its name. Also, the Friends' Meeting House (1805) and the Brighton Synagogue (1874) in Middle Street. These buildings served Brighton's developing 19th century population as well as the seasonal influx of visitors. They contribute to an understanding of the changing character of the Old Town as it took on the town centre role for communities spread across the expanded area of Brighton. They also have architectural interest in their own right as buildings that were a focus of investment and continue to have a strong communal value whether they remain in use or not.
- 5.6 The Town Hall, reconstructed in 1897, was a major civic focus for the Old Town, reflecting the area's role as the administrative heart of the city. The associated market building was demolished in the mid-20th century to make way for the council offices and hotel that now define Bartholomew Square. Public uses also include the

Middle Street Primary School, the oldest in the town, first opened in 1805, subsequently extended and then rebuilt in 1974.



Brighton Town Hall

- 5.7 Accessibility from London was a particular factor in the success of Brighton as a seaside resort and the route from the railway station to the beach was lined with attractions, such as theatres, music halls and cinemas. The Old Town became a centre for entertainments typified by the Hippodrome, which was successively an ice rink, a circus, a theatre and then a bingo hall. This building demonstrates the use of innovative construction techniques providing an inspiring experience for visitors in addition to the entertainments it presented.
- 5.8 Accommodation for visitors was initially provided in coaching inns or at a domestic scale in rented properties and guest houses. In the late 18th century, inns began to evolve into hotels. One of the earliest was the Old Ship Inn, which also hosted civic functions in its assembly rooms. Another surviving example is the Clarence in North Street.
- 5.9 The first purpose-built hotels were introduced in the early 19th century: the Royal Albion Hotel opened in The Old Steine in 1826. Hotel-building accelerated after Brighton was connected to the railway network and, with a premium for sea views, the seafront was characterized by hotels. The Princes Hotel on Grand Junction

Road was converted out of a terrace of houses in 1840 and the Queen's Hotel on the King's Road was opened in 1846.



The former Princes Hotel, Grand Junction Road

- 5.10 There are many good-quality shopfronts both historic and modern. Easily missed are those that clearly began as modest functional outlets and are now overlaid by modern fascias. Signage, including hanging signs, can enliven the area, but in excessive cases the character of the conservation area can be threatened.

Building styles, materials and colours

- 5.11 The range of styles from the 17th century to the present day gives the area a distinctive palette of materials, colours and textures.
- 5.12 Scale and mass: While plot widths may be determined by the medieval layout, building heights are a product of both age and status. In Ship Street, for instance, the early two-storey range at Nos.31-33 contrasts starkly with the adjacent four-storey height of No.34 dating from the 19th century. Although this may seem haphazard, there are underlying rhythms of width, fenestration, a generally vertical emphasis and diminishing storey heights. These illustrate the development of a hierarchy within the area during the 19th and 20th centuries and now contribute to its intimate character.
- 5.13 In contrast, larger scale uses tend to line the main streets at the edge of the area – North Street, West Street and King's Road. The opportunity for these developments, including banks, offices, hotels

and the larger shops, was often provided by road-widening improvements in the 20th century.

- 5.14 Materials: Building materials are typically related to status, as well as the age of buildings and their historic functions. Earlier buildings, generally in vernacular style, were faced in local beach-cobbles, flints and occasionally weatherboarding. These materials could be elevated in status by fine craftsmanship: The squared flints fronting No.69 Ship Street are of exceptional quality.



- 5.15 Brick became popular in the 18th century for higher status buildings, while mathematical tiles or render were used to cover historically inferior materials such as soft-wood framing or bungaroosh. This mixture of materials is seen within individual streets illustrating the socially mixed historical character of the Old Town.
- 5.16 Elsewhere, throughout the area, architecturally detailed stucco was used in imitation of ashlar stonework from the Regency period onwards. It is an important part of the character of the Old Town, and of Brighton as a whole, as the town came to pre-eminence in the Regency period.
- 5.17 Roofs were generally clad with plain red clay tiles. There was limited coastal trade in slate from the 18th century, but the real impetus for slate came from the introduction of railways in the 1840s.
- 5.18 Colours and textures: Traditionally, colours have been generated by the building materials; the greys of flint and the reds and yellows of brickwork. Stucco was often self-coloured to replicate stone when first applied, but is generally painted now. White and cream colours give a consistency, for instance to the seafront, while non-conforming dark grey strikes a discordant note in Duke Street.

Listed buildings

- 5.19 A high density of listed buildings, particularly in the Lanes, Ship Street and Prince Albert Street, demonstrate the quality of buildings in the area. While there are no buildings at Grade I, the Hippodrome, the Synagogue and the Old Ship Assembly Rooms are all Grade II*.



The Synagogue, Middle Street – Listed grade II*

Locally listed buildings

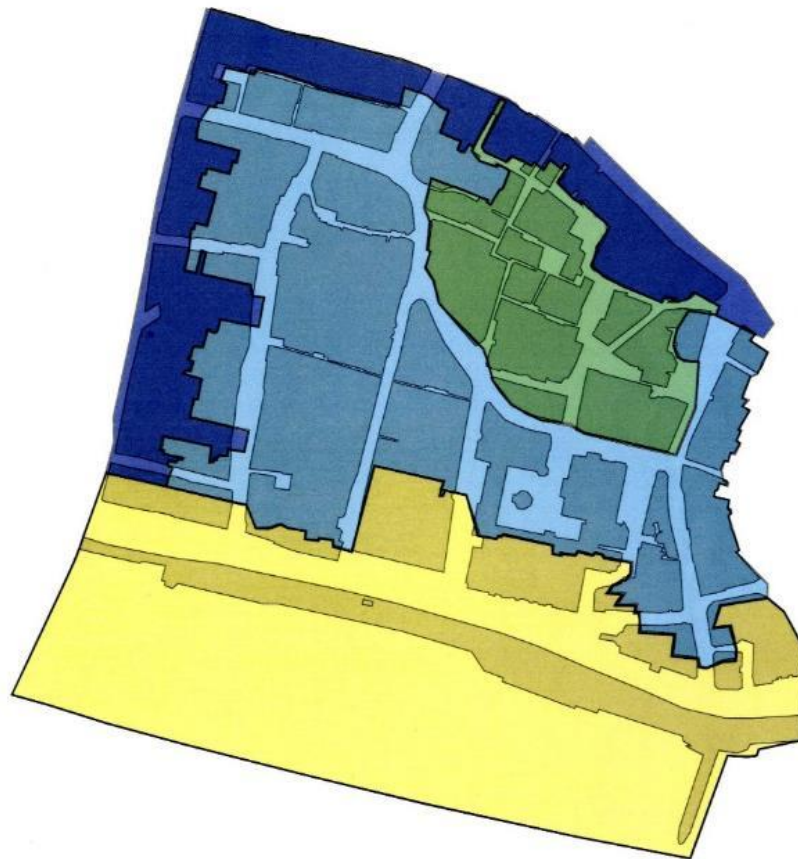
- 5.20 In 2015, the Council published a revised Local List of Heritage Assets. This identifies buildings and gardens which, although not designated in the national context, are nonetheless important to local distinctiveness or for local associations.
- 5.21 There are three buildings on the local list within the Old Town:
- East Street/Grand Junction Road – 1930 former cinema
 - King’s Road – The Old Ship Hotel
 - West Street – the Molly Malone PH
- 5.22 The criteria for local listing in Brighton treat conservation areas differently because conservation area designation already provides a greater level of protection than local listing. Accordingly, only those that are atypical of the area but also of particular interest in their own right are included. It follows that the buildings noted on the Townscape Appraisal Map (Appendix 1) as making a positive contribution to the character of the area are likely to include several with qualities commensurate with the local list.





Other buildings

5.23 Buildings and sites that are not designated or noted as positive may be considered to make a neutral or negative contribution to the character. Neutral buildings are often the more modern interventions, whereas negative sites can be seen as opportunities for change.

6. Character areas

6.1 The development of the Old Town over time has resulted in distinctive parts that can be considered in further detail. This appraisal identifies four sub-areas. However, boundaries should not be taken too literally as existing buildings and future proposals can have a wider effect.



Character areas:		The Centre
		The Lanes
		The Seafront
		West Street & North Street

The centre

- 6.2 This area includes the north-south alignment of streets that survive from the medieval plan and the narrower east-west streets and lanes that connect the area with West Street and Valley Gardens. These connections were improved in 1842 when Prince Albert Street was constructed to link Duke Street and Bartholomews.
- 6.3 Middle Street, once a main route from the centre to the sea, is now relatively quiet with a domestic scale resulting from the narrow street, strong rhythm of the narrow plots, a largely consistent three-storey height and an irregular building line.
- 6.4 The street was clearly much busier in the late 19th and 20th centuries when the Hippodrome drew crowds to circus and music hall entertainments and latterly bingo. Currently disused, it was built in 1897 as an ice rink with what became a large circular auditorium under a huge dome as a circus/theatre in 1901/2. In its present form, the entrance is relatively understated, while the dome is not readily apparent in the streetscene.



The Hippodrome, Middle Street

- 6.5 The former hotel at No.8/9 brought the seafront scale into Middle Street with five large storeys looming over its neighbours. Otherwise, the domestic scale is typified by the rounded bays of Nos.74-76 and the late 18th century houses opposite the Hippodrome that turn into Boyces Street.

- 6.6 The Synagogue, built in 1874 to the design of Thomas Lainson, is significant in a European context. It maintains the rhythm of the street by dividing its bulk into three distinct bays. This device is used less successfully on the mid-20th century building at Nos.15-17 opposite.
- 6.7 Ship Street takes its name from the Old Ship Inn, which has early 17th century origins. To the rear are the Assembly Rooms (another important historic focus for entertainment) with a frontage of 1895 that does not do justice to the 18th century interior where Paganini played in 1831.
- 6.8 Like Middle Street, Ship Street also retains a domestic character with three-storey Georgian houses. Mathematical tiles were used for the bow fronts of No.7, while Nos.8 and 69 are faced with flint. Elsewhere, brick and stucco predominate. The street has a high proportion of listed buildings and few modern intrusions.



No.69 Ship Street. Note detail of high quality flintwork on page 21 above

- 6.9 One very different property is the gothic building at Nos.3-6 with a timbered gateway and brick infill panels. This is a whimsical mock-Tudor rebuilding in 1933 of the New Ship Inn of the 1630s.
- 6.10 Ship Street is interrupted by Prince Albert Street and near that junction is the open service area to the rear of the Hippodrome. Once occupied by a row of small properties at right angles to the street, there is now a break in the active frontage with views to the

unsightly parking area, the rear of the Hippodrome's fly tower and the intrusive side elevation of Nos.18-19. Cumulatively, this results in a negative impact on the area's character and appearance.

6.11 Ship Street becomes more urban at its north end. It is dominated here by the 19th century Post Office, which was remodelled in 1925 using Portland stone. Opposite is the former Holy Trinity Church originally built of stone and flint in 1817 to the design of Amon H Wilds. It was altered in 1825 by Charles Barry as it became an Anglican chapel of ease, then the stucco side elevation was added in 1867 when Duke Street was widened, and the front was remodelled in 1885. The church became a museum and is now the Fabrica Gallery.

6.12 Ship Street Gardens is a narrow brick-paved lane connecting Ship Street to Middle Street. It houses a balance of commercial and residential uses which once characterised the area: The north side is lined with well-preserved 19th century shopfronts, while the south side is a brick and flint garden wall to a small range of cottages with further terraced houses beyond. At the centre of the gardens there is a large and dominating fig tree which, together with tamarind, were the only form of vegetation in the town at the beginning of the 19th century. It adds an unusual green element to the tight urban grain.



6.13 Black Lion Street was connected more directly through to North Street until it was cut across by Prince Albert Street. The east side was fronted by the market until it was redeveloped in the 1980s to form Bartholomew Square. The east side now is almost wholly taken up by the flank wall of the Thistle Hotel (now Jury's Waterfront), the offices of Bartholomew House and the access ramp to the underground car park. The concrete frame and green glass bays of the hotel and office buildings form a substantial negative element in the historical character of the Old Town.

- 6.14 The west side is also dominated by the modern extensions to the Old Ship Hotel and the incongruous Moore House, designed by Piers Gough, which makes a reference to vernacular weatherboarding but rejects the orthogonal norms of the historical context. The Cricketer's Arms is said to be the oldest public house in Brighton. Although re-fronted with bow windows in 1824, it dates from the late 17th century. Adjacent is the Black Lion PH, which looks historic with a pebbled ground floor and slate-hanging above, but is actually a sensitive recent reconstruction using distinctive materials well suited to the conservation area.
- 6.15 Black Lion Lane is an extremely narrow passageway squeezing between the Cricketer's and the Black Lion. The south side is fronted by three 18th century cottages with slate-hanging above boarded ground floors, indicative perhaps of timber-framing. Concrete slabs have replaced the original brick paving, creating an area of poor quality public realm.



Building contrasts in Market Street including the glazed tiles at No.23

- 6.16 Market Street was once the principal street for food shops associated with the market hall that opened in 1774. The lower part of Market Street was obliterated in the 1980s by the construction of Bartholomew Square and the Thistle Hotel which cut off its historic connection to the seafront. The northern part, with Brighton Place creates a fine open space fronted by modest 17th, 18th and 19th century buildings. The Pumphouse PH, on the site of the Old

Town's original water supply, and the shop at No.23 are faced with black glazed mathematical tiles.

- 6.17 Duke Street was part of the 17th century layout of the Old Town, but it was widened on the north side in 1867. This caused the loss of a theatre dating from 1790, although No.32 respects the height and set-back of the original building. Widening also led to a remodelling of the south wall of Holy Trinity Church.



The pedestrianised part of Duke Street

- 6.18 The south side is lined with early 19th century houses, now shops, including the listed pair at Nos.12-13. On the corner with Middle Street, the Victory PH has a lively late 19th century front of decorative ceramic tiles applied to an earlier building. The adjacent narrow building has ominously, since 2014, been painted entirely in black. On the north side, Duke Street Yard includes a remarkable timber-fronted house of about 1780.
- 6.19 The area from West Street to Middle Street was pedestrianised in 1983. Trees planted down the centre provide an attractive focus to views from Ship Street.
- 6.20 Prince Albert Street was added in 1842 to connect the north-south streets. Unlike the more gridded streets, this route is a progression of sinuous curves with unfolding views punctuated by rounded street corners. As it passes the open space of the Friends' Meeting House it is fronted, unusually for this area, by single storey shops

with bold details. Those on the north side are framed with pilasters and a balustrade of red terracotta. Beyond, No.15 is a particularly distinguished three-storey house, now offices.

- 6.21 The street is then lined with curved terraces leading to the Town Hall. Being of a later date than much of the area, bow windows and consistent shopfronts create a formality that is more often seen outside the Old Town.
- 6.22 Bartholomew Square was created in the 1980s when the final part of the market building was demolished and replaced with civic offices. Jury's Waterfront Hotel (formerly the Ramada Renaissance, then the Thistle), built at the same time, severed the connection to the seafront and without active frontages the square remains rather a dead end. The architecture is not an adequate foil to the listed Town Hall and the lack of animation has led to it being infilled with a standalone restaurant of contemporary design.
- 6.23 The concrete paving in the square and around the Town Hall, a haphazard collection of buff bricks, grey and red slabs, is extremely dated, adding to the forlorn atmosphere.



6.24

complements the civic scale of

the

once stood close to the

modern

Priory

House

and the

Jury's

Waterfront Hotel to reach the seafront. The east side includes several late 18th century vernacular houses.

- 6.25 East Street formed the eastern limit of the built-up area, until the late 18th century, with a defensive gate onto the Pool Valley. As the town expanded with grand residential properties fronting the Old Steine (now forming part of Valley Gardens Conservation Area),

buildings on East Street developed to service these houses. Following this it has become a significant retail area. Most of the buildings date from the 19th century with a strong rhythm of bow windows and canted bays. No.62 has pilasters decorated with the typical late 19th century sunflower motif.

- 6.26 Towards the north end, East Street widens into an informal square fronted by the Sussex Tavern, which is thought to be the eastern side of an historical open area called the Knab. Space such as this is a rarity in the Old Town and it is enlivened by outdoor dining and three important trees. Further north, East Street widens and the scale increases as it meets North Street and Castle Square with views towards the Royal Pavilion.

The Lanes

- 6.27 This is the area broadly to the north and east of Prince Albert Street. It was the last part of the open land, known as the hempshares that was developed mainly from the 18th century.



- 6.28 The area is very different from the rest of the Old Town, being characterised by dense two-storey properties fronting narrow, brick-paved lanes. Most of the buildings date from the 18th and 19th centuries although earlier evidence may well be hidden behind later frontages. It is now popular for its small independent shops, many of which have 19th century shopfronts, and it has become an important destination for visitors.
- 6.29 Meeting House Lane runs north-south connecting North Street and Prince Albert Street. Until the latter cut through in 1842, the southern section was part of Black Lion Street. A further arm leads east to Brighton Place. The lane is not named after the Friends' Meeting House, but rather the Presbyterian Meeting House that was established at the junction with Union Street in 1688.

- 6.30 From the south, the entrance funnels down invitingly. However, the entrance from North Street between two modern buildings is almost anonymous. Above the shopfronts buildings are fronted with a mix of brick, weatherboarding and mathematical tiles.
- 6.31 Union Street is similarly flanked by small-scale shops and cafes, notably the 19th century shopfronts of Nos.1-5 and the cobble fronts of Nos.9/10. Hanging signs add to the visual diversity of the area, however 'A' boards increase clutter at street level. The former Presbyterian meeting house, dating originally from 1688 and from which the street takes its name, was rebuilt and enlarged in 1810 and again, by Amon Henry Wilds and Charles Busby, in 1825. It closed in 1988 and has been converted into a public house.



The award-winning Brighton Square is a focus for The Lanes

- 6.32 Brighton Square added 24 shops to the Lanes in 1966. The scheme, which made use of a derelict site, was designed by Fitzroy Robinson architects and won a Civic Trust award. Construction has started on a further lane (to be named Hannington Lane) to be added between Market Street adjacent to Brighton Square and the rear of properties on North Street, opening into North Street through a newly created footpath as Puget's Lane.
- 6.33 Nile Street was named after Nelson's victory at the Battle of the Nile in 1798, although it predates the event by some time. It was pedestrianised in 1989 when the Nile Pavilions, designed by the

Robin Clayton Partnership, were built along the north side incorporating the listed No.16 Prince Albert Street.

- 6.34 Brighton Place stands on a slight rise once known as the Knab, which was developed from the 17th century to provide workers' housing. In contrast with the Lanes, it is a wide space enlivened by pavement cafes and lined with 18th and 19th century buildings of two and three storeys. Brick, render, flint and tile-hanging contribute a varied palette of colours and textures that all relate to the evolved character of the street. The clock-tower of the former Hanningtons department store provides architectural interest to views northwards.

The seafront

- 6.35 King's Road follows the line of the cliff that separated the Lower Town on the foreshore from the Old Town above. Until the 19th century it would appear that there was no more than a minor lane linking the ends of the north-south streets.
- 6.36 In 1821-2 a formal promenade was built between East Street and West Street. It was extended eastwards as Grand Junction Road in 1829 and westwards to Brunswick Town in 1834 becoming a fashionable carriage drive with extensive seaside views. The promenade was widened in the mid-19th century and again in the 1880s. The distinctive railings and shelters date from this time, while the ornate lamp-posts were added in the 1930s. The ironwork was cast by Every's Foundry in Lewes. Today, the road is blighted by traffic that cuts off the Old Town from the seafront, with consequent noise and pollution.
- 6.37 King's Road is supported on a line of brick arches, which now house leisure uses – bars, clubs, galleries and the Brighton fishing Museum – fronting directly onto the beach. The foreshore is further enlivened as uses spill out onto the foreshore, with funfair attractions, sculpture and structures inspired by beach huts, winch houses and fish stalls. These are largely temporary, small scale and low level structures such that no particular structure dominates.



Brick arches supporting King's Road

- 6.38 The beach itself is a major factor in both the area's character and its historic interest as a driving force in Brighton's development as a seaside resort. It provides extensive views along the coast and back towards the Kings Road buildings towering above the brick arches. The area between West Street, being the direct route from the railway station, and the Palace Pier is particularly well patronised during the summer season.
- 6.39 Compared with much of Brighton, the King's Road itself is not an architectural showcase – buildings with canted bays have either been stripped of their detail or never had it in the first place – and the scale is larger than the rest of the Old Town. There are exceptions, however: the former Sheridan Hotel on the corner of West Street is a six-storey 'wedding cake' of decorative stucco; Nos. 42/43 are faced with black-glazed mathematical tiles; and No.39 is decorated with shell motifs and urns. Nonetheless, the well-detailed entrances to No.41 and Nos.54/55 are swamped by the paraphernalia of garish advertising on awnings and over-deep fascias.
- 6.40 The Old Ship Hotel is said to be the oldest inn in Brighton, but the frontage dates from the 19th century, apart from the 1950s extension rising to six storeys. This addition on the corner of Black Lion Street might be considered obtrusive but for the adjacent Jury's Waterfront Hotel, built of concrete with plain canted bays of green glass in 1984-7. The design by Michael Lyell Associates,

which cuts across the historic street layout, has been heavily criticised as an eyesore since it was built.



Jury's Waterfront Hotel, King's Road

- 6.41 From the Jury's Waterfront Hotel, Kings Road continues towards East Street with smaller-scale 18th and 19th century buildings. On the south side, and fronting the sea on Grand Junction Parade, is the Queen's Hotel. Although the hotel now occupies the whole block, it can still be read as several buildings including No.6 Kings Road, 1825 by A H Wilds, and the range fronting the west side of East Street. The modern bay on the corner of East Street and Grand Junction Parade, added in the mid-1980s, does not enhance the building.
- 6.42 To the east of East Street, Clarendon Mansions (1869) and the former Princes Hotel (c.1840) are both listed buildings. Between them is the former ABC cinema of 1930. This locally listed Art Deco building on the site of the former Brills Baths has cream faience facades that wrap around Clarendon Mansions to give an imposing entrance frontage onto East Street.



Entrance front of the former ABC Cinema on East Street

North Street and West Street

- 6.43 West Street is one of the defining streets of the medieval Old Town. The upper end was widened in 1868 at the same time as Duke Street. Then the whole street was widened on the west side in the 1930s with office blocks, including a large Montague Burton building giving a very urban scale.
- 6.44 On the east side, the scale steps down from the former Sheridan Hotel on the seafront to the blank façade of a night-club. The main part of this site dates to 1867 when the iron-framed Grand Concert Hall was built in the centre of the site and an Italianate hotel building on both the West Street and Middle Street frontages, by the architect Horatio Goult for William Childs. The current West Street elevation is a plain fronted nightclub entrance built in 1969 and which lacks any reference to its context. The building runs through to the façade of a five-storey former hotel in Middle Street. Clearly, a development scheme to revive this run-down site would also help to animate Middle Street.
- 6.45 As the direct route from the railway station to the sea, West Street became a focus for entertainments, such as cinemas and amusement arcades. Some of these facilities were purpose built, but often they have been converted from earlier buildings, such as the large early 19th century house at No.77, which stands out in the streetscene because of two unusually wide bows.



The wide bow-fronts of No.77 West Street

- 6.46 Most of the buildings on the east side are late 19th century or modern. At No.57, the locally listed Molly Malone PH is an ornately detailed Baroque revival building of 1901. However, the modern buildings at Nos.51-53 and at No.59 undermine the vertical emphasis that gives the street much of its character as does a range of poor shopfronts.
- 6.47 North Street was the northern edge of the medieval town leading northwest to the parish church. Further to the northwest it became Dyke Road, formerly the principal connection to London. In the 18th century, this was the main entrance for visitors to the developing resort and North Street became the main commercial thoroughfare, which it has been ever since.
- 6.48 As its importance increased, North Street was widened in the 1870s and again in the 1930s with further adjustments being made in the 1960s. Consequently, little survives from before the mid-19th century and the north side is particularly characterised by larger commercial buildings of the late 19th and 20th centuries.
- 6.49 Buildings on the south side are a mix of styles and quality united by a fairly consistent use of sash windows, decorative cornices and string courses. The former Clarence Hotel at Nos.30-31 is the only surviving evidence of coaching inns in North Street, while Burger King at No.63 belies its past use as the Bijou Electric Empire (better

known as the Prince's Cinema or Jacey), one of four cinemas in North Street.



South side of North Street: formerly Hannington's department store

- 6.50 Near the corner with Ship Street is the 1935 building of the former Vokins department store. Hanningtons store, first opened in 1808, expanded to occupy a range of buildings from the East Street corner to No.14 including the highly decorative Nos.8-10, which had been the Brighton Union Bank. This high quality townscape is let down by buildings, such as Nos.21-25, a clumsy modern attempt to re-work Brighton's typical canted bays.
- 6.51 North Street opens into Castle Square at the junction with East Street. However, as with the whole of North Street, the space tends to be dominated by heavy traffic. Redevelopment on the corner of Castle Square and East Street has reconfigured the plot so that the conservation area boundary now runs through the middle of the building.

7. Issues for future management

- 7.1 Analysis of the conservation area in the preceding sections has identified a number of issues affecting its special architectural and historic interest. They are considered together in this section and will be incorporated into a separate management plan, following adoption of this character statement.

Designations

- 7.2 Conservation area boundary review. The existing conservation area boundary encompasses the medieval town within the defining East Street, North Street and West Street. This is a very robust area distinctly different from the planned development of Brighton from the Regency period onwards. The area is also further defined by the designation of adjacent conservation areas to the east and north. Accordingly, no reason is seen to expand the existing designation even though there is architectural and historic interest in buildings to the west and north. This could be recognized in other ways.
- 7.3 One small administrative anomaly that could be rectified in due course is the way the boundary appears to cut through the building on the corner of Castle Square and East Street. This appears to reflect the pattern of properties before the corner was redeveloped in the late 20th century.

Cumulative impact of minor alterations

- 7.4 The loss of architectural detail, particularly the timber-framed windows of buildings constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries, is notable within the conservation area. Individually, these losses might be viewed as relatively minor alterations. However, where an area is affected by multiple changes taking place in an un-coordinated and piecemeal way, this can result in a cumulative negative impact. This drives down the perception of the area's special interest and the quality of its historic character.
- 7.5 While residential properties that are single family dwellings have 'permitted development rights' that provide permission for most minor alterations, these rights are not generally enjoyed by buildings in other uses such as shops, offices and flats.
- 7.6 Buildings that contribute positively to the character of the conservation area are considered to be an integral element of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset even when they are not separately listed. This means that their qualities must be taken into account in the planning decision-making process. Within this conservation area almost all such buildings are in non-residential or multiple uses, and therefore do not benefit from permitted development rights for minor alterations.



Boyces Street: Plastic windows and door at No.6

- 7.7 The problem of lost architectural detail through minor alterations was particularly notable on Middle Street. In most cases the loss of architectural detailing is reversible, although modern replacements will never provide the same historic interest and workmanship as a building's original fixtures and fittings.

Vacant buildings and economic activity

- 7.8 The conservation area contains a number of key buildings that make a positive contribution to the area's special historic or architectural interest but are unfortunately vacant. This tends to lead to a lack of maintenance and consequent decay that places the building at risk and can blight the vitality of its surroundings.
- 7.9 The most significant such case in the Old Town is that of the Brighton Hippodrome where the structure is now seriously at risk. The Hippodrome occupies a large parcel of land with a long frontage on Middle Street and a service yard entrance on Ship Street and its condition is having a negative effect on the character and appearance of the conservation area. Loss of significant historic fabric or economic potential would be a threat to the conservation area's special interest and to the surviving evidence of Brighton's development as a seaside resort in the late 19th and early 20th century.



Middle Street: the extensive vacant frontage of the Hippodrome has a blighting effect on this part of the street, whereas repair and refurbishment could regenerate the whole street

- 7.10 Other buildings on Middle Street, including Nos.7&8 and the former Brighton Synagogue give the appearance of vacancy. The apparent lack of use affects the character of the street, reducing the economic vitality of the area and creating areas of inactive and poorly maintained street frontage.
- 7.11 A row of vacant shops at Ship Street Gardens is similarly affecting the vitality of an area of mixed commercial and residential use. This threatens the maintenance of buildings that contribute positively to the area's character as well as reducing the additional security of the passive surveillance provided by occupied shops.

Unsympathetic development

- 7.12 Ensuring that new development proposals contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the area is one of the key purposes of designating a conservation area. Two developments within the Old Town Conservation Area or in its setting stand out for having a significantly adverse impact on its character: the Jury's Waterfront Hotel and the Odeon Cinema.



Bartholomew Square: Jury's Waterfront Hotel and offices

- 7.13 The Waterfront Hotel has a long frontage that was built across Market Street. The raw concrete, relieved only by green glass, gives a jarring contrast with the older stuccoed buildings on King's Road, while the poor corner treatment and raised ground floor create inactive frontages to King's Road and Black Lion Street.
- 7.14 The Odeon Cinema, just outside the conservation area, has an alien roof-form and blind frontages that disengage with the surroundings again in marked contrast with the intricacy and consistent materials of the seafront buildings in the conservation area.
- 7.15 These are not the only cases: the building at Nos.51-53 West Street has an unfortunate horizontal emphasis while Nos.21-25 North Street is a leaden attempt to ape local details. There are clear lessons to be learned from the recent past to inform future developments. These include issues such as street-plan, bulk, rhythm, activity, materials and detailing as well as preserving and enhancing the character of historic areas.



Nos.21-25 North Street

Opportunities

- 7.16 Every effort should be made to build on the opportunities that arise in ways that enhance the qualities of the area. The major opportunity at present is the repair and reuse of the Brighton Hippodrome, which has the potential to revitalize the centre of the conservation area.
- 7.17 Other opportunities arise through redevelopment proposals, such as the addition to the Lanes, development of the garages to the Old Ship Hotel, and rebuilding between No.78 West Street and Nos.7/8 Middle Street. However, there are many more minor opportunities to secure the better use of buildings, for instance through improvements to upper floors.

Public realm

- 7.18 There are opportunities for improving street surfaces, to better reflect or enhance the historic interest and character of the Old Town. A wide variety of materials have been used throughout the conservation area. The brick paving in Duke Street seeks to replicate the traditional surfaces of the area and has been fairly successful, while the red and grey slabs in Bartholomew Square and East Street have not stood the test of time. In addition there is widespread evidence of low maintenance and patch repairs in tarmac.



Bartholomew Square: incoherent street surfaces poorly maintained

- 7.19 As well as considering street surfaces, there is scope for a coordinated approach to street furniture – seating, bollards, streetlights and railings – and the reduction of street signage and other clutter to the minimum necessary. While King’s Road enjoys its own distinctive street furniture, it also suffers from unrelieved expanses of tarmac.
- 7.20 From the 1860s, street nameplates were ceramic, set in cast-iron frames, but they were largely replaced with alloy signs from the 1940s onwards. The earlier pattern is to be revived for the Hannington Lane development.
- 7.21 The effect of public utilities on the conservation area needs to be considered, including the arrangements for refuse collection that lead to some unsightly communal bins on streets.

Shopfronts

- 7.22 The conservation area includes many well preserved historic shopfronts, as well as sensitive replacements. However, there are also areas of garish modern shopfronts with over-sized fascias and awnings in unsympathetic modern materials that detract from the architectural interest and quality of the conservation area. These are particularly notable on North Street, West Street and King’s Road, and they include examples used by national chains as well as smaller independent retailers.



Duke Street: traditional shopfront details obscured by an over-deep fascia

Traffic management

7.23 The City Council is embarking on a programme of improved traffic management that will make significant improvements to the movement of vehicles particularly on Ship Street and Black Lion Street. This could build on the success of schemes for shared surfaces integrating pedestrian and vehicular use.

7.24 However, the impact of traffic on King's Road is and will remain considerable, effectively divorcing the seafront hotels and shops from the promenade to the south with a constant stream of heavy traffic. Improvements to King's Road are central to the Council's Seafront Strategy.

Management Plan

7.25 The issues raised in this Character Statement will be taken forward for consideration in a conservation area management plan. Without prejudicing the content of such a plan, it might potentially address:

- Designations
- Principles for the conservation of buildings
- Strategies for tourism, regeneration and the public realm
- Guidance on the design of new developments
- Design for movement – pedestrians and vehicles
- Planning controls for change and development

- Resources
- Site specific actions
- Community involvement and collaboration

8. Commitment

Adoption

This character statement was formally adopted by the city council on following public consultation.

- 8.1 The statement is a material consideration to be taken into account in the determination of planning matters affecting the Old Town Conservation Area.

Review

- 8.2 Local authorities have a statutory duty to review conservation areas 'from time to time'. Best practice suggests a review cycle of between 5-10 years. This will depend upon the degree of change and the pressure for change that the area experiences in coming years.



the area

Appendix: Townscape Appraisal Map

