

## **Stanmer Conservation Area Appraisal**

Designated: 1970

Extended: 1988 [and 2010](#)

Area: 78367 Hectares / 193.65 Acres ([replace with area of new boundary](#))

Character Statement Adopted: [2010](#)

### **Introduction**

#### Location and Setting

Stanmer Park forms a distinct area to the north east of Brighton, approximately 5km from the city centre. Physically and visually removed from the city, it retains a rural downland context. It comprises an important, and well-used, open recreational space for the city, and provides walking and cycle access from the city to the South Downs. The area around the House and village was designated as a conservation area in 1970. The designation was reviewed in 1986, at which point an extension to include a large area of parkland was proposed. This was approved in June 1988.

The area forms a gently rounded, dry chalk valley, aligned north-west to south-east on the dip slope of the South Downs. For the purposes of this assessment, this will be simplified to a north-south alignment. Stanmer House lies at the head of the valley to the north, from where two smaller valleys extend to the east and west. Stanmer Village lies within the eastern of these valleys. The parkland associated with the House extends to the south, and is bisected by the drive, which provides access along the valley bottom from the Lower Lodges to Stanmer House. The parkland comprises amenity grass, sports pitches, access land and woodland. The area is bounded to the east and west by woodland, which delineates the chalk ridges to either side of the valley. The modern A27 is located in a deep cutting to the southwest, but is elevated to the south. The campus for Sussex University is located to the east, whilst agricultural land lies to the north.

The area is designated as a Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II), and contains 27 listed buildings. The area also falls within the confirmed South Downs National Park. Parts of the area are also designated as a proposed Local Nature Reserve, a Site of Nature Conservation Interest, and included in the South Downs Environmentally Sensitive Area.

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A conservation area is defined as ‘*an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*’. This document seeks to define and assess the ‘special interest’ of Stanmer Conservation Area. Due to a number of changes in the area following its last review, most notably the 1987 storm and construction of the A27, this document also reviews and updates the current conservation area boundary.

#### Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Management Plan

A Historic Landscape Survey and Restoration Management Plan was produced in 2003 (Colson Stone 2003). It covers the extent of the registered historic park and

garden, and thus a much wider area than the conservation area. Its aims were to assess the condition and value of historical, wildlife and landscape elements of the park and put forward a series of proposals to achieve its future restoration and management.

The study identifies many layers of significance at Stanmer. In particular it identifies its significance as an 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape that remains largely complete and in single ownership. It was concluded that the detailed Figg Plan (1799-1800) should form the basis for the future management of the landscape at Stanmer. It does not suggest that the Figg landscape should be 'restored'. Rather, that future management should seek to re-establish the broad layout, visual qualities and character of the 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape, whilst accommodating, where possible, existing uses. From this standpoint, the study identified a range of conservation policies, objectives and specific proposals to guide future management. Of these, policy LU4 identifies the need to review the conservation area and particularly its boundary.

The Colson Stone Report provides a comprehensive overview of the history and character of the Stanmer Park landscape. It does, however, cover a much wider area, and is primarily focussed on the landscape element of the park, rather than the built elements of the village and House. As such, whilst the Colson Stone Report has informed the following assessment, this assessment will focus more closely on the conservation area, and particularly on the built elements as the centrepiece of the area.

### **Assessment of Special Interest**

#### General Character and Landscape Setting

The conservation area comprises a country house, its stables and other service facilities, the estate farm and estate cottages; all set on the valley floor within extensive open informal parkland with lodges at the principal park entrance and woodland along the ridge tops; these features, in association, collectively make up this historic parkland estate.

The estate landscape was redesigned during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century in keeping with the 'naturalistic' fashion of the time; it remains a rare survival of a largely 18<sup>th</sup> century manorial designed landscape, including tree clumps, walks and rides in an open valley landscape contained by ridge top woodland belts. Its original wider open downland setting is still evident, and is registered as an historic park and garden, but various parkland views southward are now affected by the A27 and various adjacent late 20<sup>th</sup> century educational, leisure and commercial developments. The park is a popular destination for residents of the city, and a popular site for sporting and leisure events.

Stanmer House provides the architectural focus to the park. Built in the 1720s, it is an attractive warm stone fronted 18<sup>th</sup> century country house, recently restored and in use as a venue for hire for conferences, special events and meetings. It fronts the drive and lawn, and is seen in picturesque association with the Victorian church and churchyard by visitors entering the park from the south. The garden front to the

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House faces the open parkland to the south but is now part obscured by later planting. To the rear stand various nursery buildings and the former stables, now dilapidated. Specimen tree and woodland planting complete the scene.

The village, which largely dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, is nearby but visually contained. The former farm house, long timber clad barn and various farm yards frame the single street; beyond which lie a number of estate cottages, all faced in brick and flint, of similar building detail and backing onto enclosed fields and woods.

### Historic Background and Archaeology

#### *The origins and historic development of the area*

The name Stanmer is Anglo-Saxon in origin, meaning 'Stony Pond'. In 765, Aedwulf, King of Sussex granted the Estate of Stanmer to the Canon and Monks of St Michael in South Malling. The boundary of this Estate is fossilised in the modern-day boundary of Stanmer Parish. Stanmer Village comprised part of this [estate](#) and has existed as a unit since at least the time of the Domesday Book of 1086. At this point, it is likely that 29 villeins and 5 cottagers were resident in the village. By 1327, 25 taxpayers are recorded.

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The estate remained under the ownership of the Canons of South Malling until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538, when it was taken over by the crown. In 1547 the estate was let to John Michelborne of Westmeston, for a period of 80 years. A survey of crown assets was undertaken in 1608. This records a demesne farm of 93 acres and a small community of just under 30 dwellings, supported by sheep and corn husbandry. In 1615 the estate was purchased by another John Michelborne on behalf of his brother Richard of Broadhurst, both great-grandsons of Michelborne of Westmeston. Over the remainder of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Michelborne gradually acquired the village farmland and amalgamated the estate. With the loss of farmland, only those villagers required to run the estate remained at the village. Village occupancy reduced to one quarter of the original by 1635, and there were only 3 residents by 1664. The village shrunk as a result, and the earthworks in the field to the west are now all that survive of the houses, barns and crofts that became redundant.

Peter Gott, Receiver General for Sussex, bought the estate in 1700. The sale particulars record that the village comprised of only 12 dwellings, and it can be inferred that the estate contained no woodland at that time. The estate was sold on again to Henry Pelham of Lewes in 1712, and passed to his son, also Henry Pelham, in 1721. He immediately set about improving the estate. Construction of a new house began in 1722, designed by French architect Dubois. Dubois also designed [the gardens around the House, including extensive landscaping, water courses, a bowling green and a walled kitchen garden.](#) Some of the surrounding woodland was also planted at this time.

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The estate passed through successive generations of the Pelham family. [In 1737 it passed to Thomas Pelham, who was then still a minor. His trustees commenced a scheme of enhancement and expansion in the 1730s and 1740s, with further enhancements from the 1770s onwards, when Thomas Pelham came of age.](#) The

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[park](#) was improved in the naturalistic manner associated most commonly with Capability Brown. The designs followed the principles of the ferme ornée, through which much of the [park](#) remained as productive farmland; improved aesthetically through ornamental features and landscaping. Pelham [assets elsewhere were sold in order to purchase](#) land to the south in 1770, and the present Lower Lodges [were constructed](#) within the following year. A survey of the estate by Yeakell and Gardener in 1778-1783 shows the extent of the park and the village at this point. The village already displays its distinctive linear form, with north-south aligned street.

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Thomas Pelham was created 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Chichester in 1801. The William Figg Survey of 1799-1800 provides a detailed plan of the estate at this time (Map 1). The field that fronts on to the west of the village street is labelled as 'The Green'. A secondary access route to the village from the west is shown for the first time on this plan, including Upper Lodges. Like the Yeakell and Gardener survey, this plan shows the church located at the southern terminus of the village street. This church was destroyed by fire in 1837, and replaced by Henry Pelham, 3rd Earl of Chichester, the following year.

A further terrace of cottages was constructed on the east side of the village street during the 19th century. This replaced buildings and a circular pond shown on the Figg Map. The pond to the north of the village was also created by 1840 (Map 2), with two ranges of farm buildings added to its immediate north by 1875 (Map 3). In 1870-5 a water catchment system was constructed to the design of Thomas Jones, estate foreman, to supply rainwater to the House and estate buildings. This survives to the northwest of the House [and is designated as a listed building](#).

The main development in the village in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the addition of a pair of almshouses on the east side of the street. Built in 1912, these were dedicated to Lilla, Countess of Chichester, who had died the previous year. The estate remained in the Pelham family until 1942, when it was requisitioned by the War Office. A condition survey and a number of accurate plans were drawn up, providing a record of the estate at this time. This showed that the Pelhams had maintained the estate to extremely high standards. Unfortunately, extensive damage was caused throughout the military occupation, especially to the village, buildings around the House, and to areas of woodland which were used for tank training.

Following the war, the site was acquired by Brighton Corporation. The farmland was leased, a garden nursery established, the village houses restored and the parkland opened to the public in 1953. Despite repairs to the House, the north and west wings were deemed beyond economic repair and demolished in 1961. In the mid 1960s the University of Sussex established a new campus in the southeast corner of the estate. In the village, a semi-detached property, including the Stanmer Tea Shop, was constructed, whilst the [property to its north, including the post office](#), was demolished following a fire.

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The woodlands were severely damaged by the storm of 1987, and the A27 was constructed across the southwest corner of the park in 1988. The council's garden nursery closed in 1991, and the area is now used by a variety of community-based horticultural enterprises. The walled garden and greenhouses are used by the council parks department. Due to changes in farming in the park, most of the

agricultural buildings in the village became redundant in 2005. Stanmer House is now privately run, providing function rooms for business and events.

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### Archaeological Significance

Stanmer and the surrounding area is rich in archaeology, dating back as far as the Neolithic period, much of which is visible as surviving earthworks. The park contains numerous earthworks and remains relating to the Bronze Age. Two Bronze Age settlements have been excavated to the west; beneath the Brighton University Varley Halls site on Coldean Lane, and beneath the A27.

The Roman site of Rocky Clump, and the surrounding area, has been subject to archaeological investigation by the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society for many years. A 13<sup>th</sup> century farmstead has been excavated to the southeast of the Upper Lodges, and to the south of Rocky Clump. Archaeological remains of parts of the original Stanmer Village survive as a deserted medieval village to the immediate west of the current village.

In 2004, excavations to the rear of the House revealed the remains of the former service wing, incorporating parts of an earlier Jacobean manor house and possibly a medieval building. A vaulted tunnel accessing the ice house was discovered, with further culverts likely to relate to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century water management system. This system incorporated the water catcher to the west of the village and a sewage system with gas engine located beside the drive. The water catcher's timber and slate superstructure has been lost; its location now only identifiable as a large area of concrete. The underground tanks however, and presumably other archaeological remains, survive largely intact.

The conservation area contains the majority of an archaeologically sensitive area (ASA) centred on the village and including the water catcher, and a small part of an ASA located in the Great Wood to the southwest of the walled garden, centred around two Scheduled Bowl Barrows.

### Spatial Analysis

**Comment [S1]:** Spatial analysis figure and inset need to be reinserted following amendment

Views in to and out of the conservation area are important in placing the area in its setting. Internal views, spaces, landmarks and permeation routes are important in defining the area's character, and to the visitor's experience of the park. Alterations to these can have a significant impact on the 'special interest' of the conservation area.

Important views in the conservation area include:

- V1. View from the top of the drive, across the lawn to the House and church
- V2. View from the gap in woodland on the east ridge to the House and church (Figure 1)
- V3. View from the east front of the House across the park
- V4. Views from the parkland south across the Downs, framed by woodland to the east and west; in particular the views south from (a) Marquee Brow and from (b) the gap in woodland (Figure 2)

**Comment [S2]:** Change caption for Figure 2 to 'View V4b'

- V5. View of the church from across the pond.
- V6. Gradually unfolding views along the length of the village street, to the church, into the farm yards and across the paddock to the west

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Important spaces and permeation routes in the conservation area include:

- S1. The Lower Lodges provide a fitting historic entrance to the park and conservation area
- S2. The drive forms the main permeation route through the conservation area, providing a direct link between the main entrance at the Lower Lodges and the House, and on towards the village, which together form the centrepiece of the area
- S3. The lawn to the east of the House is of particular spatial importance, as it acts to unite the three elements of the designed landscape: the House, the church and village, and the surrounding parkland
- S4. The village and paddock, with the tea shop as a focus for visitor activity

Important landmarks in the conservation area include:

- L1. Stanmer House
- L2. The Church
- L3. Lower Lodges

### Character Analysis

Comment [S3]: Reinsert amended Character Area Figure

The area can be divided into three distinct character areas: The House, The Village, and The Parkland. The Village comprises agricultural and residential buildings, arranged in a linear form. The House is set to the west of this, and relates directly to its surrounding pleasure gardens and stables. A number of operational buildings are located to the north and west of the stables, in what is termed here the 'Ancillary Area'. These include the Stanmer Rural Museum and City College (Stanmer Park Campus), as well as the entrance to the walled garden. The Parkland forms the majority of the area, and includes access land, amenity grass and woodland. Whilst each area displays its own distinct character, the areas are linked through their shared development as part of the Stanmer Estate.

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#### Character Area I: The House

Comment [S4]: Reinsert The House Character Area Figure

The centrepiece of the area, Stanmer House comprises an 18<sup>th</sup> century country house. The main frontage forms a restrained classical-style, near symmetrical warm sandstone façade, overlooking parkland. The pleasure grounds are located to the south and rear (west) of the House, and comprise a formal fountain garden and Cedar Lawn, with woodland beyond. Modern planting to the south obscures the traditional relationship between the parkland and the House and pleasure gardens, whilst promoting a strong sense of enclosure to the gardens.

The prestigious stable block is located to the north. Vacant and in a poor state of repair, it is hidden in formal views. Beyond the stables, an ancillary area now includes the Stanmer Rural Museum, City College Brighton and Hove (Stanmer Park

Campus) and the entrance to the walled garden. This area utilises topography and planting to be visually removed from the House.

The House and ancillary area form the focal point for business activity in the area both historically and now, and are thus under pressure for change.

### Important buildings

#### *Stanmer House*

Listed at grade I, Stanmer House (Figure 3) dates primarily to 1722-7, although it is likely to incorporate parts of an earlier house. It was designed by Nicholas Dubois for Henry Pelham, with the designs completed for Thomas Pelham, after his brother's death. An enclosed porch with Tuscan pilasters was added in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the main façade extended to the north in 1860. It is brick-built, with local Lindfield sandstone ashlar fronts to the main east and south elevations, and render to the remainder. Of two storeys with attic, it has hipped slate roofs. On the main east facade, the central three bays project forward and are capped by a pediment housing an oculus window. The roofline incorporates a number of prominent chimney stacks.

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Although the focus of the park, Stanmer House occupies a relatively secluded location, nestled at the base of the valley, and not visible from much of the park. When approaching from the south for example, it only becomes visible abruptly at the left-hand turn at the top of the drive. This effect has been over-emphasised by recent planting, which has obscured the original more open aspect between the House and much of the park. The restrained classical style of the House contrasts sharply with the picturesque vernacular style applied to the village. With the Great Wood as a backdrop to the House, its formal architecture is also juxtaposed directly with the surrounding 'natural' landscape and vegetation.

The House originally comprised four wings, of which two have now been demolished, and replaced by temporary car parking. The fencing and lighting in this area is modern, and unsympathetic to the historic character of the park. The rear area contains a 17<sup>th</sup> century gin wheel and a number of remnants of flint walls and buildings, which add historic and architectural interest. The rear aspect of the House presents an irregular roofline, which may provide subtle evidence for the pre-18<sup>th</sup> century house.

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#### *Stables*

The prestigious stable block was constructed in 1778 (Figure 4). It has coursed flint and red brick walls to the exterior, gault brick walls to the internal courtyard elevations and hipped slate roofs. It is U-shaped, with a central carriageway entrance along its north side housed beneath a squat tower. On this side, the stables form a hard edge to the road. This, alongside mature vegetation, encloses views in the area. Empty and dilapidated, the future of the building is uncertain. Its current condition erodes the character of the area.

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The open side of the courtyard orientates towards Stanmer House, with the two buildings relating directly to one another. However, surrounding vegetation is designed and located so that the stable block is not visible in views of the House or from the gardens.

### Spatial Features

#### *The Pleasure Gardens*

A formal square lawn (Figure 5), containing a central fountain, fronts the south elevation to Stanmer House. It was first levelled in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, possibly as a bowls green, and the fountain was present by 1875. The use of the garden for events associated with the House has led to some modern intervention, including the erection of a tall fence to the south. The levelled area extends to the south, to a further lawn, bordered on three sides by vegetation, and with a steep 20<sup>th</sup> century earthwork to the west, which is of little historic character. This area retains a character somewhere between the formal space of the fountain garden and the more informal character of the rest of the park. It is accessed via a 20<sup>th</sup> century decorative iron gate.

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The cedar lawn (Figure 6) comprises a gently sloping grassed area with a number of large and particularly majestic cedar trees. The size, shape and colour of these trees are distinctive, and they are visible from many areas across the park. The area is bounded by belts of vegetation, which limit views out of the area, and create a sense of seclusion. This is overemphasised by 20<sup>th</sup> century vegetation to the south, including a cherry tree orchard and dense hedge. These have a harmful effect on the originally more open aspect between the House and parkland to the south. A vacant glasshouse beside the walled garden and a ruined orangery building (built in the 1970s based on historic precedent) identify the presence of, and provide access to, the ancillary area to the north. However, their neglected state has a negative impact on the area, and the access routes are not immediately apparent. The cedar lawn is bounded by woodland to the west, which contains remnants of flint walls and the pet cemetery; further clues to the historic nature of the area. In some areas the flint walls require stabilising and repair in order to halt further decay.

The area to the immediate north of the House was originally a formal garden, comprising three oval flower beds within a lawn, as shown on the Figg Plan. It is now overgrown and largely overlooked, forming a generic part of the parkland setting to the House, and screening views to the stable block.

#### *The Ancillary Area*

The ancillary area is based around an area of hardstanding, from where the Rural Museum is accessed to the south, the walled garden to the west and City College (Stanmer Park Campus) to the north. It lies to the immediate northwest of the House and stables, but is hidden from view, reflecting its subservient position in relation to the House. Due to the demands of varied modern use, the area has been subject to higher levels of modern intervention. The legibility of the area has broken down, leaving a somewhat incoherent character.



The area of hardstanding is used informally for parking, and requires maintenance. The entrance to the walled garden provides a focus to the area, comprising tall brick piers and an iron gate (Figure 7). It is flanked by a glasshouse to the south (and pedestrian access to the cedar lawn), and a 19<sup>th</sup> century grade II listed store shed of brick, flint and weatherboarding to the north. Both the walled garden and store currently lie outside the conservation area, but merit inclusion.

There has been a building in the location of the Rural Museum (Figure 8) since at least the 1840s, but the current building appears mostly 20<sup>th</sup> century in date, with brick walls, concrete lintels to large openings, a pitched slate roof and brick chimney. The building is set behind a poor modern gate and tall hedge.

The City College is located to the north of the stable block. It comprises a collection of temporary buildings, sheds and polytunnels, surrounded by beds, grass and vegetation. This area used to form part of the paddock, providing an open setting to the stable block. A straight road runs north-south across the grounds, following the line of the original paddock boundary as shown on the Figg Plan (1799-1800). This marks the boundary to the conservation area. Although the area forms a pleasant and well-maintained space, there is no historic precedent for its character. Further, it obscures the original relationship between the stable block and open pasture to its immediate north. The ad-hoc arrangement of poor quality (mostly temporary) buildings has a negative impact. This land is bounded to the south by a flint wall, which has in places been replaced with insensitive modern fencing, and merits rebuilding.

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### Conclusion

Stanmer House is the most significant architectural piece within the conservation area. The House, its gardens, the stables and ancillary area contribute to the special interest of the conservation area.

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As this area is the focus for many of the modern uses in the park, it is generally under most pressure for modern intervention and change. The area contains a number of intrusive elements which are damaging to the special interest of the conservation area:

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- 20<sup>th</sup> century trees and vegetation to the south of the House have significantly altered views to and from the House and gardens, creating a false sense of enclosure
- The stable block is empty and dilapidated. The condition of the building will continue to deteriorate unless works are undertaken to consolidate the building and a suitable new use found
- The area of hardstanding outside the Rural Museum and entrance to the walled garden requires maintenance
- The City College buildings obscure the previously open aspect to the north of the stables. The character of the College is pleasant, but has no historic precedent
- The orangery and glasshouse are in disrepair and detract from the character of the cedar lawn

- Areas of flint walling are in disrepair or have been replaced with poor quality fencing
- The lighting, signage and gates to the area to the rear of Stanmer House are unsympathetic

#### Recommendations

(i) Negotiate a new use for Stanmer Stables and secure emergency repairs to preserve the fabric of the building

(ii) Improve the public realm in the ancillary area

(iii) Improve the area of the cedar lawn including opening up views out of the area.

(iv) Adjoining areas merit inclusion in the conservation area, including the walled garden (Figure 9), which is a prominent historic feature in the area. The boundary should also be extended to include the orchard to the south of the walled garden (Figure 10) and Care Co-operative Farm to the west (extension A as shown in appendix 1). A brief character statement for this area follows:

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The flint and brick walls of the 18<sup>th</sup> century walled garden to Stanmer House survive largely intact and act as a reminder of the historic nature of the area. The walls are approximately 2.5 metres high and built in red brick and flint, with numerous areas of rebuilding and alteration. The entrance forms a dominant feature, and is set to the north of the east wall. It comprises two rebuilt brick piers with a projecting course to the top, supporting a large iron gate. The walled garden is used as a nursery, and contains a series of north-south aligned glasshouses, polytunnels and storage areas, displaying varying levels of use and maintenance. Although these structures are modern in character, its continued use for horticulture is in-keeping. The tall wall acts to enclose the area, promoting a sense of detachment from the rest of the park.

A range of bothy buildings, including the two storey Gardener's House survive along the north wall of the walled garden. These are built in traditional local materials, including knapped flint, flint pebbles and brick in a high variety of treatments and patterns (Figure 11), with pitched and mono-pitched clay tile roofs. The structures are of considerable aesthetic, architectural and historic interest, and should be included. Some require maintenance, and a strategy for repair and use of the buildings should be implemented.

The orchard lining the south wall of the walled garden, and the Care Co-operative Farm to the west, are depicted in the Figg Plan as under horticultural use. The current uses of these areas are therefore in-keeping with their historic use. They form pleasant green, secluded spaces, which merit inclusion in the conservation area. The south wall of the walled garden is a dominant feature in views in the orchard and, combined with the woodland to the south, promotes an extremely high sense of seclusion in the area. A flint wall is present to the rear of the Care Co-op Farm and orchard.

## Character Area 2: The Village

**Comment [S5]:** Reinsert The Village Character Area Figure

This is a single quiet village street, now lacking farm activity, but nevertheless still popular with visitors to the park and downs. Restricted visitor parking is provided beside the church. The southern end is dominated by the church and former farmstead, the northern end comprises an orderly group of typical downland cottages of a picturesque vernacular style. Between the two are the village amenities, including a tea shop, type K6 telephone kiosk, 20<sup>th</sup> century letterbox and toilets, which form the village focus. The surrounding fields and woodland rise steeply to the east and gently to the west so as to contain the village and preclude long views in or out of the village.

The character is of a traditional 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century farm estate hamlet that has grown in an orderly sequential fashion, with common features that reflect its shared development by the Pelham Estate and later farm and housing management by the Council. The village barn and adjacent yards, stores and shelters, currently forlorn in appearance, require new uses. Incremental change is restricted to buildings within the farmyards. Interestingly the street alignment is offset, such that the village is seen in a sequence of unfolding vistas; with the bend outside the tea shop articulating the farm and residential sections of the village as visually discrete parts. Each part engages as much with the countryside beyond as with each other. The church and the long double height barn running parallel with the street are visually dominant.

### Important buildings and groups of buildings

#### *Church*

Built in 1838 in the Early English Style, the church is highly picturesque, with galletted flint walls, stone dressings and an elegant shingle spire (Figure 12). Decommissioned, its future use is uncertain. It is situated in a small graveyard with flint boundary wall and railing. A ha-ha to the south links this green space directly to the park. An ancient yew to the north of the church emphasises the antiquity of the area. The village well and donkey wheel are located in a small flint structure to the north of the graveyard. Contemporary with the present church, it reuses fabric from the former church. The church is a major landmark, with the spire visible from much of the park, across the adjacent pond and as the south terminus of the village street.

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#### *Home Farm*

Home Farm constitutes the south half of the village. The farmhouse is set in a large plot with flint boundary wall and orchard to the rear, and with flint and brick walls and a slate roof. Its size and materials promote a level of prestige, relative to the other dwellings in the village. The long, double-height barn is the most visually striking building, fronting directly on to the east side of the street (Figure 13). It is flint-built with red brick dressings, and weatherboarding to its street frontage.

A range of pitched-roofed farm buildings, stores and covered stalls bound the area into a series of yards. Although the fabric of these structures is not all historic, their scale, massing and materials are significant. Above all, the arrangement of buildings

to enclose and form open yards is of particular importance to the character of the area. Contained views are apparent across the yards to the open parkland beyond.

The farm buildings are currently vacant and require a new use to ensure their future. In order to maintain their character, and that of the village, residential conversion is unlikely to be appropriate.

### *Cottages*

The north half of the village comprises small-scale residential dwellings (Figure 14). Built over the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, they display uniformity in scale and materials, including:

- two storey height,
- pitched or hipped clay tile roofs,
- flint walls with brick dressings,
- timber horizontal sliding sash windows,
- prominent decorative brick chimney stacks, and
- low flint boundary walls with half-round brick coping and white picket gates.

Hipped porches were added to most properties in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and maintain the picturesque architectural style. A pair of brick-built 20<sup>th</sup> century almshouses similarly preserve the scale and character of the village.

Whilst sharing these unifying features, each group of buildings differs slightly in its detailing and relationship to the street, emphasising the variation in construction dates. The overall uniformity in design and materials means the character of the village is particularly sensitive to incremental change. Three cottages in the village are unlisted, but remain visually well-conserved. An Article 4(2) Direction under the [Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) Order \(1995\)](#) would be desirable to ensure future planning control over minor alterations to these properties. [The retention of traditionally-styled timber sliding sash windows is particularly important to the character of the area.](#)

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The former housing plot between numbers 16 and 19 is now vacant; presenting a belt of vegetation to the streetfront, with parking for residents behind. [The use of the site for parking is of benefit in reducing pressure for on street parking.](#) This site could provide the opportunity for a new small-scale housing development, in order to clarify and re-establish the original continuity of built form along the street. [However, any benefits of development would need to be weighed against that of parking. Any development proposal would need to contain careful consideration of car parking and of the archaeological potential of the site.](#)

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### *Spatial Features*

#### *Paddock*

The paddock is located along the west side of the street, and is bordered by a low flint wall, with a raised strip of grass and mature chestnut trees along the street

front. It contains a number of subtle earthworks relating to the deserted medieval village, and a belt of trees serve as a backdrop, enclosing the area. The paddock forms a clear break in the linear built form, and has a major [positive](#) impact on the streetscene. Despite being leased privately, the paddock gives the impression of a village green, which further identifies the area around the tea shop as the village focus.

#### *Public Realm*

The pavements throughout the village comprise either red brick paving with cobble setts to the kerb, or red brick kerbs to tarmac pavements, and are in need of some maintenance. Strips of grass alongside the pavements add to the rural village character. Cars park on both sides of the street and on the pavement, and impact on the street's historic character and on views along its length. The hardstanding opposite the tea shop is in a poor state or repair, and used informally as additional parking. The lighting is of a standard modern design and has a [negative](#) effect on the area, [whilst garden paraphernalia and wheelie bins also clutter the streetscape. Signage to prevent vehicular access to the village for visitors is intrusive and appears temporary in nature. If such a sign is required it could be made more permanent and constructed in more sympathetic materials.](#)

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#### *Northern Terminus*

The northern terminus to the village is marked by a belt of trees that form a visual screen with the historic agricultural parkland to the north. A small circular pond bounded by metal railings is largely hidden in vegetation and does not form a major part of the village scene. A handful of modern portal framed farm buildings and agricultural fields lie to the north, beyond the tree belt and outside the conservation area. The southernmost of the modern farm buildings reuses flint walls from a 19<sup>th</sup> century farm yard structure and open-sided shed, which is orientated towards the adjacent pond. Although of little aesthetic value in its current state, this structure forms an element of the historic village, having been formerly associated with Home Farm to the south.

#### Conclusion

Stanmer Village forms a highly picturesque agricultural estate village of considerable historic character, which contributes positively to the special interest of the conservation area. However, some intrusive and negative features within the area are damaging to its special interest:

- The recent closure of Home Farm means that there are now a significant number of historic buildings (including the grade II listed Barn) with an uncertain future. Some of the buildings are already in need of some repair.
- Some areas of pavement and the hardstanding beside the toilet block in particular are poorly maintained, and currently detract from the historic character of the village.

- Ivy, although relatively picturesque, is in some areas enveloping buildings, including farm buildings and number 3 Stanmer Park. Ivy can be very damaging to buildings, and requires pro-active management and/or removal.
- Parked cars – particularly on the pavement - impact on views along the village street, detracting from its historic character.

Recommendations

(i) Priority should be given to finding new uses for the long barn and church that:

- preserve their character and special interest;
- would enhance visitor enjoyment of the park and downs, and
- which may provide for other uses displaced from within the park.

(ii) New uses are required for the former farm yard enclosures adjacent to the barn, and which lie at the very heart of the village. The uses should:

- be compatible with the village’s rural location,
- enhance its position as a recreational gateway to the open downs,
- secure the retention and sympathetic restoration of the traditional agricultural buildings, and
- secure the demolition of unsightly or inappropriate buildings and structures.
- encourage opportunities for the continued agricultural use of buildings and presence of livestock at Home Farm

(iii) A planning brief and an enhancement plan are necessary for the farm yard enclosures and the yacant plot between numbers 16 and 19 (Figure 15). The brief should identify appropriate land use and design opportunities.

(iv) An Article 4(2) Direction under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (1995) is recommended to remove permitted development rights for numbers 11, 12 and 19 Stanmer Village, the unlisted dwellings within the village.

(v) Whilst the conservation area boundary remains largely legible and logical in this area, it is proposed that the boundary should be extended to the north to contain the open-sided agricultural building (extension B as shown in appendix 1). This building retains substantial remains of a 19<sup>th</sup> century flint-walled structure (Figure 16). It orientates directly towards the adjoining pond, and provides greater coherence to the location and setting of this feature. Although mature trees shield views between the structure and the village, and the modern over-structure is visually poor, the building historically forms a constituent part of both Home Farm and the village, and should be included for completeness of the village unit.

Character Area 3: The Parkland

Open parkland with specimen tree planting, tree clumps and woodland belts, originally laid out in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The park constitutes the setting and main approach to the House and to the village and nurseries beyond. It also now

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functions as an ‘edge of town’ country park, with recreational facilities, but preserves its rural character through containment within the rolling downs. The woodland belts atop the ridges reinforce the sense of self containment and contribute to its historic downland setting. This setting is however now affected by some visual and noise intrusion from the A27 and adjacent late 20<sup>th</sup> century developments to the south.

### Use

The park and farmland is subject to a number of countryside management regimes introduced to recreate the historic designed landscape and improve its ecological value. The character of the area is largely dependent on these. Different areas are managed as amenity grass, access land, woodland, sports pitches and pasture.

The amenity grass mostly lies to the west of the drive. It is a well-used part of the public park. The area is mostly open, with areas of tree planting. Some of this planting has historic precedent, but much is modern, obscuring the original 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape. In particular, modern planting alongside the historic Old Lodge Clump will, once fully grown, obscure views along the valley and visually enclose the central portion of the park. This will significantly alter the design and character of the parkland. The tongue of higher ground known as Marquee Brow is managed as longer grass, which is mown once a year and is of high ecological value (Figure 17). The Brow affords particularly good views to the south, with open downland and woodland belts visible beyond the A27 and modern developments. These woodland belts form part of the wider 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape.

The access land (Figure 18) lies mostly to the east of the drive. Recent removal of fences means the whole area is now open as one, with numerous gated access points. The area forms open cattle grazing, interspersed with clumps of trees of varying size and shape. These clumps do not exactly correlate to those shown on the Figg plan, but nevertheless work in harmony with the designed landscape to frame and channel particular views. The area is bordered to the east by fenced woodland, which runs along the ridgeline. Extensive views are afforded from a gap in this woodland, particularly to the south frontage of Stanmer House, the church spire, across the park more generally and over the developments and downs to the south.

The woodland to the west of the conservation area comprises a Forest Garden, containing winding ‘serpentine’ paths amongst spaciouly planted and varied specimen trees. Although there is no historic precedent for a Forest Garden, this area originally constituted a wilderness garden, which would have retained a similar character. It is a pleasant area in which to walk, with added interest in the varied foliage and glimpsed views back to the parkland. The boundary between the Forest Garden and neighbouring amenity grass is blurred due to recent planting, including inappropriate fruit tree specimens.

Sports pitches are located to the south and centre of the park, and introduce an urban recreational character. The central pitch is located in a sensitive area, and is harmful to the historic parkland character of this area. Its removal would be encouraged. Modern generic changing pavilions are associated with the southern



itches. A line of bollards marks the ownership boundary between Sussex University land and the park, but the open grass under University ownership still remains a coherent part of the parkland. The buildings of Sussex University are mostly screened by vegetation, but are visible from some locations. This vegetation incorporates and expands on historic planting known variously as Oval Clump (on Figg) or Russell's Clump (on later maps).

A fragmentary surviving strip of historic woodland named Tenantlain Belt (to the east) and Coldean Belt (to the west) forms the southern boundary to the park. This screens views between the road and park, and contains areas of parking. The area is rather neglected, with poor surfacing, a modern flint-walled toilet block ruined by vandalism, and evidence of fly tipping.

The southwest corner of the conservation area comprises part of a large field, bounded to the east and south by woodland and sloping gently to the south. Although originally connected to the park, the construction of the A27 means this is now a discrete area, with no direct physical access or visual relationship with the park. The A27 is partially situated in a deep cutting (Figure 19), but is also visible in part from the park. It has had a significant affect on accessibility, and creates substantial visual and noise pollution across the lower portions of the park.

Management of use is of critical importance if the historic [designed](#) landscape is to be safeguarded and enhanced and the park's peaceful rural qualities are to be preserved. Demands on the space are high and may conflict. Priority should be given to management regimes that are sympathetic to the historic character of the area, whilst facilitating public access and enjoyment of the park.

### Built Features

#### *Lower Lodges*

The Lower Lodges (numbers 37 and 38 Stanmer Park) mark the principal entrance to the park and are a fitting historic gateway to the conservation area (Figure 20). Comprising a symmetrical pair, they are each of one storey, painted white brick with a hipped slate roof and dentil eaves cornice. Each Lodge is set within a garden with bow top fencing. Number 37 has been extended by a small lean-to to the west, which has a slight negative impact on the symmetry of the pair.

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#### *The Drive*

The drive [is](#) a linear tarmaced route, [mostly designated as a bridleway but with vehicular access](#). It bisects the parkland and forms the main permeation route from Lower Lodges through the park. [Trees have recently been planted to either side of the drive, creating the impression of an avenue](#). There is no historic precedent for an avenue at Stanmer, and the insertion of this feature significantly alters views across the valley and the character of the drive itself. This will only become more apparent as the trees reach maturity. The drive splits to the north, forming a one way loop system branching to the west towards the House and then returning via the village to the east. The area between the two [parts of the drive](#) contains specimen trees, which generally retain the character of historic planting in this area.

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The alignment of the drive gives direct views to the church, before turning to the west to give a sudden close view of the House.

Parking areas (Figure 21) are scattered along the length of the drive, utilising areas of hardstanding created by the military during World War II, and vehicular access is restricted by stones, bollards and bunds. There is no historic precedent for these areas, and the surfacing as well as the presence of parked cars in these areas is detrimental to the open historic parkland character and to views across the park. Modern street lighting and signage is also intrusive in some areas.

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Evidence for military occupation along the drive and in the park reflect an important part of the later history of the park.

### *Frankland Monument*

Located in the Forest Garden, the monument was built in 1775 and dedicated to Frederick Frankland (Figure 22). Triangular in plan and classical in style, it is built in coade stone, with a large base with latin inscription, above which a funerary urn surmounts a column resting on three tortoises. The monument is largely hidden in views within the park. Its unexpected discovery when walking through the woodland acts as a reminder of the historic nature of the area.

### Conclusion

The park comprises a rare survival of a largely 18<sup>th</sup> century designed estate landscape, reflected in its designation as part of a registered historic park and garden. It constitutes the setting and approach to Stanmer House.

A number of intrusive factors are, however, damaging to the character and special interest of the area:

- The A27 has a significant affect on accessibility, and creates substantial visual and noise pollution across the lower portions of the park. The bypass has wholly divorced the area to the southwest from the park, both physically and visually
- Developments on the adjacent hillside have a negative impact on views from the park to the south.
- Car parking areas along the drive are detrimental to the open historic parkland character and to views across the park. The car parks become increasingly intrusive on progressing up the drive to the House.
- Modern interventions, including lighting, signs, bunds and bollards along the drive and perimeter of the grassed areas detract from the character of the area. This is heightened by any growth of weeds on the bunds. The bunds and bollards have, however, been of huge benefit in restricting vehicular access onto the grass. Vehicles on the grass would further detract from the character of the area and from views, so such restrictions should be retained.
- Some areas of new planting are not in-keeping with the historic character of the area, obscuring views and altering the spatial arrangement of the park.

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This includes the creation of a lime avenue along the drive and planting to the west of Old Lodge Clump in particular

- The area of Coldean and Tenantlain Belts is poorly maintained
- The sports pitch to the centre of the park is inconsistent with the use and character of this area

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### Recommendations

(i) Vehicular access to the park should be carefully managed, (a) to restrict car borne trips to the village to essential trips only, so as to preserve the village's rural character and (b) to locate parking in the park in a manner that minimises visual impact and enhances enjoyment.

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(ii) A long-term strategy of non-replacement should be instigated for inappropriate modern planting (especially fruit tree specimens beside the pleasure gardens and along the perimeter of Great Wood, trees along the drive and beside Old Lodge Clump), Any further planting in the park should have regard for the historic character of the park and for the original landscape design, as set out in the Restoration Management Plan. Native parkland specimens would be more appropriate additions to the park, if located appropriately.

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(iii) Any future development proposals at the south of the park or beyond should look to mitigate their impact on the park. Opportunities to strengthen screening of existing developments – including the A27 and University of Sussex Campus – should be sought.

(iv) A coherent strategy should be formulated for paraphernalia in the park, and along the drive in particular. Signs, surface markings and other modern interventions should be kept to a minimum and, where they are necessary, located sensitively. In general, well-placed and well-designed surface markings would be more appropriate than signs to control speed. Traffic calming measures would introduce a more urban character to the area, so should be avoided wherever possible. If found necessary, they should be as sympathetic as possible to the historic character of the area. Double yellow lines would generally be inappropriate in the park. Tarmacadam should be replaced where possible with gravels.

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Benches and other park furniture should be carefully located in the park in order to minimise impact on its character. Their design and materials should be in-keeping with the historic character of the area. When and where possible, modern lamp standards should be replaced with less intrusive low level lighting.

(v) The current boundary for Stanmer Conservation Area within the Parkland character area no longer reflects the character of the area, nor the House's setting and approach. Four boundary changes are therefore proposed, as shown in appendix I:

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- The woodland belts along the east ridgeline form an intrinsic part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape, the setting of Stanmer House, and the character of the conservation area. They act to heighten the sense of enclosure in the

park, and channel views to the south. They also form part of the historic circuit, and contain archaeological features. Although now lined in concrete and somewhat neglected in appearance, Lots Pond (Figure 23) to the north of the woodland may have originated as a historic dew pond. Thus predating the 18<sup>th</sup> century [park](#) landscape, it is of historic interest in itself. The woodland belts, up to and including Lots Pond, should therefore be included in the conservation area (Extension C). The boundary should be drawn along the fenceline on their eastern edge. To the north, the boundary should follow the east-west path to the immediate north of Lots Pond and continue across the access land to meet the boundary at the north terminus of the village. This loosely follows the crest of the ridgeline in this area, and therefore forms the limit of the visual setting of Stanmer House.

- The area of open grass to the southeast of the area forms part of the open parkland setting of the approach to Stanmer House (Figure 24). It comprises closely mown grass to the south, and longer grass to the north, bordered by a belt of woodland screening Sussex University. It comprises an integral part of the parkland approach to the House, in views from the drive in particular. The woodland incorporates the remains of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Russell's Clump. This area therefore merits inclusion in the conservation area (Extension D). The boundary should be drawn around the east boundary of the belt of woodland dividing the park from Sussex University.
- The area to the south of the A27 should be removed from the conservation area. There is no longer any visual or physical relationship between this area and Stanmer House. As it no longer forms part of the setting of the House, and is severely impacted by the noise and modern visual aesthetic of the A27, the special interest of the area has been lost and it thus no longer merits designation as part of a conservation area (Removal E). The new boundary should follow the alignment of the new road under construction into Sussex University. In order to remain legible on the ground, the boundary should follow the north kerb of the road.
- The Forest Garden and Great Wood to the west of the conservation area comprise an integral part of the surviving 18<sup>th</sup> century designed landscape and of the setting and approach to Stanmer House. Similar to the woodland belts on the east ridgeline, they frame and channel views to the south. The Great Wood also forms the backdrop to views of Stanmer House. The woods retain remnants of a number of flint walls and archaeological remains. They therefore merit inclusion in the conservation area (Extension F). The boundary should follow the fenceline at the top of the A27 north escarpment. At the crest of the hill, the boundary should follow the paths down the slope to the rear of Care Co-operative Farm. This loosely follows the topography of the area, and thus the visual extent of the setting and backdrop to Stanmer House.

### **Statement of Special Interest**

Stanmer Conservation Area comprises significant elements of an 18<sup>th</sup> century designed estate landscape. It includes Stanmer House, stables and associated ancillary area, the estate village and the parkland approach.

The House forms the centrepiece to the area. The polite architecture of the House contrasts with the picturesque vernacular style of the village, and with the verdant surrounding parkland. The village retains a characteristic linear form, with uniform building materials and style. This promotes the image of a quintessential rural village, which is emphasised further by the large paddock to the west, which gives the appearance of a village green.

The south façade of the House and the elegant spire of the church form prominent landmarks, and views of these from the surrounding parkland are important to the identity and character of the area. The sense of enclosure created by belts of woodland along the east and west ridges, as well as longer views to the downs, woodland and developments to the south are also a key feature of the area. The drive is a significant feature and route through the area, but its character has been altered through modern planting schemes. As a whole, Stanmer Conservation Area retains a quiet, secluded character, comprising all major elements of an 18<sup>th</sup> century estate.

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