

# College Conservation Area Character Statement

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this character statement is to provide both an account of the College Conservation Area and a clear indication of Brighton & Hove City Council's approach to its preservation and enhancement. It is intended to assist and guide all those involved in development and change in the conservation area and will be used by the Council in assessing the design of development in future planning proposals.

1.2 The statement should assist members of the public, investors, and the planning authority to consider the significance of the elements that make up the historic environment and to understand how future development should best protect that significance. Planning legislation requires that special attention is paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The emphasis will be on control rather than prevention, to allow the area to remain alive and prosperous but at the same time to ensure that any new development accords with its special architectural and historic character.

## 2. The Conservation Area

### 2.1 Location and context

The College Conservation Area was designated on 28 April 1988 and has not been extended since. The full extent of the Conservation Area shown in Appendix A and the list of buildings in it are itemised in Appendix B. The conservation area is comprised of two parts:

1. The Brighton College buildings and grounds which are mainly non-residential.
2. The eight streets (see Appendix B) which are residential in character.

The conservation area is approximately rectangular in plan. It is bounded on the southwest by Eastern Road, northwest by Sutherland Road, and northeast by Canning Street. It includes all of Walpole Road and Walpole Terrace to the southeast as well as the western end of Belle Vue Gardens.

Brighton College sits at the southern end of the conservation area. It is a school dating from the mid-nineteenth century. Its façade onto Eastern Road is a magnificent gateway into the Conservation Area. Most of the surrounding housing was built in the late-nineteenth century with some additional buildings at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Brighton Colledge comprises the original listed school building with later buildings built up to the present day. The earliest development of the college was completed between 1848 and 1866 and was designed by George Gilbert Scott.

## 2.2 Summary of the area's Special Interest and Character

Though there is a significant number of residential terraces in the conservation area, its character is dominated by the outward appearance of the Brighton College buildings and its grounds. However, the residential buildings that surround much of the college contribute an urban character that is a significant and important feature of the environment. Much of the college buildings are inward facing except at the southern end where the main frontage and entrance to the college faces Eastern Road. This has a red brick and limestone façade centred on a gateway clocktower and lantern above. Other college frontages onto Sutherland Road and Walpole Road are mostly mid twentieth to early twenty first century. Many of these later buildings have developed around the increasingly enclosed school campus with plainer street frontages that are often behind high masonry walls. As a result, the street frontages of the terraced housing on College Terrace and Walpole Terrace provide an important contribution to the character of the area.

To the east on Walpole Road and Walpole Terrace there are nineteenth century town houses. At the southeast junction with Eastern Road is the College Preparatory School. To the north of the school grounds is College Terrace which has late nineteenth century 4 storey (with basement) red brick terrace housing with distinctive boundary walls in similar materials. One street north of College Terrace is Canning Street with 2 storey, late nineteenth century stucco (mainly painted white) terrace housing with black metal railings on both sides. All these properties are terraced and sit behind narrow front gardens or steps down to lower ground floors.

The character of the area is a mix between the centrally Gothic campus with its later twentieth century and contemporary additions and nineteenth century terraced housing. The College sports field provides openness within the built-up area that also allows wider views across the city from Walpole Terrace. To the south, the townscape is dominated by the substantial school buildings, including the listed central gateway and dormitory buildings to the east and west of it. Towards the north of the conservation area the residential developments predominate in Canning Street and in the streets that overlook the playing grounds of the school.

The geography of the conservation area rises to the north away from the sea with Canning Street at the highest level. This would have originally resulted in clearer views to the coast from the college when most of the surrounding area was still dominated by agricultural land and before the development on the south side of Eastern Road.

## 2.3 Building Materials

Most of the townscape in the conservation area is finished in brick – mostly red brick, but with a significant amount of painted render used on residential terraced houses. Flint walls predominate within the school quadrangle although there are also Caen stone window and door surrounds, quoins and other features including some copings

where the pitch roofs have no eaves. At the northern end of Sutherland Road is the Science and Sports block which is the most dramatically different in terms of its architecture and materials. It has been clad in dark grey panels and glass “curtain walling”. Most of the other buildings in the conservation area are finished in materials that complement the various architectural characteristics of the nineteenth century buildings that dominate the conservation area including the Gothic of the Brighton College Buildings, the Arts and Crafts of College Street and the occasional Regency style such as the buildings on the corner of Walpole Road and Walpole Terrace.

#### 2.4 Appearance and Views

The most significant views within the conservation area are along Eastern Road, with dominant views to the east and west along Eastern Road and looking north along College Terrace. The initial view of the College is the first section of the Jackson dormitory block to be completed in 1884. This is the most decorated part of the gothic building with its two gables, mullioned paired and tripart traceried windows, its quoins, inset flint chequer patterns, brick and stone buttresses and much of the quoins and lintels are in decorative terracotta. At the junction with Eastern Road and College Road the full vista opens, and the full width of the Jackson building can be seen as well as the now completed gate and tower. This is the most complete and impressive view of the school from the streets around it.

The nineteenth century development in the conservation area is the primary influence on the appearance of both the residential areas and the college. The long views along the terraced houses, especially those on College Terrace and Walpole Terrace have a strong regular unity that is contributed to by a significant amount of historic and original features that still survive in the frontages. Each has a very different material finish – painted stucco on Walpole Terrace and red brick and terracotta details on College Terrace. Both have three canted bays to the second floor, decorative boundary treatments either in red brick/ terracotta or stucco/ decorative cast iron railings. Walpole Terrace also has steps rising to the front doors. These regular features contribute positively to the regular pattern of these three-four storey terraces.

Views along Canning Street also have a distinct nineteenth century character and appearance with each house mirroring its pair on the terrace. There are canted bays to each house providing a regular rhythm to the street pattern.

Views of the school up along Sutherland Road are more piecemeal with an eclectic mix of twentieth century and early twenty first century buildings, ranging from College Hall built in 1914 to the latest college building completed in 2022. This view is also affected by the setting of Freshfield Business Park & car park. This currently has a negative impact on the street views and future development could deliver an opportunity to preserve and enhance the conservation area.

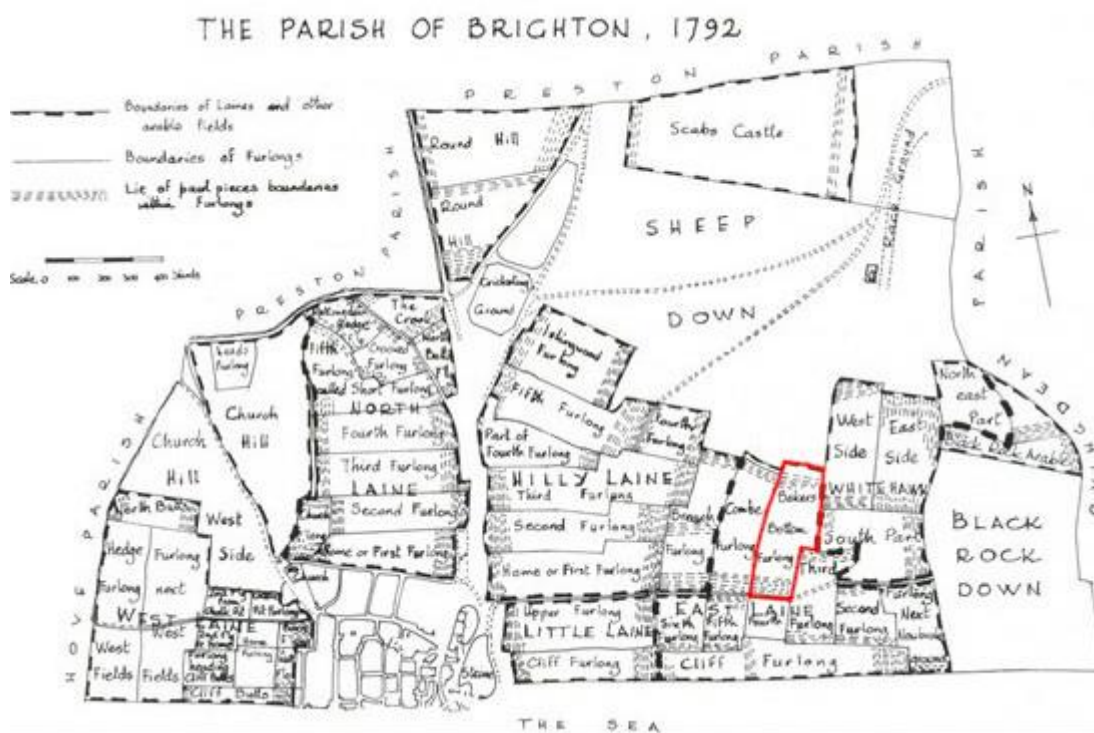
#### 2.5 Buildings and Archaeology

There are no archaeological designations in place within or adjacent to the conservation area and none of the surviving buildings predate the school. All of the statutorily listed buildings are within the school grounds. There are no locally listed buildings in the conservation area.

### 3. History

#### 3.1 Origins and historic development

Prior to the development of the school, the area consisted of enclosed pastoral land leased out as “furlongs” or “laines”. The conservation area now occupies land shown on the 1792 map (below) as Bakers Bottom Furlong. There appears to have been no development on the land until the middle of the nineteenth century when Brighton College took out a lease on it. The school had been founded in the 1840s and originally based in Portland House where the University Hospital Sussex building now stands at the top of Portland Place.



The outline of the plot identified in the 1851 map (below) is now more defined by the roads which developed in and around it, which subsequently determined the approximate boundary of the present conservation area. All of this land south of what is now College Terrace and with the exception of the most south eastern corner was purchased by Brighton College.

Building on the present site began in 1848 and were designed by George Gilbert Scott. The main school building near the centre of the site was completed in 1849 and is the oldest of the college buildings on the site today. Although limited funding reduced some of the architectural features of his building, it retained many Gothic characteristics of the time. The Chapel was completed by 1854, the principal's house and the dining hall by 1866. All George Gilbert Scott's buildings survive and are grade II listed.



The 1851 map show the school, but the chapel has yet to be added and no other residential development had been built anywhere else in the conservation area.

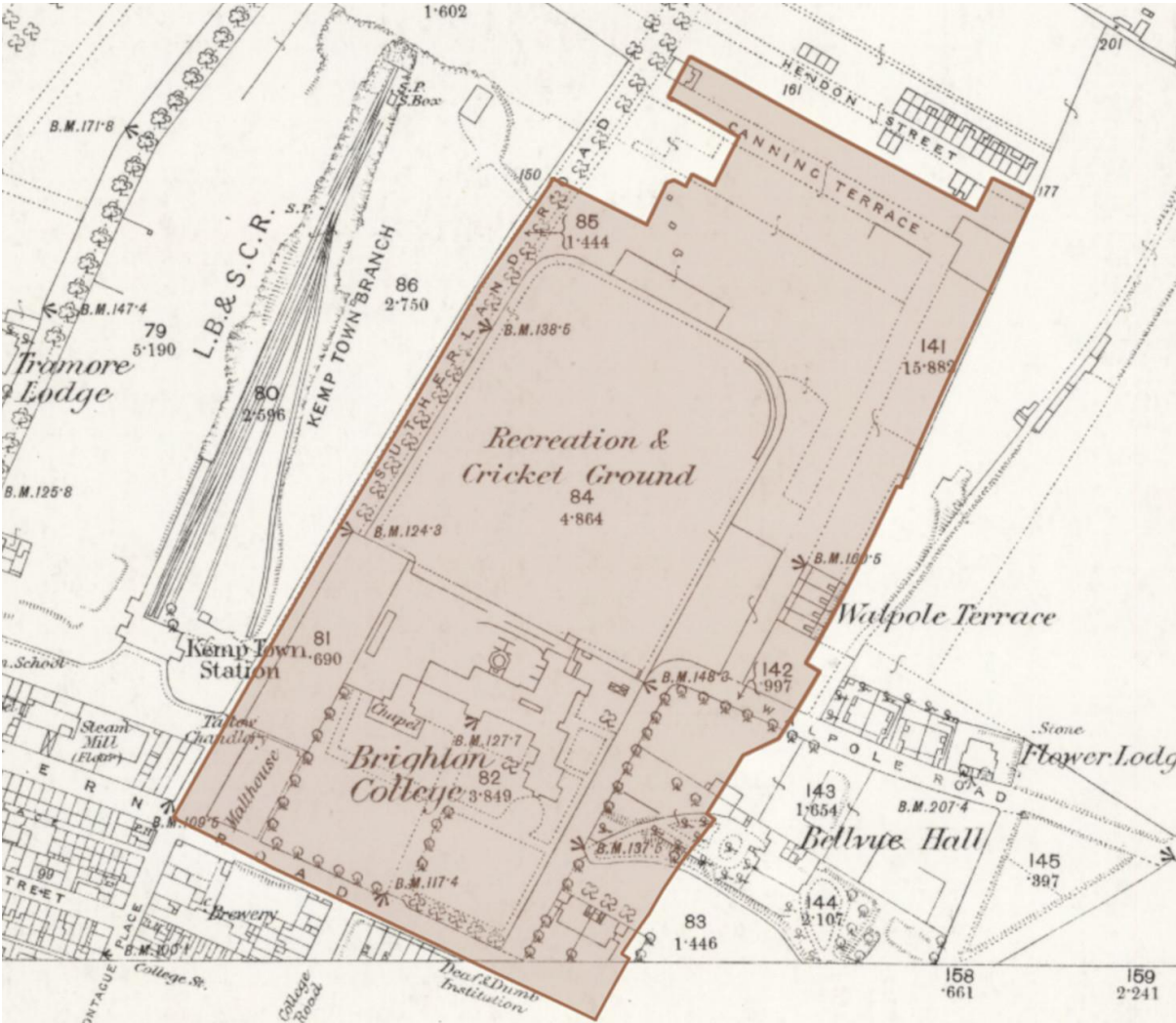
Outside the college more buildings rapidly developed south of Eastern Road and down to the coast. By the 1870s, all the south side of Eastern Road was developed. During the 1870s Walpole Terrace was constructed and by the 1890s College Terrace and Canning Street were also built. Walpole Road was developed in the 1890s and a convent was built near the corner of East Road with chapel added in the 1920s. The chapel and convent are now owned by Brighton College and function as a Preparatory School.

The original school buildings as intended by Scott were not designed as a quad but as south facing buildings with the chapel and Principal's house to the west and east facing over the open land. By the end of the 1870s, a new range of buildings for the school was developed south of Scott buildings. They are much closer to Eastern Road and started the process of enclosing the quad which continued to become even more enclosed in the next century. Initially the frontage only extended from an industrial building to the west (The Malthouse) to the central gates, and the rest of the frontage was finished in 1929.

Since the 1960's, the school has developed rapidly, first with functional buildings of limited architectural ambition. Towards the end of the twentieth Century, more positive contemporary buildings have added to the architectural interest and variety of the conservation area. Over the last twenty years all of its biggest and most



ambitious construction projects have been completed by some prominent architects including KFM, Hopkins Architects, Allies and Morrisons and Richard Griffiths.



1873 Ordnance Survey Map showing the college when the first main buildings by Scott were complete but before the later college frontage onto Eastern Road was developed. It also shows the first residential buildings beginning to be developed around the site with first four houses on Walpole Terrace and houses along both sides of Eastern Road but not in the conservation area. In the western corner of the conservation area is the Malthouse.

3.2 Historic and current uses and social context

The area was developed first by Brighton College with some residential development surrounding the college in the 1870s to 1890s. The use of these residential buildings has not changed since then. However, other development, not associated with the either the college or housing has gone. The Malthouse was destroyed by fire and was then acquired by the college. The college’s art school now stands on this site. The convent has been adapted by the college as a preparatory school.

3.3 The development of the site context

The southern side of Eastern Road is in the East Cliff Conservation Area. There are three unlisted nineteenth century stucco houses, opposite the college which contribute to the historic setting.

From 1869, the school buildings faced the Kemp Town Railway Station on the western side of Sutherland Road. This was a branch line connecting the area with Brighton Station. The line closed in 1971 and this area is now dominated by the Freshfield Business Park, a large modern industrial estate.

## **4. Appraisal**

### **4.1 Brighton College**

All the earliest listed buildings at the centre of the school grounds were designed by George Gilbert Scott to be set back from the from Eastern Road. The earliest buildings do not have the greatest impact on the conservation area's character as most are no longer visible from the public highway. They were originally designed to face the open grounds of the school to the south. These are now enclosed by a quadrangle of further development from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

George Gilbert Scott's design for the buildings were described as "joyless" by Pevsner. The severe budgetary constraints have held back the gothic exuberance of the early buildings compared to similar education establishments of the time, including Scott's own. The lack of students and therefore, money in the early years of the school resulted in a scaled back complex of buildings with only the central block being built by 1850. During the next ten years the chapel, followed by the school masters house were added as funds became available. The Chapel was built in 1854 at a time when Scott was one of the most prolific architects designing chapels, churches and cathedrals including chapels for colleges and schools such as Wellington College, Exeter College, Oxford, and Harrow School College. All the Scott buildings are constructed in a familiar Gothic revival language of the period. The principal's house was paid for by himself and is more articulated with detailed facades. The chapel appears to be the most minimal of the complex by comparison, on the other wing of this first facade.

The dining hall to the north of the principal's house is the last of Scott buildings and was completed by the 1870s. The rest of the school buildings facing out into the streets of the conservation area were developed at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century.

The Eastern Road frontage has a more Jacobian expression of the gothic designs than the Scott buildings. The central gateway to the quad is the focal point of this Eastern Road streetscape. The changing pattern of gables, eaves, dormers, varied stack sizes, single and paired fenestration with its varied building line provide the interest along its full length. Designed by Thomas Graham Jackson, the work was partly complete in 1884 up to the western end of the building. The eastern parts of this listed frontage were completed in 1929. The clock tower was completed in 2014 by Richard Griffiths Architects. It therefore took 130 years for this phase of the school to be completed, based on several unrealised designs by Jackson.

The eastern most end was left incomplete until the remaining corner site was developed with a contemporary addition to the accommodation block by Allies and Morrison. Built on the corner building of Eastern Road and Walpole Road, it has a redbrick gabled frontage, sympathetic to the rest of the Jackson frontage. To the rear, flint elevations face into the quad responding to the flintwork of many of the historic buildings within the school complex.







The gateway and clocktower before and after the work to complete the original design of the building was completed in 2014.

Further north along Walpole Road is the Leach Building, a late twentieth/ early twenty-first century building which provides a less positive contribution to the conservation area. It is unfortunate that the rendered wall in front of it contributes a negative impact on the conservation area. This may have originally been a flint wall which could have been restored/ treated more sympathetically like the boundary treatment on Eastern Road.

The Woolton Building on the corner of Southerland Road with Eastern Road is another late twentieth century building. Built in 1971, it has a utilitarian, post-modern brick frontage, with narrow windows on the ground floor leading to a contrasting glazed and panelled extension. It also has a negative impact on its conservation area.

North of Woolton Building is the grade II listed school hall designed by F T Crawthorne (built in 1914). It has simple gothic red brick basilica form with a range of 7 Tudor traceried windows and steeply pitched tiled roof.

North of the school hall is the Kai Yong Yeoh teaching block by Hopkins Architects (built in 2017). It dominates the street with its five-six storey, nine bay frontage. Like the Allies and Morrison building, it has a contemporary take on the gothic buildings of the school. The materials are red brick and Portland cement window surrounds.

Connected to the Hopkins building is the Skidelsky building in black brick and timber by KFM. It has more industrial character and a distinctive break from much of the rest of the street. It won a RIBA award in 2012.

North of the KFM building is a mid-twentieth century boy's day house with rather more Georgian character reminiscent of LCC housing. Its materials, scale and pitched roof relate to some the character of other historic buildings in the college campus.

At the northwest corner of the school facing Southerland Road is the latest block and one of the largest. It contains the science classrooms, sports halls, and swimming pool. It faces onto the street with a façade primarily in black cladding and opaque glazing.

#### 4.2 Buildings on Walpole Road, Walpole Terrace, Belle Vue Gardens, Canning Street, College Terrace and Hendon Street

The residential buildings in the conservation area consists of close grain urban terraced houses, all of which developed after the College was established. The first of these, which still survives is Nos. 1-22 Walpole Terrace. They are unlisted stucco houses, three storey, plus lower ground floor, built in the 1870s. All have canted tripartite bay windows on the lower ground, ground and first floors. The roof is pitched with eaves. Most have surviving railings in a Byzantine "flowing foliage" design with a rendered low wall and heavy piers.

Further houses developed along Walpole Terrace, College Terrace, Canning Street and Walpole Road, over the next 20 years. 1-16 College Terrace is a uniform terrace of red brick with terracotta details, 4 storey with a lower ground floor and original mansard roof, canted bay windows up to the first floor with terracotta decorative features including a cobbled portico entrance and the balustrades of the boundary wall.

1-22 Walpole Terrace and 1-16 College Terrace, though unlisted are of historic significance, retaining most of their important historic character and features. They contribute positively to the historic character of the conservation area. They are the earliest and/or most architecturally ornate terraces in the conservation area. They are long and imposing terraces and have great impact of the streetscape. They are defined as "key buildings of historic significance" in Appendix A. The remaining buildings described below do have some significance and historic character, but do not contribute equally to the overall historic significance of the conservation area.

In the corner of Canning Street and Walpole Terrace, at number 55 Canning Street is a small late nineteenth century/early twentieth century 2 storey workshop, now used by Metway Studios. The studios include a 3 storey, 6 bay building to the rear, adjacent to Hendon Street. The Conservation Area extends to this area of Hendon Street.

Canning Street consists of modest 2 storey (with basement) late nineteenth century townhouses. The houses are paired, with canted tripartite bay windows on ground and first floors and other decorative features such as a cornice underneath the eaves, canopy above the door, fanlights and in several instances the original railings.

It is also notable how traditional paint colours such as white and gardenia suits these properties better than bolder colours particularly when they in a grouping. A minority of properties have had some harmful alterations such as front dormers and a small additional window on the front elevation. In one instance, a first-floor bay window and cornice have been removed and french doors and a balcony inserted.



Walpole Terrace

Residential houses were developed on Walpole Road at the start of the twentieth century. A nunnery was also built at the junction with Eastern Road. This is now Brighton College Prep School which still retains the red brick chapel on the corner of Belle Vue Gardens. The rest of the façade is stucco finished in an eclectic mix of Neo-Georgian and Neo-Italianate styles. On the north side of Belle Vue Gardens are two pairs of substantial three-storey arts and crafts Edwardian gable fronted houses faced in brick, clay tiles and roughcast render. On the north corner of Walpole Road and Belle Vue Gardens is a elegant detached three storey house in hanging tiles, roughcast render and redbrick. It has a gable frontage and side gable with a catslide roof.

North of Belle Vue Gardens on Walpole Road is a terrace of more modest Edwardian two storey houses. These are paired, with double fronted bays on ground and first floors and finished in red brick with hanging tiles in the gable above the bays. At the junction with Walpole Terrace, Walpole Road turns East where there are similar red brick terraced houses on the south side of the street. On the northern side is a pair of stucco finished late nineteenth century houses with canted bay windows on all floors. These have two storeys with lower ground floors and dormers in the roof. They have now been converted into flats.





College Terrace

#### 4.3 Boundaries, green Landscaping and trees

The main Eastern Road frontage of the Brighton College is planted with sycamore trees and hedging. These sit behind iron railings on a low flint wall with limestone coping. The boundary opens at the centre to form a gateway. It has a wide entrance between two heavy piers, surmounted by lamps on iron barley sugar columns. This boundary wall was extended sympathetically to the west in 2016, around the Woolton Building.

North of the Woolton Building, the boundary is mixed in design and materials. Two stretches of flint wall have suffered from many interventions and poor repairs. There are sections of high austere railings and gates which relate unsympathetically to the historic character of the area.

The southern edge of College Terrace and western edge of 1-22 Walpole Terrace consists of low flint wall, with regular piers and wrought iron railings inbetween. It is grade II listed. The railings are spear headed with fleur-de-lys heads on spaced supporting posts. Many of the railings are now damaged or lost and some have been replaced with simple steel railings. Significant and substantial soft landscaping, trees and dense shrubs are behind the railings, within the playing field.

By contrast the eastern boundary of the College onto Walpole Road is a bleak rendered 2m wall. It gives privacy to the Allies and Morrison's borders block but undermines any architectural contribution the building might make to the streetscape. It also has a negative impact on the conservation area and obscures views of the



only parts of the original school, (the Principal's House and the Dining Hall). This is particularly evident on Belle Vue Gardens and Walpole Road (see below).





Boundary wall between Brighton College and Walpole Road

The street furniture in the conservation area includes early cast iron lampposts. The Commissioners of Brighton in 1851 ordered gas street lighting from Langworthy & Reed. They are the earliest street lighting in the conservation area. These were later electrified in the 1930's and are marked "BLEECO" on the transmission box. Cast iron lampposts survive on Walpole Terrace, Canning Street and College Terrace. On the western corner of Eastern Road and Walpole Road is a 'K' type pillar box dating from the 1980's or 90's. Road and pavement surfaces vary across the conservation area and most paving flags and curbs are in concrete, however in Walpole Terrace and Canning Street there are surviving examples of granite set crossovers, granite curbs, Purbeck curbs and gullies. There are also a few surviving York stone flags in Canning Street.

## **5. Pressures for Change and Opportunities for Enhancement**

### **5.1 Pressures for Change**

The main pressure for change is likely to arise from the wish of Brighton College to further develop within its own grounds. Many additions have been made to the school buildings in the last twenty years.

The contribution the school makes to the conservation area with its architecture, landscape and boundaries is likely to have a significant impact on the historic significance of the environment. Therefore, it will be important that further development be assessed in the context of the historic buildings within the conservation area.

## 5.2 Negative Development within the Conservation Area

In the residential streets there is little scope for substantial development. However, the historic character of these streets can easily be eroded by progressive, unsympathetic alterations and the removal of original architectural features. A minority of houses on Walpole Road, College Terrace and Canning Street have had front dormers or rooflights added to them. These should not be permitted on the front elevation.

There is very little evidence of the installation of uPVC windows, but these do appear in some places, for example in Canning Street. uPVC windows are not generally considered acceptable within Conservation Areas, but some exception may be considered where they cannot be seen from public spaces. In most cases this will be on the rear elevation, but they should not be used on the front or on prominent side elevations.

Most of the buildings in the conservation area and outside its boundaries have a neutral or positive impact on the setting of the College Conservation Area. One exception is the Freshfield Business Estate, which is dominated by low rise, metal clad buildings. Most of the landscape, including the roads are dominated by car parking. This has a negative landscape impact on the conservation area. Further development on this commercial estate should take account of its impact on the conservation area.

## 5.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

The green space on the playing field, including soft landscaping (trees, shrubs), and listed railings contribute to the quality of the environment of the residential streets facing onto it. This boundary could be improved by the repair and replacement of missing railings and wall. The benefits of such changes can be seen on the Eastern Road frontage with the removal of a damaged wooden fence and installation of railings, wall and trees which have significantly improved the appearance.

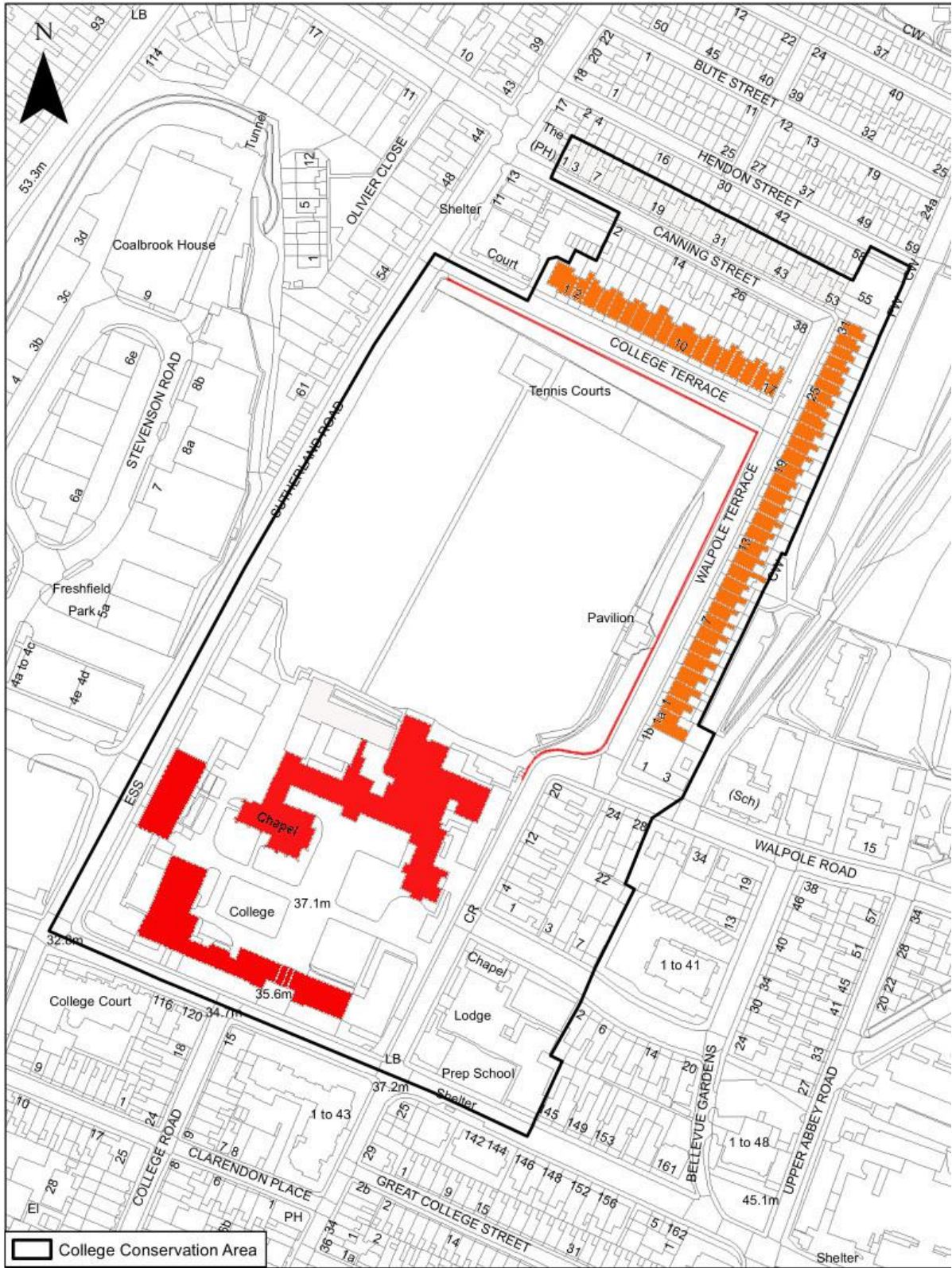
The western boundary of Walpole Road has a high wall with white painted render. This creates a barrier to the community and opportunities have been missed to create glimpses of the listed buildings within. Continuing the low wall and railings from Walpole Terrace would have been more appropriate or work with the existing wall (flint or other) to create openings along its length. On a lesser but still significant note, the white render may in time attract graffiti, which is not “secured by design” and will detract from the conservation area.

Future development of Brighton College may involve revisiting the Woolton building as it has a negative and discordant impact on the setting of the historic and more positive contemporary buildings in the conservation area. There is an opportunity to improve the architecture at this location and complete the Jackson frontage more sensitively.



# Appendix A - Conservation Area Map

## College Conservation Area





## **Appendix B – Schedule of properties within the Conservation Area**

Belle Vue Gardens:

1-9 odd.

Canning Street:

1-55 odd, 2-38 even.

College Terrace:

1-17 consecutive

Eastern Road:

North side from junction with Sutherland Road to 154 odd.

Sutherland Road:

East side from junction with Eastern Road to junction with College Terrace.

Walpole Road:

1-3 odd and 4-28 even, together with the Brighton College Prep School (number 2).

Walpole Terrace:

1-31 odd.

Hendon Street:

Unnumbered (south side on extreme southeast elevation)

