



DITCHLING CONSERVATION AREA



CHARACTER APPRAISAL

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Bench in the churchyard with a view to the South Downs

I.1 PURPOSE OF THIS APPRAISAL

This “Conservation Area Appraisal” seeks to record and define the special architectural and historic interest of the Ditchling Conservation Area, as a way of ensuring that the conservation area is both preserved and enhanced (as required by the legislation) for future generations.

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. 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*”. It is the quality and interest of a whole area, rather than that of individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying a conservation area.

Section 71 of the same Act requires local planning authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas. Section 72 specifies that, in making a decision on an application for development in a conservation

area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

This appraisal therefore satisfies the requirements of the legislation by defining the special character and appearance of the Ditchling Conservation Area, and by setting out a number of recommendations for its preservation and enhancement. It therefore provides a firm basis on which all new applications for development within, or on the edge of, the Ditchling Conservation Area can be assessed.

I.2 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Following the approval of a first draft by Lewes District Council, copies of this appraisal and the accompanying maps were provided for local amenity groups, East Sussex County Council, and English Heritage. A copy was posted onto the Council’s website and a press release sent to local papers. Two months were allowed for comments to be submitted, after which the final draft was completed. This appraisal was approved by Lewes District Council on December 2007 as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).



Ditchling Museum

1.3 THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Policies which seek the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas are set out in the Lewes District Local Plan which was adopted in March 2003 (Policies H4-H8). The Council is currently drawing up revised policies as part of its Local Development Framework (LDF), which will ultimately replace Local Plans. This appraisal will form part of the LDF and will be supplemented in

due course by a further document (Ditchling Conservation Area Management Proposals) which will set out a programme for improvements and monitoring.

This document should also be read in conjunction the East Sussex Structure Plan and national planning policy guidance, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) – Planning and the Historic Environment.



Wings Place, West Street



Postbox in East End Lane

2 SUMMARY OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST

2.1 KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The special architectural and historic interest of Ditchling Conservation Area derives from a number of factors including:

- The village's historic cross-shaped street pattern and layout;
- The rural setting of the village in a pastoral landscape with views of the South Downs;
- The predominance of St. Margaret's Church which holds a prominent position on a knoll above the village and is a local landmark;
- The architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, 49 of which are listed;
- Ditchling's historic role as a centre for the practice of non-conformist Christian denominations, continuing to this day in three extant non-conformist meeting houses/chapels in the village centre i.e. The Old Meeting House (Unitarian); Quaker Friends Meeting House; and the Emmanuel Chapel; and additionally a strict Baptist Chapel straddling the Northern boundary of the Parish;
- The prevalent use of local building materials in buildings and walls, notably timber framing, red clay tile, brick and flint;
- The picturesque area of the pond, Village Green and War Memorial between Old Manor House and St Margaret's Church;
- The area's trees and other vegetation particularly where this bounds a road, footpath or public place;
- The variety of construction and building materials used for boundary walls and railings;
- Its significant agricultural and sand-quarrying heritage much of the evidence of which still exists;
- The village's associations with notable early 20th century artists and craftspeople;
- The tranquil village atmosphere of East End Lane and the space in front of Pardons and East End House;
- Distinctive local features and details (e.g. red clay paviers, Sarsen stones, historic post boxes and old lighting columns) that give the village its special identity.



East End House



Wings Place, West Street

2.2 JUSTIFICATION FOR DESIGNATION

Located at the foot of the South Downs below Ditchling Beacon, Ditchling is a small historic village not far from Brighton in East Sussex. The village is set in open countryside and there are fine views out of the village to the South Downs. The village is famous for its association with Eric Gill, calligrapher and stone carver, and other artists and craftspeople who came to live in Ditchling in the early 20th century.

Ditchling is first recorded in a written document in A.D. 765 and, 300 years later, is noted in the Domesday Book as possessing a church and a mill. The village's historic origins are still apparent in Ditchling Conservation Area which covers the village's ancient street pattern and contains 49 listed buildings. The most notable are the grade I listed St Margaret's Church, which dates mainly from the 13th century, and a picturesque 16th century brick and timber-framed dwelling known as *Wings Place*, also listed grade I.

2.3 BOUNDARIES AND EXTENT OF THE CONSERVATION AREA

Ditchling Conservation Area was first designated on 7th October 1969 (the first conservation area to be designated in Lewes District) and was extended on 14th September 1992.

The boundaries of Ditchling Conservation Area have been drawn to include the historic core of Ditchling and encompass almost all of the village's pre-1900 buildings with significant examples of architecture and building from the 12th to the 19th centuries.

All of the buildings and spaces beside the main north-south thoroughfare (North End, High Street, South Street) are included from the junction of Beacon Road to North End House.

In the eastern part of the village, the boundary encloses the whole length of East End Lane, a historic route through the village, from the High

Street to Lewes Road. Some unremarkable 20th century development that does not make a positive contribution to the special historic interest of the area has not been included, for example, Fieldway, The Dymocks and East Gardens.

The remainder of the village west of the High Street has been included because of the special architectural and historic interest of St Margaret's Church and environs, the buildings of Lodge Hill Lane and West Street, and the distinctive and picturesque area of the Village Green and pond. An area of open land on the outskirts of the village, north of Clayton Road, has been included in the conservation area in order to protect its landscape setting.

This appraisal includes a recommendation, detailed in Chapter 9 for the addition of two areas into the conservation area, one along Lewes Road, the other along Beacon Road.

The Watermen's Homes Conservation Area is a separate conservation area with a distinctively different character and appearance that lies just to the north of the Ditchling Conservation Area.



Church of St Margaret



The church is roofed with clay tile and Horsham stone slabs