

## **Rottingdean Conservation Area Review**

Designated: 1970

Area: 16.85 Hectares: 41.64 Acres

Article 4 Direction: Proposed

### **Introduction**

#### **Location and Setting**

The historic downland village of Rottingdean is located 6 km east of Brighton centre. The village is located within a long north-south aligned valley which provides shelter from the prevailing southwesterly winds. The valley terminates at the sea to the south, at a low point in the cliffs, and provided good passage inland to Lewes and beyond. Rottingdean serves as an important centre for the surrounding community, and also as a destination for tourists. Rottingdean comprises a substantial village which, despite suburban development on its fringe, remains as a distinct settlement separate from the urban conurbation of Brighton and Hove.

The conservation area was designated in September 1970. It comprises the core of the historic village, including the High Street and The Green, as well as flanking green spaces to the east and west (Conservation Area and Topography Graphic).

Amongst its heritage assets, the area contains 54 listed buildings, 8 locally listed buildings and an archaeological notification area. 3 further archaeological notification areas, 2 scheduled ancient monuments and a listed building (Rottingdean Windmill) are set in its immediate surroundings. Much of the open downland surrounding the village was designated as part of the South Downs National Park in April 2010 (Existing Heritage Designations Graphic).

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 Rottingdean Conservation Area, and make recommendations for its future management.

### **Assessment of Special Interest**

#### **General Character and Landscape Setting**

Rottingdean comprises a substantial downland village, with the medieval village core at its heart, and some later 20<sup>th</sup> century development on its fringe. Although situated by the sea, the village's development was based primarily on agriculture, and a number of farmsteads and converted agricultural buildings survive. Later, the village became popular with artists and writers, who built large houses centred around the green. The village remains a thriving community and is of great historic character.

The conservation area covers the historic core of the village. The medieval street pattern survives, and is largely of a linear form; centred on the High Street with the green – with its church and original manor (Challoners) - situated to the north.

The built environment is varied, comprising tight-knit groups of vernacular cottages focussed around the High Street, grand detached residences situated in individual garden plots around the green and farmhouses and converted farm buildings to the north. A strong visual coherence is generated by the use of traditional materials, particularly a wide variety of flint, as described in the adjacent information box.

### Flint

Two main kinds of flint were used in construction in Rottingdean: *field flint* and *beach pebbles*. As the names suggest, field flints are flints gathered from the surfaces of ploughed fields. They are irregular in size and shape and tend to have a mixture of white weathered rind and shiny black interior exposed. Beach pebbles are flints that are collected from the beach. They are smooth and rounded in shape due to erosion by the sea, and are coated in an opaque rind.

Unprocessed field flints tended to be used for humbler cottages, barns and walls. Flint pebbles were often used in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, on both humble and grand buildings. Both kinds of flint can be chipped/split to expose more of the shiny black interior. This is called *knapped flint* and is generally found on higher status properties. It was particularly popular in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and continued through to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. On some of the grandest houses, the flint was knapped to form closely fitting 'squares' of flint. Small flakes of flint were also sometimes placed in the mortar joints in a process called *galetting*.

Further variety is produced in flintwork through differences in the density, coursing and strike (the angle at which the flints are laid) of the flints, and the lime mortar's colour, texture, composition, lime content and method of pointing.

The types of flint used in Rottingdean – and the variety therein – is extremely important to the character of the conservation area (Figure 1). The mortar is more homogeneous in the area, due to the use of local sands and tempers, and contributes to consistent historic identity of the area.

*Further information on other traditional materials is available from Brighton & Hove City Council's Supplementary Planning Document on Architectural Features. This is available from the Council's website.*

The character of Rottingdean is closely linked to its landscape setting. The village is viewed in the context of open downland, which acts as an immediate reminder of the village's rural location and the agricultural antecedents of the area. In particular, the steeply-sloped Beacon Hill to the west of the area forms an important backdrop to views in the village. Rottingdean Windmill – set upon its skyline – forms a striking landmark from within the village and when approaching Rottingdean from Brighton, and is closely associated with the village's identity.

Other green spaces surround the conservation area - ~~the playing field on Steyning Road/Newlands Road - form~~ a strong edge to the village, distinguishing it clearly from surrounding suburban development when viewed from the surrounding hilltops. The allotments and spaces that flank Beacon Hill are historic rear gardens ~~to the properties on The Green~~ that similarly form the edge of the historic village. ~~Further allotments and green spaces to the north of Hog Plat do not share this historic precedent, but are nevertheless part of the setting of the conservation area.~~ These spaces and the ~~surrounding~~ downland form a 'green buffer' that emphasises the historic village's originally wholly rural setting and maintain a visual break from encroaching suburban growth.

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Rottingdean also retains strong links with the sea; the presence of which influenced the village's historic development. The village and sea are viewed in association from surrounding hilltops, providing a strong sense of place.

### Historic Background and Archaeology

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

Rottingdean likely originated around a fresh water spring at the green (the current well acts as a reminder of this, and formed the only source of water in the village until 1879). The village lies at the junction of the north-south route of Falmer Road/High Street and historic east-west routes across the downs. A small inlet on the seafront is shown on the 1839 Tithe Map (see Map 2 [PAGE NO](#)), and it is thus likely that the ability to draw boats safely to shore was an additional benefit to its location, and a driver for development along the High Street between the green and shore.

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The name Rottingdean is of Saxon origin and translates as the '~~wooded~~ valley of Rota's people'. The lands comprising Rottingdean were owned by Earl Godwin of Kent, father of the Saxon King Harold. Recorded in the domesday survey of 1086 as 'Rotingedene', it was by this time already a small village of 50 to 100 people, with a small church. The manor was tenanted by Hugh from William de Warrenne.

Standing on the site of an earlier Saxon church, the current church is dedicated to St Margaret. The nave dates to the 12th century, and the tower and chancel were constructed in the early 13th century; probably following the collapse of an earlier tower in a gale.

During the Hundred Years War, Rottingdean was attacked by French raiders on several occasions. During an attack in 1377, many villagers took refuge in the church belfry, but perished when the raiders set fire to it. Evidence of this can still be seen in the pink and cracked stonework in the church. By the 15<sup>th</sup> century land in Rottingdean belonged to at least four different manors.

Despite its proximity to the sea, Rottingdean was primarily an agricultural village. Many of the villagers would have supplemented their agricultural wage with some fishing. For example, in the 17th century, Thomas Stanmer, had over 40 sheep, 6 loads of nets and was part owner of a cockboat.

In the 17th and 18th century, it is reputed that smuggling also supplemented the more legitimate incomes. The gap at Rottingdean represents the lowest point in the cliffs between Brighton and Newhaven, and therefore provided an ideal point at which to smuggle goods inland. Many of the villagers were involved in smuggling in contraband goods such as tea, lace, wine and spirits, whilst wool was smuggled back out. A network of tunnels reportedly connect the seafront with many of the village properties. The smuggling trade in Rottingdean was immortalised by Kipling's 'A Smuggler's Song':

*Five and twenty ponies  
Trotting through the dark  
Brandy for the Parson  
Baccy for the Clerk*

It is reputed that the sails of windmills on Beacon Hill were used to signal to smugglers. The current windmill was erected in 1802, the mill was operational until 1880. By 1890 its future looked uncertain, as it was in need of urgent repair. These repairs were finally funded by the Marquis of Abergavenny in 1905-6, although it remained disused. This suggests that the windmill by this point already performed a symbolic role in the village. It is now maintained by the Rottingdean Preservation Society.

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From the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century an area at the corner of The Green and Dean Court Road was used as a Quaker Burial Ground. The site includes the locally listed Beard Family Tomb, and was last used for burial in the 1950s. The Beard family were an important local family; who variously owned much land and property in Rottingdean and the surrounding area, including both Down House and Hillside. The existence of such an eminent landowning Quaker family – at a time when such non-conformist religions were much persecuted - is particularly unusual.

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**Deleted:** The exact extent, location of graves and level of preservation of the burial ground as a whole has yet to be determined.

Rottingdean remained primarily agricultural throughout the post-medieval period, with four farms operating out of the village through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century: West Side Farm; Court Farm; East Side Farm and Challoners Farm. These reflect the four-way manorial divide already evident in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The village also became popular with day-tripping visitors from the growing resort at Brighton. This was aided by the construction of the Newhaven Turnpike road along the coast in 1824. A number of enterprises were established over the following decades to cater for the tourism trade, including sea bathing machines, sporting events and tea shops. In 1896 a railway car, running on stilts in the sea, also briefly connected Brighton and Rottingdean. Designed by Brighton inventor Magnus Volk, and nicknamed 'daddy longlegs', the car was accessed via a specially-constructed pier. The railway closed just five years later. Remains of the track can still be seen when the tide is out.

Rottingdean had also become a popular haunt for artists and writers; seeking a quieter alternative to the hustle and bustle of neighbouring Brighton. This led to the construction of large residences around the Green throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, of which many survive (see adjacent box). The increased popularity of Rottingdean with artists, tourists and the middle classes alike led to a rise in

population, from 543 in 1801 to 1992 in 1901. Amongst its more notable residents, Edward Burne-Jones and Rudyard Kipling are the most famous.

By the time of the 1789-1805 Draft Ordnance Survey Map (Map 1), many of the grand properties had already been built and the form of the village was largely established; with a fine grain of building already evident along the High Street and the larger properties fronting on to the green to the north. Comparison with the 1839 Tithe Map (Map 2) and historic OS maps (Map 3 – 1898, below) show some of the later changes that took place around the green, as further grand residences continued to be built and extended.

#### Buildings highlighted on the 1898 OS Map

- The Grange was probably formerly the Vicarage, built 1740. Artist Sir William Nicholson lived there in 1912 to 1914. It was restored in the 1920s by Sir Edwin Lutyens
- The Elms was built in 1750. Originally common land forming part of the Green, a house was constructed here in 1715, which the current house replaced. Rudyard Kipling lived here from 1897 to 1903.
- Prospect Cottage, Aubrey Cottage and North End House date to the 18th century. Originally three dwellings, Prospect Cottage and Aubrey Cottage were combined under the ownership of Edward Burne-Jones. Sir William Nicholson bought the house in 1920, after which Sir Roderick Jones and his wife Enid Bagnold were resident and added North End House to the property. They have now been divided back into three separate houses.
- Cavendish and Pax probably date to the 18th century, but were refaced in the 19th and the house was later divided into two residences
- The Dene – previously Elm Lodge and Dean Court – was used as a racing stable by Lord St Vincent. It was rebuilt and enlarged by ELJ Ridsdale in 1877.

Amongst the established fine urban grain of the High Street, the stately St Aubyns was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Originally named Field House and constructed as a large residence, it was in use as a school by 1832. In 1887 Rottingdean School was established at the property, but relocated to the north of the village in 1894 (as first shown on the 1898 OS Map - Map 3). At this point the present St Aubyns Preparatory School took over the building.

A catholic community of the Order of St Martha was established in Rottingdean in 1903, with the current convent opened in 1925. The convent chapel remained the focus for Catholic worship in the area, until a new catholic church was consecrated in 1958. The current Aided Roman Catholic School of Our Lady of Lourdes opened in 1969.

After World War I, the decline of sheep farming led to significant changes in Rottingdean, with the sale of many of the farmsteads and surrounding farmland. The sale of farms in the 1920s led to conversion of many farm buildings to primarily residential use. Tudor Close was one of the first, where two former barns and a cow shed from Court Farm were converted into housing in a 'Tudorbethan' style in 1929. [The complex also includes numerous re-used historic timbers.](#) Later

converted to a hotel, many film and theatre stars stayed here including film star Bette Davis, before the complex was reconverted to housing in the 1950s. Further farm buildings were also converted to form the now residential Tudor Cottages, Challoners Mews, Little Barn and Court Barn. In 1928 the village was annexed into Brighton and improvements to the coast road (Marine Drive) in 1933 greatly enhanced access. These factors facilitated suburban growth in the area.

The Undercliff sea defences and an associated open air swimming pool (closed and infilled in 1990) were built in parallel with the construction of the coast road. The sea defences halted ongoing coastal erosion which had continually altered the Rottingdean landscape. The new road and defences prompted several developments in the area, including the relocation and rebuilding of the White Horse Coaching Inn and Queen Victoria Public House (originally situated at what is now West Street car park), and the construction of numbers 50-52 High Street and 51-57 Marine Drive and St Margaret's flats beside the seafront. These alterations, the sea defences and the suburban growth are clearly evident on the 1950s OS map (Map 4).

In 1980, Kipling Gardens – then part of the gardens of The Elms and in an overgrown state – was threatened with redevelopment. In order to preserve this part of the former village green, Rottingdean Preservation Society bought the land and restored the garden along traditional Victorian lines. The gardens were presented to Brighton Borough Council and opened to the public in 1986.

#### *Archaeological Significance*

Evidence for Neolithic activity survives in the Rottingdean area, with a number of worked flints discovered and several extant prehistoric monuments on the surrounding hilltops. On Beacon Hill, a number of barrows remain upstanding, which are protected by two scheduled ancient monuments and two archaeological notification areas. A further Neolithic long barrow (or conjoined bowl barrows) was removed in 1863 during 'improvements to the cricket ground' (which was located on Beacon Hill), whilst further features are identifiable on aerial photographs.

A further possible bowl barrow has been identified on the hilltop to the east of Rottingdean; on an area now developed as suburban housing within Saltdean.

A hoard of Roman coins were reputedly found within an urn in Rottingdean in 1798. The coins were found whilst ploughing a field, and dated to AD253-273. The exact location of the find is, however, unknown.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1802, the Sussex Weekly Advertiser reported that a 'skeleton of an ancient warrior and a sword' had been discovered during the construction of the windmill on Beacon Hill, and that both items disappeared whilst the labourers were at lunch. A further skeleton was discovered during construction of a rear house extension on Nevill Road in 1992. Both inhumations are thought to be Anglo Saxon.

[Circular features evident on Beacon Hill could relate to Bronze Age burial mounds, previous windmills and/or the sites of historic beacons. Further investigation would be required to establish this further.](#)

Spatial Analysis (Spatial Analysis Graphic)

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The High Street forms the main axis in the village and conservation area; forming its commercial heart and linking the seafront to the village green. Falmer Road and Marine Drive (the coast road) form the main gateway routes in to the area. Marine Drive – a busy road - forms a physical barrier between the village and the sea, which erodes this historic relationship. The route of Falmer Road/High Street is also subject to high levels of traffic relative to its size and character. The traffic along the narrow High Street is particularly harmful, as the conflict between the needs of pedestrians and car users is most apparent here.

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Beyond the main roads in the area lies a network of twittens and paths that are not immediately apparent, but provide good pedestrian permeability throughout the area for those familiar with it. Included within this network are a number of historic droveways that provide access from the village to the downs, such as Whiteway Lane and Hog Plat.

A clear sense of enclosure pervades much of the conservation area. Along the High Street this is formed by a strong building line with buildings fronting directly onto the narrow road with irregular pavements; which forms a particularly intimate streetscene. To the north, a sense of enclosure and privacy is formed through high walls and dense vegetation, which form a visual edge to the street front. This also provides for a strong definition of public and private space. A sense of boundary is less clearly defined along Falmer Road, where grass verges along the road promote a rural, open quality. Nevertheless, public and private space remains distinct.

A number of important open spaces are apparent within and around the conservation area. The green and Kipling Gardens form the main public spaces at the heart of the area. The green (including the pond) comprises a visually open space which contrasts with the surrounding sense of boundary. Kipling Gardens, as well as the private gardens of the large houses and farmsteads within the northern half of the conservation area, comprises bounded space in which the sense of privacy and enclosure is emphasised. As such, Kipling Gardens forms a quiet haven much removed from surrounding village activity. Mature vegetation, as marked on the adjacent plan, is also important to the character and sense of privacy in the area.

Important views in, of and across the conservation area include (Figure 2):

- V1. Views between Beacon Windmill, Beacon Hill and the conservation area (a, b and c)
- V2. Views between the conservation area and surrounding open downland from where the village is viewed in association with the sea and downs (a and b)
- V3. Strong linear view south along the High Street towards the sea, framed and directed by flanking housing
- V4. Views to large residences from across the green.

Important spaces and permeation routes in and around the conservation area include:

- S1. The Green and Pond

- S2. Kipling Gardens
- S3. Beacon Hill
- S4. Verges along Falmer Road and the Green
- S5. Surrounding downland and green spaces that form a distinction between the village and surrounding suburban development.
- S6. Web of twittens and footpaths within the area and leading out on to the Downs (marked in black dashing on the associated graphic)
- S7. Junction of Marine Drive and High Street as the historic village crossroads and now the main gateway into the area

Local landmarks in and beside the conservation area include:

- L1. Beacon Windmill (Figure 3)
- L2. St Margaret's Church
- L3. The Elms
- L4. White Horse Hotel

### **Public Realm**

Public realm throughout the area is largely of good quality. Pavements and paths are generally surfaced with red brick pavers with red brick kerbs. This fosters a positive historic identity that distinguishes the village from surrounding development. However, some areas of replacement red brick pavers contrast with the original because they are much more homogenous; care needs to be taken to ensure they blend in. The pavements are irregular in width; where they are particularly wide, alternative surface treatments including areas of cobbles have been incorporated. Along the broad pavement on Vicarage Lane, for example, areas of cobbles have been incorporated alongside the predominant red pavers. An early 20<sup>th</sup> century type K6 telephone box and a 19<sup>th</sup> century style lamppost of a design common in the local area complete the scene here. Road surfaces are largely generic; however the loose gravel finish to Whipping Post Lane is a positive feature, emphasising the rural qualities of the area.

Lighting is mixed: 19<sup>th</sup> century lampposts of local Brighton designs predominate around the central areas such as the High Street and Green. Much of the lighting along the High Street comprises 19<sup>th</sup> century style lanterns attached to buildings – as the narrow width of the road and its pavements has prevented lampposts from being installed. Along Falmer Road the lighting (and indeed the surfacing) is more standard.

### **Character Analysis**

The conservation area can be divided into four distinct character areas (Character Area Graphic): The High Street – to the south of the area – comprises the commercial heart of the village, and is characterised by a dense urban grain of predominantly small, closely-spaced vernacular cottages interspersed with early 20<sup>th</sup> century terraces. The Vicarage Lane Character Area contains moderately-scaled houses set in an informal, rural arrangement. The Green forms the central space in the area; around which are set a number of prestigious detached residences - associated with some of the village's more famous artistic and literary inhabitants -



and St Margaret's Church. To the north, The Farms area contains numerous buildings relating to the village's historically agricultural economy. These include large, prestigious farmsteads alongside converted farm buildings.

Although each area retains a different character through its historic development, built form, morphology and use, the boundaries between the areas are not clearcut; with cross-over between their character. The four characters together comprise the surviving historic village of Rottingdean.

### **Character Area I: The High Street** (Graphic)

The High Street Character Area is centred on the commercial heart of the village. The High Street itself forms a strong north-south linear axis. A number of streets branch from here to the east and west. The area is densely packed and displays buildings of a variety of dates and styles, reflecting its incremental change over time.

#### **Streetscapes**

##### ***The High Street***

The High Street forms the main road in the village; providing a link between the seafront, Marine Drive and the Green, and forming the focus of commercial activity in the area. The street is linear, with strong views along its length. This linearity is emphasised by the narrow width of the road. Buildings generally front directly on to the street, with narrow or non-existent footways, which creates a strong sense of boundary. The main exception to this strong building line is at The Trellis/Barclays Bank/St Aubyns School, where the buildings are set back from the street front, and the sense of enclosure is reduced (Figure 4).

Commercial buildings in the street are concentrated towards its southern end, with a greater proportion of residential buildings to the north. They display shopfronts of varied style and quality, as described further below.

#### ***Shop fronts***

Shop fronts within the conservation area tend to retain solid stall risers (such as at number 67 High Street) and some have recessed entrances, which are positive features in the streetscene. The stall risers act to provide a solid visual base to the building, ensuring it does not appear to be 'floating' above the ground floor. Recessed entrances provide visual relief to the frontage and the streetscene, breaking down the scale of the shopfront. However, the shop fronts have generally been inserted into earlier buildings. Many of the shopfronts do not relate well to the character of the host building; with large expanses of glass and poor proportions. This is particularly true of the fascias, which are predominantly of uncharacteristic modern materials, with no detailing and are poorly located or scaled in relation to the building.

A number of the shops and offices do not contain standard shopfronts, but rather have a traditional domestic window with lettering on the glass or a fascia/lettering placed directly on the wall. This is generally beneficial, as it limits the impact on the building, as is evident at Barclays Bank and Lloyds TSB. However in some instances the inserted fascia is of poor design, material and poorly located. Examples of this include numbers 47 High Street (Yorkshire Buildings Society) and 37 High Street (Adam & Remers Solicitors and Nationwide fascias on side elevation).

The street morphology, plot size and a number of surviving buildings indicate the medieval antecedents of the village. However, most existing buildings date to the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They display a range of designs and architectural styles but are unified through the use of predominantly vernacular and traditional materials such as flint, brick and render. The majority of buildings are of two storeys, with pitched roofs – either set parallel or with a gable end to the road.

### ***East-West Roads***

Park Road, Nevill Road and Steyning Road connect at right angles with the High Street, and rise up the sides of the valley to the east and west. Historic mapping from the 1870s show that the lower portions of these roads already existed, but it was only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (evident on the 1930s OS map) that the roads were laid out to the current extent. The lower parts of these streets are situated within the conservation area and comprise mainly commercial properties, the rear spaces to properties on the High Street and some early 20<sup>th</sup> century terraces. The buildings within the conservation area vary in style, age and quality. The streetscapes are viewed in the context of the suburban housing beyond. These factors lead to a somewhat disjointed and incoherent character. The uniform suburban housing along the private Nevill Road – outside the conservation area - is more picturesque.

### **Key Buildings and Groups of Buildings**

Although many of the buildings in this character area make a positive contribution to the area both as individual buildings and as part of a group, a number of buildings stand out as of particular interest and character:

#### ***Early buildings***

The Old Black Horse, the Olde Cottage Tea Rooms, Hampton Cottage and May Cottage (Figure 5) all form rendered buildings with pitched roofs running parallel to the road. Although they appear to have been much altered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, their long, low form suggests earlier foundations: the Old Cottage probably dates to c.1589, whilst the Old Black Horse has the date '1513' painted above its door. They form particularly picturesque buildings which highlight the long history of this village street.

Dated to 1712, numbers 78 and 80 High Street comprise a pair of two storey cottages, with white rendered elevations and steeply-pitched tile roofs (Figure 6). Both are designated as buildings of local interest. An inglenook fireplace survives to number 78 which is a particularly significant survival.

#### ***18<sup>th</sup> century buildings***

A number of buildings displaying characteristic 18<sup>th</sup> century architectural features are present along the High Street, although they are not dominant. These buildings display vertical hung sash or horizontal sliding sash windows within well-detailed flint and brick elevations.

Number 33 High Street is particularly well-detailed, with a pebble plinth and knapped flint above (Figure 7). The sun insurance plate on the main elevation, central chimney stack, dentil cornice and surviving horizontal sliding sash windows are characterful historic features. Although displaying 18<sup>th</sup> century features, the proportions and assymetry of number 33, as well as number 116 and the Rottingdean Club suggest that they may comprise earlier buildings that were substantially altered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. The bay window to number 116 High Street and porch to the Rottingdean Club are later additions.

Distinctive due to its tall, narrow form and cobbled frontage, Tallboys (number 66 High Street) was built in 1780 and operated as the Customs House (Figure 8).

### **Late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings.**

Terraced buildings are a predominant built form along the High Street. Varied dates of construction - from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century – are reflected though varied detailing. However they are unified through use of traditional vernacular materials (field flint, flint pebble, soft Wealden brick and lime render), pitched roofs and two storey height. Many now contain later shop fronts, which vary in quality and character.

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Numbers 43 to 49 High Street form a well-detailed early 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace, with cobbled-elevations and red brick dressings (Figure 9). Numbers 21 to 31 High Street forms a further short terrace dating to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Situated at the entrance to the High Street, they front directly on to the road. The buildings are of uniform design with a single window to each floor and the majority have a dormer to the front roof slope. Some of the properties have, however, been subject to modern alteration, which has harmed the uniformity of the group.

Although outside the conservation area, numbers 18, 20 and 22 Nevill Road contribute to the character of the area (Figure 10). Built in the 1890s, they comprise a short terrace stepping up the hill. They are built in flint with brick dressings and a matching porch to each entrance.

Situated towards the northern extent of the High Street, Margo's Mews and Mill Cottages both date to the late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Formerly known as Bunker's Barn, Margo's Mews was first converted to cottages for the poor; it became a tea room in 1921 before being converted back to houses in 1985-6. Numbers 79 and 81 High Street, otherwise known as Mill Cottages, comprise flint and whitewashed double pile cottages with a particularly rural vernacular character (Figure 11).

Located to the south of the area, St Aubyns dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 12). Originally built as a detached house, but converted to a school in 1832, it is set back from the road. The tall flint boundary wall helps maintain the building line along the High Street. Both its size and set back location contrast with the more typical scale and morphology of the High Street, such that it forms a prominent building. Located opposite Park Road, it is also a focus of views along this road.

### **20<sup>th</sup> century buildings**

Mock-timber framing is evident on several of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings, seen most extensively at number 100 which occupies a prominent corner location (Figure 13). The early 20<sup>th</sup> century terrace on Steyning Road is of architectural quality, with mock timber framing to the gables, square bay windows and forecourted gardens with brick boundary walls. Similar details are evident at numbers 106 to 114 High Street.

Barclay's Bank – a large detached building slightly set back from the street front and thus fragments the building line – combines mock timber framing with flint elevations and pointed arch openings (Figure 14), whilst a typical combination of Sussex vernacular materials are evident on the Co-op; flint, with red brick dressings and tile hanging.

## Conclusion

The High Street forms the commercial focus of the area, and connects the Green and the sea. It is characterised by:

- Buildings dating from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century, with variation in architectural style and detailing emphasising the area's long history and piecemeal development
- Dense urban form with strong building line
- Small vernacular cottages of two storeys
- Prominent, mostly plain clay tile, pitched roofs
- Elevations predominantly of field flint or flint pebble, with brick dressings
- Irregular width pavements.

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However a number of negative features are present in the area, which erode the historic character of the area:

- The road is subject to heavy levels of traffic relative to the type of road. This leads to queuing traffic and obstructions and contrasts starkly with its historic character.
- Some buildings have been subject to insensitive alterations. These include the boxed eaves to the garage at number 79 High Street, replacement uPVC windows on Steyning Road and the Juliet Balcony to number 102-104 High Street which is an uncharacteristic feature.
- A number of shop fronts are unsympathetic to the historic character of their host building.
- Number 68-74 High Street is a much altered building of little streetscape value.
- The streetscapes along east-west streets are disjointed and incoherent. A number of modern developments erode their historic character.

## **Character Area 2: Vicarage Lane (Graphic)**

The Vicarage Lane Character Area comprises the area between the High Street, The Green and Whiteway Lane. The area comprises mostly residential buildings, displaying a relatively spacious character and a varied relationship to the street front.

Set at the lower end of the green, the character of the area is that of a historic rural village nucleus.

Green verges and verdant front gardens, alongside the gravel surface to Whipping Post Lane, emphasise the rural quality of the area. Several of the buildings in the area are set back from street fronts along lanes and unadopted roads, such that they are not immediately apparent in the streetscape.

## **Key Buildings and Groups of Buildings**

### ***Whipping Post House***

Set to the rear of the High Street along Whipping Post Lane (Figure 15), Whipping Post House comprises a long, low rendered building dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It has been much altered over time, as is reflected by its highly irregular plan form. It is set back behind a grassed front garden and orientated away from the road.

The building has a colourful past: It was once the home of famous Rottingdean smuggler Captain Dunk. It was also once a butcher's shop. The name is derived from the village's whipping post and stocks, which used to be located where the chestnut tree now stands in the front garden, whilst the village ducking chair was situated to the rear of the house; in the village pond,

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### ***1 Vicarage Lane, St John's and Blacksmith Cottage***

1 Vicarage Lane, St John's and Blacksmith Cottage form a short row of properties set at an angle to Vicarage Lane. Number 1 and St John's date to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with particularly picturesque pebble elevations with painted brick quoins and a shallow pitched tile roof (Figure 16).

Set substantially further back than number 1 and St John's, Blacksmith Cottage has the date 1600 painted on it, retaining traditional sliding sash and casement windows (Figure 17). The roofscape is particularly characterful, with the ridgelines of two further wings, located at right angles and to the rear of the front range, visible above the front range.

### ***Buildings on Vicarage Terrace***

Vicarage Terrace is a private road accessed from Whiteway Lane, and not immediately apparent within the area. Entrance to the road is flanked by a short terrace of three buildings to the west (Figure 18), and a wide grass verge to the east. The terraced houses date to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later shutters have been added to the window openings, and are not a historic feature in this area.

Beyond, number 4 Vicarage Terrace is a detached house that likely dates to the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century. The 18<sup>th</sup> century numbers 5 and 6 Vicarage Terrace are set behind this, and are hidden from views along Whiteway Lane. The road and its cottages are particularly secluded and picturesque.

### ***The Plough Inn, Chyngton, Forge House***

The Plough Inn, Chyngton and Forge House (Figure 19) are later insertions in the area, dating to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The current Plough Inn comprises the extensive rebuilding of its predecessor in 1938. It occupies a prominent position beside – although not orientated towards – the village pond. Chyngton is located on ‘The Twitten’, opposite the Roman Catholic Church. Its orientation towards a twitten rather than to a formal road again promotes the rural character of the area.

Forge House was built in the early 1970s on the site of the old forge. It occupies a prominent location at a bend in Vicarage Lane, and is set back from the road behind a flint wall. It has been built in traditional vernacular materials with areas of brick, flint and hung tile, but is, however, of limited architectural merit.

### **Open Space**

There are no formal public open spaces within the Vicarage Lane Character Area. There is, however, a large amount of green space and vegetation provided through wide green verges and front gardens, including those to Whipping Post House and Blacksmith Cottage. This green quality is particularly important to the rural character of the area.

### **Conclusion**

Vicarage Lane sits well beside the character of the High Street and the Green, but is also distinct in its own right. It is characterised by:

- An informal, irregular relationship between buildings and the streetfront, with many buildings fronting on to green spaces or informal roads
- Small vernacular buildings dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, emphasising the long development of the area with low key incremental change over many centuries
- Predominant use of local vernacular materials; mainly flint elevations with brick dressings and clay tile roofs. 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings also incorporate tile hanging
- Traditional surfaces and soft landscaping including grass verges and front gardens promoting a rural character

Heavy levels of traffic, however, have a negative impact on the character of the area.

### **Character Area 3: The Green (Graphic)**

The Green Character Area forms the heart of the village. It comprises large high status residences, walled gardens and the parish church located around a historic village green and pond. The green originally extended northwards to incorporate the area of Kipling Gardens and The Elms. This area is of importance historically for its association with Rottingdean’s famous artistic and literary inhabitants, and architecturally due to the quality of the high status buildings they dwelt in.

Tall flint walls to Kipling Gardens and the private gardens of surrounding residences create a clear sense of enclosure and seclusion. The residences themselves are generally visible above or beside these walls, and their architectural quality, scale and design reflect their high status.

Overall, the combination of open space, buildings of special architectural quality and the sense of privacy promote a genteel character to the area.

## **Open Space**

### ***The Green and Pond***

The village green and pond form the primary open space in the conservation area as a whole. It retains an open aspect that works to unite the surrounding houses and form a central focus to the village. This focus is emphasised by the location of the well and war memorial here, and by the location of the Church adjacent. Individual trees set on the green emphasise the sylvan quality of the area. Clear views are apparent from the green to Rottingdean Windmill, Beacon Hill and the garden spaces and allotments on its flank.

### ***Kipling Gardens***

Formerly part of the green itself, Kipling Gardens is set to its immediate north. The 1839 tithe map shows a number of buildings in the northwest portion of the gardens; evidence for these survives within the walls. The area later became the property of the Elms. It was saved from proposed redevelopment in the 1980s and restored and enhanced by the Rottingdean Preservation Society as a typical Victorian English Garden.

Although Kipling Gardens has now returned to public use, the surrounding flint walls provide an enclosed, private character that is quite distinct from that of the remaining open space of the Green and pond (Figure 20).

Further flint walls divide the space into a number of separate enclosures, hidden from each other and revealed only on progression through the area. Winding red brick paths and round arched openings provide access through the different parts. Each enclosure has its own distinctive character, including a woodland area, rose garden, chalkland garden and herb garden. A croquet lawn is set to the north east.

### ***St Margaret's Churchyard***

Set to the east of the green, beside a wide grass verge, St Margaret's churchyard forms a peaceful and secluded green space in the area. Views between it and the green are partly obscured by foliage, whilst a lychgate and wall mark its extent, such that the boundary between the 'common land' of the green and the 'sacred space' of the churchyard is clearly defined and form quite distinct spaces. Similar to Kipling Gardens, the churchyard is divided into a sequence of secluded areas. Many of the tombs and gravestones are of historic interest, and some of them are listed.

### ***Historic paths, tracks and twittens***

**Deleted: Whiteway Lane and Hog Plat**

A number of historic paths radiate from the village to surrounding downland, including Hog Plat, Whiteway Lane, Bazehill Road and the footpath to Ovingdean, Hog Plat and Whiteway Lane are set to the northwest and southeast of the green respectively, and delineate its original extent. Hog Plat is an unsurfaced track which provides access via allotment gardens to Beacon Hill. A letter box set in the wall at its entrance is a notable feature.

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Whiteway Lane is hard surfaced to its western extent – where a number of more modern developments and the Roman Catholic Church are accessed from it. To the east, it forms a narrower track with overhanging trees and a steep bank to the south forming a hollow way (Figure 21). Along this section it is flanked by a series of open green spaces that enhance the rural, spacious setting of the area. It provides access to the downs, - forming an historic route to East Hill, Balsdean Farm and on to Lewes - and is well-known as an old smuggling route. Both Whiteway Lane and Bazehill Road are evident as tracks on the 1789-1805 Draft OS Map. The western extent of Bazehill Road now forms a surfaced road flanked by suburban housing, but remains as a track to the east.

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The paths provide an important physical link between the village and its open downland setting.

## Key Buildings and Groups of Buildings

### *Church of St Margaret*

Located on the east side of the Green, the Church of St Margaret (Figure 22) is set within its churchyard and bounded by a flint wall and lychgate. As such, the lychgate and foliage to the churchyard in fact have a more visible presence in the streetscape, than the church itself. Nevertheless it is a landmark building which is clearly visible and identifiable from surrounding downland.

Dating to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and later, the church is one of the most significant historic structures in the area. It is largely rendered with a short, squat tower. Stained glass windows within the church were designed by Edward Burne-Jones and executed by William Morris.

### *Church of Our Lady of Lourdes*

Located between Whiteway Lane and Steyning Road, the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Lourdes was built in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 23). Of flint construction with a short tower, it is located in a small churchyard with flint walls. Due to its location away from the central streets and the green, the church is not immediately apparent in the area. The key view of the building is along Whiteway Lane from the junction of The Green and Vicarage Lane, where it is viewed in relation to a raised grass verge and surrounding vegetation. Its elevated position emphasises its status and enhances its visibility from surrounding downland.

### *The Elms*



Although Rudyard Kipling only resided here for a handful of years, The Elms is particularly noted for its association with this writer. Located on The Green, it is set at right angles to the road; fronting instead onto the green and pond beyond (Figure 24). This orientation allows for picturesque views across the pond. The house is set behind a gravel drive and high flint wall. The principal façade is of a formal, symmetrical design, whereas the rear has been subject to several alterations and extensions, such that the building now retains a complex plan form and roofscape.

### ***North End House, Prospect Cottage, Aubrey Cottage***

At one point these three buildings were amalgamated to make one dwelling, but have since been re-divided to their original three properties. Set close to the pavement behind modern replacement railings, they are highly visible in the streetscape and from across the Green (Figure 25). They display a variety of materials, architectural styles and detailing. Features including the long, narrow oriel window, high levels of fenestration and balustrade to Aubrey Cottage, and the brick tower to North End House, which add particular novelty and interest to the group. It is believed that the [slot beside the](#) long oriel window was inserted by artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones in order to pass his canvasses in and out of the building.

### ***The Grange and buildings along the east side of the Green***

The east side of the Green is lined by detached properties of varied age and quality. Despite variability in the architecture, the buildings are unified through the presence of tall flint walls to the street front, with the buildings themselves set back within individual building plots. The buildings are visible in views across the green.

Norton House (Figure 26) is particularly visible due to its height and massing. It dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century but [has](#) been much altered. A small roof terrace has been added to the south, which is a particularly intrusive feature on the skyline.

Vegetation and the flint wall screen views of the Grange (Figure 27) from the street, such that the wall and entrance are more prominent in the streetscene than the building itself. Built in c.1740, the Grange was later extended in c.1800 by Dr Hooker and further altered and extended by Sir Edward Lutyens in c.1920 for Sir George Lewis. The building was a Vicarage until c.1908, after which it became a private dwelling. In 1953 it was purchased by Brighton Corporation and now houses the museum, library and a tea shop. The building is in need of maintenance.

### ***The Dene***

The Dene is a prominent building on the Green (Figure 28). It dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was used as a racing stable by Lord St Vincent. It was rebuilt and enlarged in 1877 by ELJ Ridsdale; [father-in-law to former prime minister Stanley Baldwin](#). The building is much altered. The southern aspect fronts on to a lawned garden, bounded by a flint wall to the pavement and with the former stable block set to the east. The main entrance is located to the north and fronts directly on to the Green. Due to incremental alteration and ‘institutionalisation’, the architectural

quality of the building has been reduced. The building is nevertheless of importance historically and due to its prominent location on The Green.

### ***Buildings along the west side of the Green***

Dale Cottage dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 29). It is set back from the road behind a grassed front garden and cobbled wall, such that it has a limited presence in the streetscape. To the south, a small flint and brick stable block is attached to the building, although it is situated within the grounds of St Martha's Convent.

Set opposite The Dene, St Martha's Convent opened in 1925 (Figure 30). It is set substantially back from the street front, with a central driveway flanked by lawns and ornamental trees behind a flint wall with red brick dressings. The Roman Catholic School is set to the immediate south of the convent. It is set behind a tall pebble and red brick wall, such that it does not form part of the streetscape. The buildings are of no architectural or historic merit.

Dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century but refronted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Cavendish and Pax form an attached pair of two storey rendered buildings (Figure 31). Cavendish is set with its gable end to the road, whilst Pax is parallel to the road. The pair once formed a single dwelling. They are set behind a forecourted garden with pebble wall to the boundary.

### **Conclusion**

The Green – at the northern terminus of the High Street – forms the heart of the village. It is characterised by:

- The green and pond forming a unifying open space to the area
- High status 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century residences and St Margaret's Church fronting on to the green
- Mixture of materials, with a predominance of high quality knapped flint, brick and render
- Pitched roofs; predominantly clay tile but with some slate examples
- High flint walls providing a strong sense of enclosure and privacy in both Kipling Gardens and private gardens
- Open green space to the east emphasises the rural setting
- High levels of green space, trees and vegetation

Nevertheless, a number of intrusive features erode the historic character of the area:

- Historic architectural features generally survive well in this area, with little incremental change. There are, however, some notable exceptions: The character of the roofscape of Norton House has been harmed by the insertion of a roof terrace, and the windows to Kipling Cottage have been replaced with unsympathetic uPVC alternatives.
- High levels of traffic (relative to the size of road) and parked cars erode the character of the Green.

- Bollards around the Green are an unfortunate but necessary measure to control parking. The footpath on the west side of the green is generic and the verge here requires maintenance.

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#### **Character Area 4: The Farms (Graphic)**

The northernmost character area in the conservation area is closely related to Rottingdean's agricultural past. The majority of the buildings in the area are farm buildings, farm houses and farm workers cottages. However, the decline of farming in the village, particularly from the 1920s onwards, has led to a substantial shift in character. The area is now predominantly residential. Nearly all the farm buildings have been converted to residential use, which has been achieved with varying degrees of success. In some cases – such as Tudor Close - their former form and use is no longer apparent, yet the complex is now of historic and architectural interest in its own right. However in the majority of cases the requirements for residential use – including additional light, alternative access and the division of space has led to an erosion of character.

The area retains a mixture of large houses and smaller buildings and displays a wide variety of forms and arrangements derived from the original uses as farm buildings. The area has a spacious rural quality with a relatively loose urban grain.

Falmer Road forms the main road into Rottingdean from the north. It is lined by grass verges which promote a rural character. Its importance as the only direct access route into the village from the north means that it is also subject to high levels of traffic relative to its size, which erode its historic character.

#### **Key Buildings and Groups of Buildings**

##### ***Farmhouses***

Four large farmhouses are situated along the northern extent of the Green (Figure 32). Of these, Challoners is the most prestigious. Formerly the manor house and farmhouse of Challoners Farm, it was also historically known as Manor Farm. Much of the current building dates to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century with an early 18<sup>th</sup> century façade, although the cellars likely date to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The five-sided, two-storey porch is a prominent feature dating to 1805. The house was owned by Thomas Challoner in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, before successive generations of the Beard family resided there for nearly 300 years. The building is set back and is not orientated towards the road; set instead on higher ground and facing towards the green. It thus would have formed an important feature in views across the green prior to the enclosure of its northern half. Trees and vegetation now screen views of the building such that it is not prominent in the streetscape. Glimpsed views through the trees, particularly of the octagonal porch, highlight its private setting.

Due to their proximity to the road, Hillside and Court House both retain a clear presence in the streetscape. Court House was formerly the farmhouse of Court Farm. Its fine knapped and squared flint façade dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hillside's red and grey brick façade is also of particular architectural quality. It was built in 1724 as the farmhouse to West Side Farm. The sun insurance plaque on its front

elevation is a novel feature. The neighbouring building, 'Timbers' is converted from the main barn at West Side Farm, whilst a number of further associated structures, including a threshing barn, flint walls and garden gazebo survive to the rear of Hillside. The relationship between these buildings is an important survival, and reveals much about former agricultural practice in the village.

Down House, to the north of the Green, is the former farm house to East Side Farm. It is situated behind a tall pebble wall and a screen of mature vegetation, such that it is less prominent in the streetscape. Similar to Court House, its façade is of particularly good quality knapped and squared flint. It dates in part to 1619, although the polite architecture of the façade is Georgian.

### ***Tudor Close and Tudor Cottages***

Court Farm, to the east of the village was sold to the Saltdean Estate Company, who developed it into a complex of housing in a mock 'Tudorbethan' style named Tudor Close in 1929 (Figure 33). Sale of the properties proved difficult and it was later converted to an hotel. In 1936-7 it was extended to the designs of Richard Jones, before being reconverted into houses and flats in the 1950s. The complex incorporates two former barns and a cow shed from Court Farm, with further building materials re-used from other historic buildings in the area. The original farm buildings are shown on the 1839 Tithe Map and appear to be the buildings forming three sides of the courtyard at the eastern extremity of the complex.

The buildings are of particular special interest due to their exuberant and romantic Tudorbethan style. The complex is of a rambling plan form and displays high levels of mock timber framing; much of which is covered with decorative carving. The roofscape is complex, and contains numerous different styles of chimney. The windows are leaded throughout. [Opposite, Tudor Cottages also comprises farm buildings converted in a similar style.](#)

**Deleted:** Opposite, Tudor Cottages also comprises farm buildings converted in a similar style.

Tudor Cottages are set on the street front at the entrance to Dean Court Road and are thus prominent in this streetscape (Figure 34). Tudor Close is, on the other hand, slightly set back and at a lower level than street level, with some views also obscured by vegetation. Due to this, and to the complexity of the buildings as a group, partial views highlighting certain features and details take precedent over general views of the complex as a whole.

### ***Converted Farm buildings***

The arrangement of farm buildings comprising Court Barn, Lanterns and Pineglade are already evident on the 1839 Tithe Map. Much altered, they are set back behind a tall flint wall and wide green verge with trees. The buildings can only be glimpsed through the vegetation, and form private, secluded areas.

The 1873 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map depicts two small buildings on the site of Little Barn (probably relating to the two wings of the present building), with the current arrangement only established by the 1930 4<sup>th</sup> edition OS map. The building is U-shaped, and set on higher ground at the junction with Bazehill Road

such that it is clearly visible in the streetscape (Figure 35). Despite conversion to residential use, the building remains a positive feature in the area.

Challoners Mews (Figure 36) comprises a complex of dwellings set around a courtyard – which would originally have formed the farmyard to Challoners. Those buildings fronting the north of the yard are already evident on the 1839 tithe map, whilst the remaining buildings were constructed over the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The insertion of windows has had a negative effect on the complex, but they still retain their farmyard arrangement and are of much character, especially when viewed from the road with Beacon Hill as their backdrop.

The former barn of ‘Timbers’ (Figure 37) is set back from the road behind a cobbled wall and front garden. It is now in residential use, which has led to some erosion of original agricultural character and interest, through the insertion of domestic features such as large windows, rooflights to the rear (as visible from Beacon Hill) and an uncharacteristic electric gate. The tiled roof is unaltered to the front, and remains its prominent feature.

### **Farm Worker’s Cottages**

Challoners Cottages and Northgate Cottages comprise terraced farm workers dwellings, dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Figure 38). Historic features survive, including horizontal sliding sash windows. Challoners Cottages are also of note for their historic association with the Copper family – renowned folk singers and farmworkers – who have been associated with Rottingdean since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The modest scale of these buildings contrasts with that of the high status farmhouses. Their survival alongside the farmhouses and farmbuildings is important to an understanding of all facets of the agricultural history of Rottingdean.

### **Open Space**

#### **Verges along The Green, Falmer Road and Dean Court Road**

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A wide grass verge flanks The Green from its junction with Dean Court Road to Court Barn to the north, and along Bazehill Road. The verge contains numerous trees, which screen views to the buildings beyond and reinforces an open, rural character to this stretch of road. This is complemented by traditional surfaces including loose gravel driveways and red brick pavers to the pavements.

To the west, a further grassed area is set in front of the bowling green. This forms an open space, with clear views across to the bowling green and to Beacon Hill beyond.

Along Dean Court Road, a narrow grass verge similarly enhances the rural character of the village. This is flanked by a historic flint wall; originally associated with Challoners Farm and forming a field boundary evident on the 1839 Tithe Map. Original tethering hooks survive in the wall. The wall now forms the front boundary to later suburban houses, and continues to the east outside the area as a rear garden wall. As with other flint walls in the area, it contributes greatly to the historic character of Rottingdean, and should be preserved and maintained.

### ***The Rotyngs – Former Rottingdean School Site***

Rottingdean School was built to the north of the village in 1894, on former farmland. Although the modern development of The Rotyngs now occupies the school site, its flint wall to Falmer Road survives (Figure 39), [including part of the original entrance which now accesses Burnes Vale](#), as well as the school playing field to the west. The school field survives largely as shown on historic maps; comprising open space with a belt of trees to its northern boundary. The open character of the field is important as part of the green buffer surrounding the village, and its association with the historic development of the area. A war memorial now stands beside the trees along the northern boundary of the field.

The flint wall and grass verge along Falmer Road indicate the site of the former school. The verge, wall and associated trees and vegetation are highly visible when entering the village from the north; and are important to the gateway of the historic village. They promote a rural, sylvan quality.

### **Conclusion**

The Farms character area, located to the north of the conservation area, is comprised of buildings relating to Rottingdean's agricultural past. It is characterised by:

- A mix of prestigious farmhouses, converted farm buildings and farm worker's cottages – comprising buildings of varied scale and form
- Vernacular materials; predominantly flint elevations and clay tile roofs
- Sweeping pitched (hipped and gabled) roofs form a prominent part of many of the agricultural buildings
- High flint walls create a heightened sense of enclosure and privacy
- Grass verges and high levels of trees and vegetation create a rural atmosphere

A number of features in the area however have a negative impact on its character:

- Conversion of some of the farm buildings to residential use has led to a dilution of character. The insertion of large areas of inappropriately scaled and detailed windows, and the insertion of features into the roofscape is especially harmful. This is especially apparent with the rooflights on Squash Cottage and the dormers and windows to Challoners Mews.
- The public realm along parts of Falmer Road is somewhat generic, and its character eroded by high traffic flows.
- Replacement uPVC windows to some properties have a negative impact on the historic character of the area and streetscape; for example at Squash Court.

### **Setting**

Rottingdean Conservation Area comprises the historic core of the village. Some areas of 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban development and later infill developments are set within its surroundings. To the immediate south, Marine Drive Junction forms the main gateway to the area, whilst the seafront beyond played an important part in the village's historic development. These areas impact directly on the conservation area; one cannot be viewed without the other.

### ***Marine Drive Junction***

To the south of the conservation area, the junction between the High Street and Marine Drive – the former village crossroads - forms the main 'gateway' in to the village centre. The area was however substantially altered in the 1930s, when both the junction between Marine Drive and High Street and the seafront beyond were reworked. At this time, Marine Drive was widened and improved, buildings were demolished to form what is now the car park, whilst replacement buildings were constructed including the White Horse Hotel, Queen Victoria Public House, numbers 50-52 High Street and St Margaret's Flats.

The junction is of historic and townscape importance as the main gateway to the village and former village crossroads. However, the broad width of Marine Drive and the car park to the immediate north segregate the village from the sea and erode the sense of boundary and legibility of the junction. It now forms a largely open area dominated by traffic, parked cars and highway paraphernalia. The White Horse is the prominent built form; due to its scale, massing and strategic corner location. Although of limited architectural or historic merit in itself, it functions as a landmark and wayfinder at the gateway to the area. It is surrounded by generic hard landscaping and car parking.

The buildings along West Street (Figure 40) are of mixed quality but complement the vernacular character and scale of building in the village: To the west they comprise a short terrace of two storey Victorian dwellings. These have flint with red brick dressings or rendered elevations, pitched roofs and former windows to the street front. Some have been altered through the insertion of uPVC windows, poor quality shop fronts, balconies and poorly detailed dormers but nevertheless complement the character and historic development of the area. The modern Tesco's development has been designed to be in keeping with the area in terms of its materials and massing. Other than numbers 2 to 4 West Street, the road retains a strong building line and its buildings occupy a visually prominent location at the entrance to the village. Similarly, numbers 50-52 High Street and 51-57 Marine Drive occupy a highly visible corner position and create a clear building line. Built in the 1930s, they are of some architectural quality, and retain a strong presence at the entrance to the village.

Golden Square originally formed a courtyard of small, densely packed cottages. Although these have now been removed, the wash house remains and the space is of interest to the development of the village. The Square provides access to Park Road, but is currently underused and would benefit from improvement to its legibility and public realm. To its north, Rottingdean Public Hall on Park Road forms part of the 1930s developments in the village. It is of some architectural quality and is a well used community facility.

### **Seafront Area**

Beyond the junction, the High Street continues to the south to meet the sea (Figure 41). The association between Rottingdean and the sea is an integral part of the village's development, in terms of fishing, smuggling and later tourism. In the 1930s, the sea defences, an outdoor swimming pool and terraces were constructed – providing modern seafront facilities.

The current character and appearance of the seafront area dates primarily to the 1930s. The terraces are an interesting seafront feature of this period, but are currently underused and somewhat neglected in appearance. The current condition of the toilet block also detracts from the area.

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The seafront is accessed along the High Street; where it extends to the south of the junction with the Marine Drive. It is flanked to the east by buildings of varied age and height. These include one storey shops to the north which are of little architectural merit, Victorian three storey structures, and 20<sup>th</sup> century flats to the south. The Victorian buildings comprise three architectural pieces that match in their overall design (each being three windows in width with two canted bay windows rising their full height) but have been subject to differing subsequent alteration. Despite these alterations, they remain of architectural and historic interest. St Margaret's Flats were built in the 1930s but have been substantially refurbished. They are of a much larger scale and massing than the other buildings, and are thus clearly visible in the streetscape and in views from the beach. A further late 20<sup>th</sup> century block of flats is particularly prominent in views from the beach, but is of little architectural merit. The public realm throughout the seafront area is poor and the terraces are now underused. There is potential for substantial enhancement in this area.

### **Suburban Development**

To the immediate north of the conservation area, The Rotyngs and Burnes Vale comprise modern developments. They were built on the site of Rottingdean School and later Rottingdean Memorial Convalescent Home,

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The Rotyngs follows a suburban arrangement, with detached buildings set in individual plots. It is not in keeping with the morphology or character of the conservation area. Built in 2001, Burnes Vale has been executed as a series of architectural pieces, in vernacular materials (predominantly flint) such that its character is sympathetic to that of the conservation area.

Little suburban development has occurred to the west; with expansion limited to the area of Nevill Road, Park Road and Marine Drive. 'The Cape' is a modern development on Marine Drive whose scale, massing and style are unsympathetic to the character of the area. It is prominent on the skyline when viewed from the conservation area and thus has a negative impact on the area.

To the east, suburban development continues so that the boundary between Rottingdean and neighbouring Saltdean is merged. The remaining area of open



downland is visible on the skyline and allows Rottingdean to still be viewed in a rural setting. The playing field on Steyning Road/Newlands Road also provides a clear distinction between the historic village and the surrounding development, particularly in views from Beacon Hill.

### **Summary of Special Interest**

Rottingdean is an historic downland settlement, whose development as an agricultural village has been influenced by its coastal location, numerous famous residents and its later popularity as a tourist destination. The village green and adjacent high status residences and medieval church form the heart of the area, and is historically associated with many former artistic and literary inhabitants. The linear street of the High Street forms the area's commercial focus, which services a vibrant community. Buildings are of varied form and date, but the area is unified through the use of traditional materials. Flint elevations and clay tile roofs predominate, whilst the pavements are mainly of red clay pavers. Steep pitched clay tile roofs and chimney stacks create interest on the skyline; the sweeping roofs of former farm buildings are particularly prominent within this.

Narrow roads and buildings fronting directly onto the street (sometimes without any pavement) promote a clear sense of enclosure. To the north, grass verges create a rural character, but a sense of enclosure is nevertheless retained through high walls and dense vegetation. Flint walls throughout the area are particularly important to its special interest.

The conservation area contains much green space; of which the green is the most important. Bounded and divided by high flint walls, Kipling Gardens is of a contrasting character and has much in keeping with the many private walled gardens in the area. Further open spaces to the east and west of the conservation area are important to its rural setting, and create a 'green buffer' around the village that distinguishes it from surrounding suburban development.

Similarly, the wider landscape setting of the village is also particularly important. The village has clear historic associations with the sea; although the existing seafront dates mostly to the 1930s. Clear views are apparent between the village, the sea and surrounding downland; especially towards Beacon Hill and the windmill. The village can also be viewed in its rural and coastal context from surrounding downland. These visual links are compounded by the survival of a number of historic lanes – including Hog Plat and Whiteway Lane – which provide a direct physical link to the downs.

In summary, Rottingdean forms an important downland settlement of substantial historic character.

### **Boundary Review**

The conservation area boundary currently largely defines the extent of the surviving historic village. It is generally legible and coherent. The following boundary amendments are however proposed:

A. The area on the flanks of Beacon Hill comprises gardens and allotments to the rear of properties on the Green. They retain a number of historic outbuildings and flint walls. The 1839 tithe map indicates that this area already formed rear spaces and flint walled gardens to the Green properties by this time. The area is also prominent in views to Beacon Hill and the windmill from within the village. It thus merits inclusion in the conservation area.

B. The boundary to the rear of the RC Church of Our Lady of Lourdes requires revision, as it currently runs through the middle of a building and is therefore incoherent on the ground. The vicarage at Eastfield, Steyning Road, is not currently included within the conservation area. It dates to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and forms a group with similarly detailed dwellings to the east. These buildings are associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century suburban growth on the outskirts of the village, rather than with the character of the historic village, and therefore do not merit inclusion in their own right. However, Eastfield is associated with the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (an important building in the conservation area) and located within its curtilage, with a flint wall of considerable character to its front boundary. The full extent of the church curtilage should be included to provide a logical boundary to the conservation area.

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C. A strip of land comprising part of the rear gardens of properties along The Rotyns is currently including in the conservation area. This area ~~is~~ although previously part of the playing field ~~is~~ now displays a suburban garden character of no historic merit. It is therefore recommended for removal from the area.

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D. The current boundary around Nevill Road is incoherent on the ground and therefore requires adjustment. An area of poorly maintained hard surfacing – forming the setting to late 20<sup>th</sup> century developments - is currently included, which creates a particularly disjointed streetscape. The Chinese restaurant is a much-altered early 20<sup>th</sup> century building with a curved frontage. The premises of the Rottingdean Electricity Company Ltd, which was established in 1897, were located on this site, but no longer exist. Further modern development in traditional vernacular materials is set to the rear. This area is of no special architectural or historic interest and is proposed for removal from the conservation area. Beyond this, numbers 18, 20 and 22 Nevill Road comprise a late 19<sup>th</sup> century terrace of considerable historic character, and merit designation as a locally listed building.

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E. Golden Square forms part of the historic village of Rottingdean. Formerly a courtyard of small one-up-one-down cottages, the cottages have since been demolished. The associated wash-house survives, and the space is an important part of the development of the village. The square also forms a useful through-route from West Street to Park Road. Golden Square is therefore recommended for inclusion. West Street, Park Terrace and Rottingdean Public Hall similarly form part of the historic village, and part of the gateway to the area. They have, however, been subject to substantial alteration such that they are no longer of sufficient interest to merit protection through inclusion in the area.

**Deleted:** The area has, however, been subject to later alteration and infill development, which has diluted its historic character. Buildings within the area nevertheless retain some historic character, and merit further protection through inclusion in the conservation area or as locally listed buildings.¶

F. The flint wall on Dean Court Road – formerly associated with Challoners farm – and evident on the 1839 Tithe Map – is of considerable historic character. The

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boundary currently abuts the western extent of the wall. The boundary should be clarified to ensure that this wall is included,

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Other Areas. The playing field at Steyning Road/Newlands Road, Marine Drive junction and the seafront area are of particular importance to the setting of the conservation area. The playing field defines a strong edge to the historic village whilst Marine Drive and the seafront area are important to the village's historic development and as a gateway to the area. Their current character and appearance, however, is not of historic or architectural interest. The playing field displays a modern urban recreational character, whilst that of Marine Drive and the seafront is largely 20<sup>th</sup> century in character, with a poor public realm and dominated by cars. As such, these areas do not meet the current criteria for designation as a conservation area, and are therefore not recommended for inclusion.

### **Article 4(1) Direction**

There is a high level of survival of historic features in the conservation area. Most properties for example retain their original windows, roof coverings and boundary walls, which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the area. There are however a few examples where incremental change has had a harmful impact on the conservation area:

UPVC windows have been installed in a few properties, including Kipling Cottage and Squash Court on The Green and Brookside and St Ives on Steyning Road. This erodes the historic integrity and appearance of the buildings and the area.

Clay tile roofs and chimneys create a characterful skyline. The sweeping roofs of some of the agricultural buildings are particularly characteristic of the area. Alien features inserted into such roofscapes, such as rooflights, solar panels, vents and flues, have an extremely harmful impact on their character and appearance. This is evident in the rooflights inserted into Squash Cottage, The Green, the balcony on Norton Cottage, The Green and the poorly detailed dormer windows on Challoners Mews. It is important to preserve and enhance existing plain roofs which form a characteristic part of the skyline.

Flint walls of varied heights are present throughout the conservation area, creating a clear sense of enclosure that is important to the area's character. The demolition of boundary walls above a certain height is controlled in the area; however low walls can currently be demolished without consent. The loss of these walls would erode the building line and therefore have a harmful impact on the character of the area.

Although still relatively few in number, these incremental changes show that there is a threat to the area from alterations that are permitted without planning permission. As such, an Article 4(1) Direction under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 is recommended. This would remove permitted development rights for the area, in order to retain control over how and where such alterations occur and to minimise the impact this will have on the character and appearance of the area. This will help to prevent the gradual degradation of the special interest of the area as a whole.

## **Policy and Proposals**

Historic features are important to the character of the area. Where these have been lost, their reinstatement should be encouraged.

Flint walls make a major contribution to the special character of the conservation area and merit a programme of maintenance, repair and reinstatement, in accordance with best 'traditional' practice. Those walls that contribute to the streetscene should be considered for local listing.

Existing tree cover contributes positively to the character of the area. This should be maintained and where opportunities arise, appropriately enhanced. Views from the area – especially the green – to open downland, Beacon Hill and the windmill – should however not be obscured.

The open spaces around the village that form part of the 'green buffer' are important in distinguishing the village from the surrounding suburban development and highlighting its originally rural setting. These areas should remain predominantly open and green.

Large private gardens with flint walls and mature vegetation are characteristic of The Green and The Farms areas, and promote a spacious, secluded and genteel character. Gardens should remain predominantly green. Presumption should be against the subdivision of plots.

Views to the open downland surrounding Rottingdean village are particularly important in maintaining its rural setting. Views of Beacon Hill and Rottingdean Windmill are also extremely important to the village's identity. Development should not obscure these views. Development on the fringe of the conservation area will impact on the setting of the conservation area; all development within the valley as a whole should be considered in light of its impact on the conservation area. Its scale, design and materials should be in keeping with the character of its surroundings and should not harmfully disrupt the skyline. The Tesco's development on West Street and Burnes Vale on Falmer Road comprise good examples of new development on the fringe of the conservation area; both being of a sensitive scale, using traditional materials and being well-detailed.

Red brick pavers along pavements and kerbs throughout the area are in keeping with its historic character and help distinguish the area from its surroundings. The loose gravel surface on Whipping Post Lane also serves to enhance the rural character of the area. These surfaces should be maintained, with repairs carefully matched to the original. Traditional surfaces – such as gravel and red brick pavers - should be laid when opportunities arise. If lamp standards require replacement, these should be replaced with 19<sup>th</sup> century designs. A consistent approach to the public realm should be sought throughout the area.

The gateway area – including West Street and the Marine Drive Junction – form a particularly important part of the setting of the conservation area and gateway to the village. Future improvements to this area should be particularly sensitively designed and implemented.

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Heavy traffic levels have a harmful impact on the historic character of the village. Future traffic management should be sensitively handled, and appropriately designed.

Numbers 18, 20 and 22 Nevill Road comprise a short terrace of flint cottages constructed in 1890. It is a particularly picturesque group displaying a high level of uniformity. Tudor Cottages on Dean Court Road comprise farm buildings converted in the 1930s in a Tudorbeathan style, similar to Tudor Close. Set on the street front at the entrance to Dean Court Road, they are prominent in the streetscene. The Victorian post box in the wall beside Hog Plat is also a notable feature. These buildings and structures merit inclusion on the council's local list of buildings of special architectural and/or historic interest. Numbers 9-11, 17 and 18 West Street, Park Terrace and Rottingdean Public Hall form part of the historic village and gateway to the village. These buildings should also be considered for inclusion on the council's local list.

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**Further Reading**

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Field Code Changed

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