



THE PARK CLOSE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Contact; customerfirst@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Customer First
Eastbourne Borough Council
Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne
East Sussex, BN21 4UG

Also available to view and download free at:
www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

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1 Introduction

Decisions relating to changes within Conservation Areas are made in line with the relevant policies set out in the Development Plan. This appraisal will help to inform decisions made under policies and guidance documents and should therefore be taken into account when seeking to make changes in The Park Close Conservation Area. No appraisal can ever be completely comprehensive and omission of any particular building, outbuilding, feature, landscaping, material or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

The Appraisal evaluates the special character and appearance of The Park Close Conservation Area, reviews the Conservation Area boundary, identifies what makes it a unique and special place, and sets out a management plan.

The Park Close Conservation Area covers a small area of 1.255 Hectares (Map 1 Appendix A)

A Conservation Area would normally be divided onto Character Areas, however given the discrete boundary to The Park Close, arising from the historic origins of this development, there are no such divisions. However, within The Park Close, there exist boundaries based not only on architectural, landscape or historic characteristics, but also on the dynamic experience of the area – how it is perceived when walking, cycling, playing or driving within it, and when ‘boundaries of experience’ are crossed. This includes such sensations as awareness of enclosure or openness, and degrees of noise or activity, which can provide edges to areas just as much as map-based boundaries. These boundaries, real or perceived may shift with time.

The Management Plan in Section 6 contains proposals that seek to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of The Park Close Conservation Area.

This appraisal is to read in conjunction with the following companion documents, The Eastbourne Townscape Guide SPG, Conservation Areas in Eastbourne and English Heritage; Guidance Manual for the Designation and Review of Conservation Areas.

2 Summary of Special Interest

The Park Close, built in 1935 onwards as a planned development, lies to the North West of the town, between Gildredge Park and Old Town.

This area of the town was left largely undeveloped until the construction of Gildredge Manor in 1776, with its associated park, running South towards the Compton Place Estate, which although established in 1556, enjoyed an enlarged scheme, and grounds reportedly landscaped by Repton.

The area of Eastbourne known as Old Town, in which The Park Close sits, was largely developed in the 1850's and onwards as the living quarters for the serving classes who ensured the Middle Classes, drawn to Eastbourne by the fashionable resort, and the advent of the Railway, could be kept in the comfortable style to which they were accustomed. Within the area of Old Town, bordering the Gildredge park, the Golf Course and the Downs, are situated many fine Victorian Villas and grand homes, where the residents could enjoy the convenience and diversions of the town, without enduring the smoke from the hundreds of chimneys.

The Figg Map, of 1817 (below) shows the low level of development of the area,



The Figg Map of 1817 – Field 190 shows the location of The Park Close

with the field marked 190 as the eventual site of the Close. Many of the streets in this area of the town were built as strip fields and were sold, or relinquished to development, and gives rise to our modern street pattern. The diversity of character from street to street arose as speculative builders built and sold houses, and gradually large gardens became developed. This pattern of infill had given rise to many streets around The Park Close, for example The Greys – A Victorian house in large grounds just to the north of field 190 became Greys Road. Remnants of these larger homes which existed are visible in the characteristic flint, stone and brick walling, mature trees and in some cases the houses themselves remain nestled among the subsequent development.

The Park Close, a 1930's development, embraced by a wall of much earlier origin, sits within an area of large Victorian Villas and connected to the Park to which it owes its name.

This appraisal seeks to prevent inappropriate development by identifying the special architectural and historic interest of The Close and by suggesting ways in which the Conservation Area can be preserved and enhanced for future generations.

Location, Setting and Boundary Review



The Park Close – From The Air. Compton Place Road and Gildredge Park are to the top of the Image, with the North point to the left

The Park Close is a wholly residential development, set out as a planned piece and constructed in the 1930's. The Close sits within the walls of a previous house, Northfield Grange. It is bounded by Compton Place Road to the East, which borders Gildredge Park. To the North is Vicarage Road and to the South Beechwood Crescent. Of these, Beechwood Crescent is the most modern of the neighbours – A 1980's close of small groups of terraced homes. Vicarage Road is typified by three or four storey late Victorian or Edwardian Villas. The Wall around The Park Close is of a distinctive flint construction, capped with brick. That along the wall of Gildredge Park is of flint construction. Both of which are typical of the town. The setting of the Park, now surrounded by housing, was once in a more open setting, connecting it visually with The Park to the East, and the Downs to the West. Until the urban development of the 1860's this area was rural and open, having been farmed or grazed continually since 4,000 BCE.



The entrance to The Park Close, viewed from Vicarage Road

Relationship to the rest of Eastbourne

The Park Close is a self contained development, walled and accessed through a pair of gate piers, issuing on to the Compton Place Road, Vicarage Road and Borough Lane Junction. The houses all face a central green space, and turn their back onto Compton Place Road. A small access gate forms a connection between the Close and the Gildredge Park. This was part of the original layout, and although no longer used, embodies the relationship of The Close with the Park. In particular The Hermitage; used by Residents for events and parties. The Park has no thoroughfare, and enjoys seclusion, although its visual contribution of the rhythm of houses in plots and their distinctive architectural style along Compton Place Road is considerable.

Conservation Area Boundary Review.

As part of this appraisal, a review of the existing Park Close Conservation Area boundary was undertaken. Given its distinct margin, it is considered that the existing boundary is satisfactory and no changes are recommended.

3 History of the Development

The Tithe maps of 1734 – 1755 show no concentrated urban development in this area of the town between Meads and Motcombe. Open grazing, with strip fields in the flatter land towards what is now the town centre and seafront promenade are shown, with strip fields which from their dimensions would appear to be remnants of the strip system which was prevalent from around 1200 BCE until the Mediaeval period. The pattern still remained, and is still visible in the layout of our streets, they fell into private ownership, and subsequent sale. This piecemeal development gives rise to the pattern of architecture on a street by street basis (or field by field).

Until the mid nineteenth century, there was little in the way of urban development where The Close now stands. The villages of Meads to the South West, and Motcombe to the North were all that existed at that time. In the Figg Map of 1816, some ribbon development is shown growing along the road which climbs steeply to the West towards East Dean and the Downs. A number of military encampments and barracks were established along the western fringes of what is now Old Town; clues still remain in the street names bordering the Golf Courses.

In 1817 the engravings shown below illustrate the setting of the area of town which was a managed rural idyll. Laid out as parkland, this was a tamed little wilderness with set carriage drives, hermitages, view points, and conceived nature. The images below are inevitably made to show the Gildredge Park to its best advantage. The Hermitage, clearly visible in the left hand image would now show the Park Close directly behind it, and the view to the right, is the view from what is now Compton Place Road.



Above Left: View from Gildredge Park towards the Hermitage and setting of The Park Close
Above Right: View from Compton Place Road at the current location of The Park Close

By 1883, large areas of the town had been developed. Henry Currey's development of accommodation and the amusements of the Devonshire Park was established, the railways brought the middle classes to holiday, and the Town was becoming viewed as a desirable place to establish a permanent family home.

Ten years before this map was drawn up, in 1873, G F Chambers Esq had built Northfield Grange, on what was Field 190 on the Figg Map of 1817. He was a well connected gentleman, a JP and keen astronomer. He wrote several books on the subject and had an Observatory built into the house, seen in the illustration below as the tower to the right. The clear light and lack of light pollution being situated away from the town with its innovative electric and gas street lights would have made this an excellent site for such an observatory.



Northfield Grange, from Vicarage Road – Then Known as Love Lane.
Showing the Observatory to the right.

Chambers was well regarded in his field, and wrote other notable books during his time at Northfield, including *A Handbook To Eastbourne*, *A Tourists Guide to Sussex* and the much used *Chambers Guide* ; a local list of services and crafts people, including a directory of residents.

4 Analysis of the Special Interest of The Park Close Conservation Area

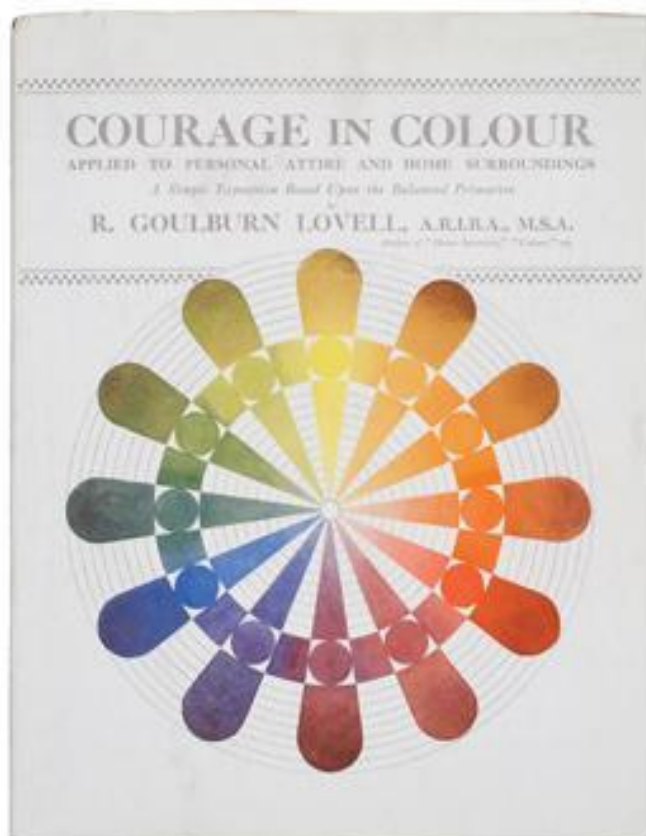
The Park Close was constructed on the land occupied by Northfield Grange. The Chambers Family vacated the property in 1902, and seems to have been rented after that point. After WWI, as was the case with many large family homes, a lack of servants and a change in lifestyle and domestic situations, the house became increasingly redundant. Electoral Records show it occupied by three unrelated tenants until 1925.

The Architect, Richard Goulburn Lovell (1861-1937) was commissioned, to construct a desirable development of 20 new homes on the site. The venture was financed by The Park Close Ltd, a company registered in Millbank, London.

The ambitious and innovative design was to set out twenty individual homes, each within a garden, with a design which drew from Arts & Crafts detail, the Tudor vernacular and cutting edge technologies.

Richard Goulburn Lovell was an influential Architect. Active in architectural education and training, he originated the Wells Street Atelier, in which instruction was set up along Beaux Arts lines. Lovell travelled extensively from 1885, and took classes in art, sculpture and drawing in Paris, New York, Egypt and the Far East and North and South America.

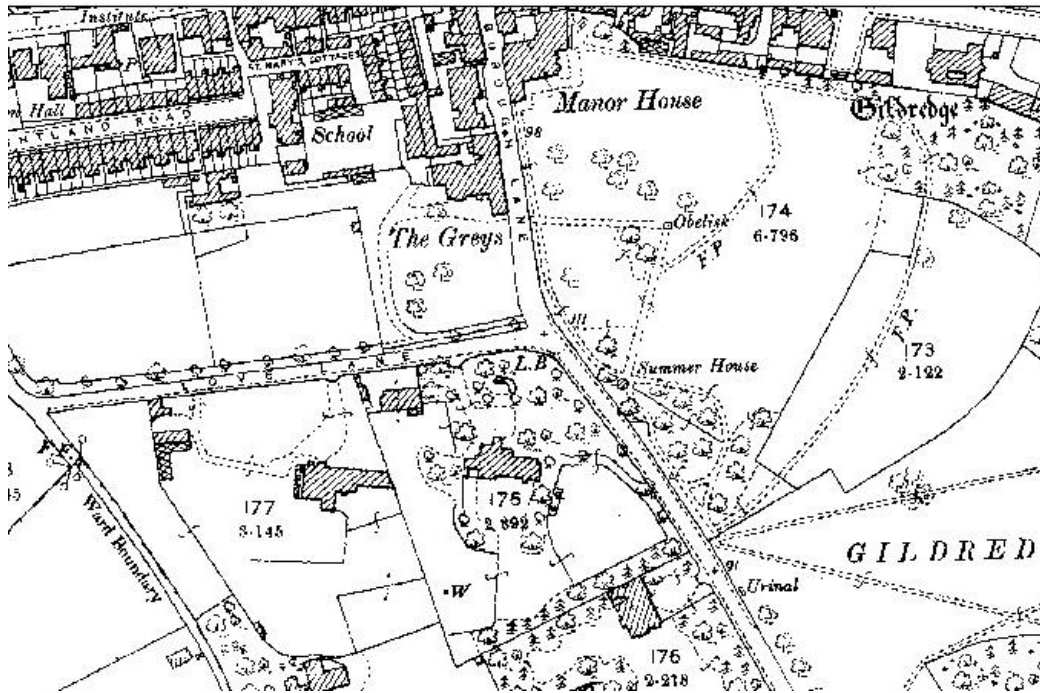
Goulburn Lovell lived in Eastbourne between 1912-1914 at St Moritz, Upper Drive. The house no longer exists, and it is unclear where he moved to, or why.



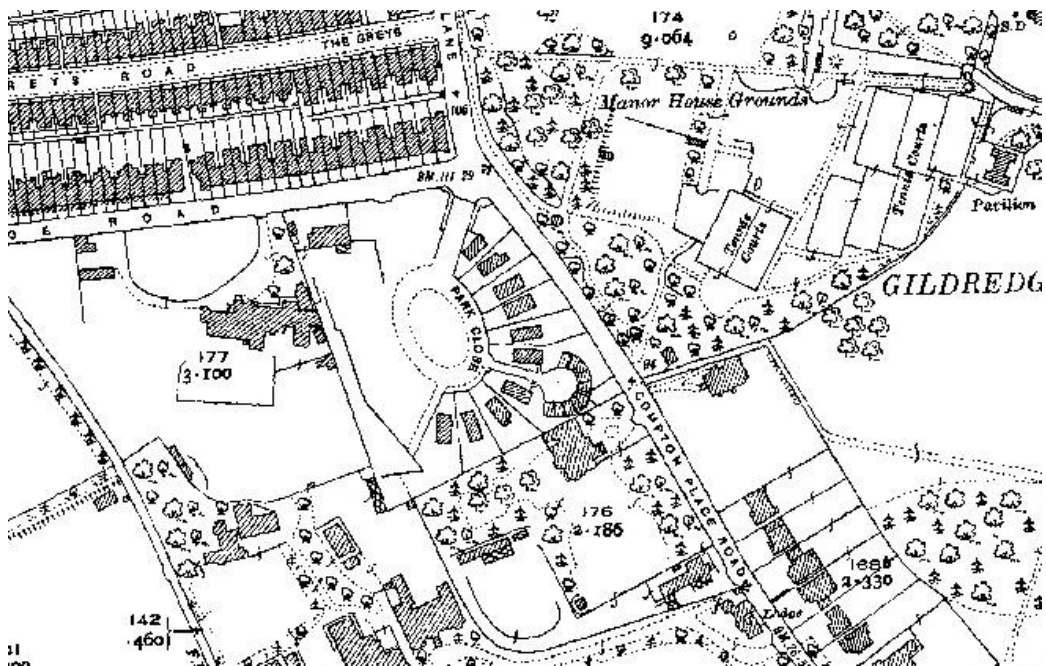
Goulburn Lovell clearly had diverse interests, and registered a patent for recycled fuel made from household waste and wrote several books on colour theory, relating to dress and the home. He was also interested in public health. He was involved with the Spahlinger treatments for Tuberculosis, in the 1930's when vaccines were being developed.

Left; An example of Goulburn Lovells books relating to colour theory

Healthy living, open spaces and fresh air were a popular driving force in architecture across Europe and North America in the 1930's – Contemporary architects of The International Style embodied this. Goulburn Lovell was able to draw from his extensive travels, an architectural upbringing in the Arts & Crafts movement and an interest in modern science to develop the Park Close as aspirational and healthy living, providing economy to the modern family.



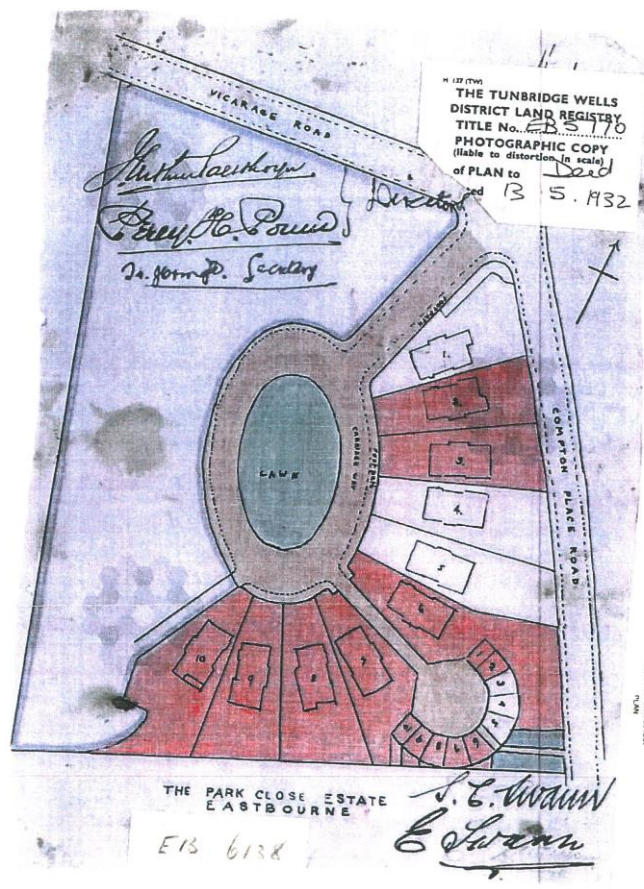
The Map of 1899, shown below, clearly marks Northfield Grange, set in its gardens., and its connection with Gildredge Park, to the East. The development of The Park Close is clearly underway by 1925, as shown by the 1925 map.



The development was conceived as one sweep of twenty homes, arranged around a central oval of grass, planted with roses. The relatively rural setting was entered by a set of iron gates, topped by lanterns. It is clear that in 1925, the Close had been partially built. It seems likely that the development of the second set was delayed. The cause of this delay is unverified, but may have been due in part to the economic crash of 1929. Speculative building slowed in the uncertain economic market.

The original layout of two ranges of ten homes, each with separate garage block was never realised. Promotional literature shows the intended layout, however the intervening years and the growing popularity of the motor car enabled a revised design to be built for houses amongst numbers 11-20, with integral parking, accommodated by the slight rise in land level.

Following approval for plans in 1929, individual submissions for numbers 11-20, following a revised plan, were submitted by P D Stonham FRIBA & Son Chartered Architect and Surveyors of Hadley House Eastbourne. The delay between phases explains the lack of the second garage court, with the dwellings backing onto what is now Vicarage lane having garages and gates to the rear of the properties.



This Land Registry document from 1932 clearly shows the partial development of The Park Close, with garaging and land for the remaining homes and garages.

The development was heavily promoted through booklets, articles and at the Ideal Homes Exhibition.

The Homes were designed along clear principles of design. Firstly, the use of Arts & Crafts style relating to interior and exterior design. The use of traditional materials of brick, clay peg tile and richly carved wood to the exterior echoes the principles of Tudor design. Wind braces, jetties, pleasing detailed chimney stacks and oriel windows with leaded lights contribute to the monochrome palette, although the outward appearance conceals more contemporary design.

The walls are constructed of solid Ferrocete and brick, thought to insulate and provide an environment free of damp. The timbers to upper levels and the decorative bargeboards are intentionally left unpainted, as with the interior joinery, to reduce maintenance costs.



Left; No 20 The Park Close. To the Western entrance to the Close, No.20 shows many details typical of these houses; Timber upper floor, jetty, leaded lights, clay peg-tiled roof in a form close to that of the 1500's. The contemporary detail lies in the eyebrow window arches, entrance steps and technologies within the home.

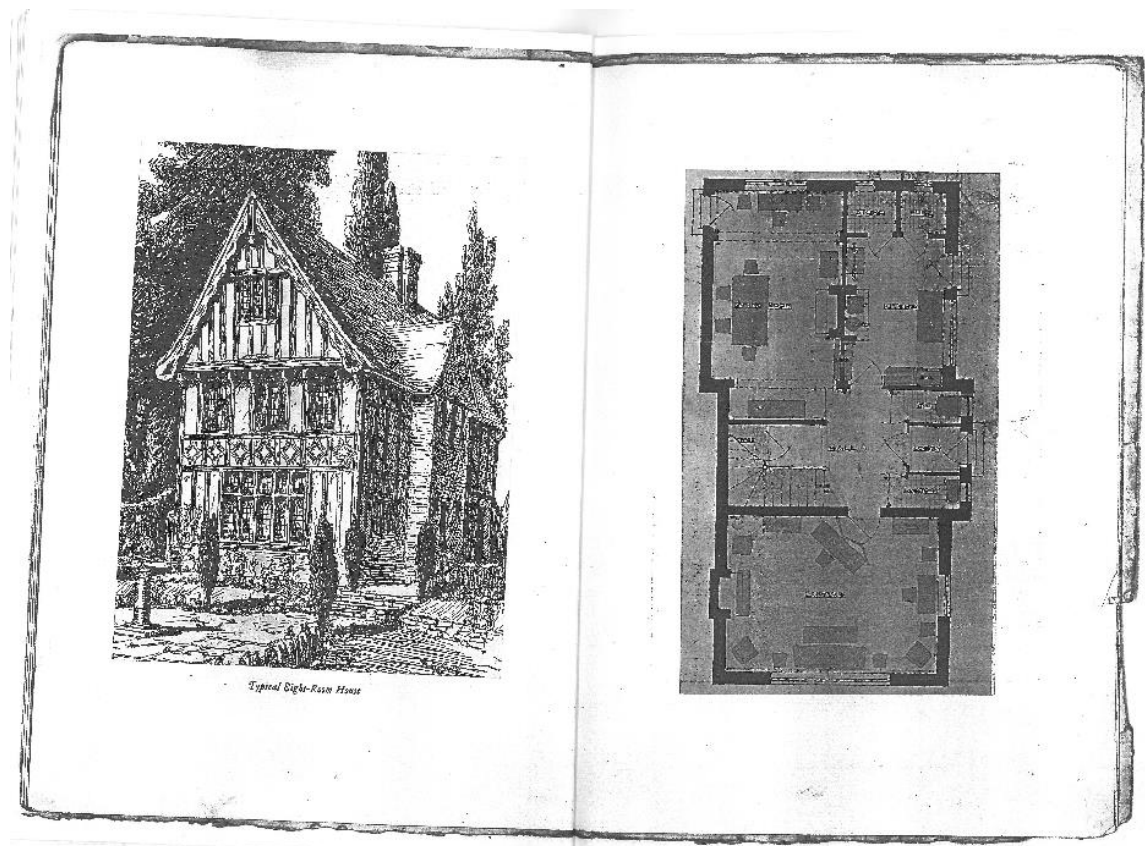
Right; Bayleaf, a traditional Wealden hall house at The Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton. The vernacular style.



The interiors are laid out at ground floor level to a tripartite design traditional in England from the late Saxon period until the Georgian period, when domestic layouts shifted. The access through a porched entrance, with one large roomed living accommodation to the left, and service accommodation to the right. The hall benefited from a WC, and a Toilet – The latter to facilitate the washing of hands, and was separate from the WC as was considered healthy and

followed the middle class preference of a separate room for ladies to remove hats etc.

The exterior environment of the homes was improved by the use of a concrete driveway to reduce dust associated with gravel, and the low maintenance of small gardens without hedges.



From *The Park Close* by Peter Varley. This contemporary account promotes the many benefits of the close and was written before the second phase of the development was realised. The images are schematic, but show the layout and facilities in the design.

The service end of the house comprised a spacious kitchen, with boiler, which fed the central heating system and provided hot running water to the kitchen and bathrooms – even to the maids attic bedroom. The houses were filled with warm air, ducted to rooms through carved oak grilles, and provided accommodation largely without fireplaces (except in the living room), or radiators. This very modern convenience would have freed a housemaid from the laborious tasks of laying and cleaning grates, and the dust generated. The efficient running of the household is promoted in the promotional booklet (Appendix E). The lack of available domestic help led to Goulburn Lovell introducing hard flooring and tiles, a lack of brass work, which would be easy for a daily maid to keep clean. The window glass used is mentioned by Varley in his book *Park Close – An Appreciation*, as 'beneficial to health, letting in ultra violet rays so stimulating to health, yet destructive to microbes'. In those pre-antibiotic days, *The Park Close* was promoted in Varleys leaflet as 'healthy, fresh living', new technologies were sometimes included, and promoted as the reason for investing in a property. Mortgages were newly available to the middle classes, who often chose to move out of large cities to enjoy such benefits. (See also Appendix F – *Park Close Advertisement*).

It is probable that the glass used was Vitaglass – This newly formed technology was a product of the heliotherapy boom where sunlight was successful in treating both rickets and tuberculosis. The image of the physically fit, suntanned body was epitomised as the outward image of health. The ancient relationship between

sunlight, air, food and health had been revived with the fashion for taking cures in Switzerland and the Continent. Chance Bros. discovered using a low level of ferrous oxide allowed UV to penetrate the glass. Pilkington Glass heavily promoted the product, and it was used by leading modernists in the 1930s.



Advertisement for Vita Glass, Architectural Review, 1935
 The glass was used by schools and health centers, and is referred to in popular literature of the time as a benchmark for well engineered, modern design.

Views and Vistas

Because of the layout of The Park Close as an oval within a square wall, the environment is essentially inward-looking and does not form strong visual relationships with the surrounding streets. (see Appendix D Map 2 Views & Vistas). The main vista from the public realm is at the Compton Place Road / Vicarage Road / Borough Land conflagration. The principal view from The Close at street level is through this entrance, flanked by gateposts. The view looking North up Compton Place Road reveals the rear and side elevations of No.1 – 6 in particular, and their rear elevations and roofscapes contribute to the character of this area. The original wall to Northfield Grange encompasses the development, and is a heritage asset.



Above: Vista looking South down Compton Place Road.
Below: Vista looking down Vicarage Road



Within the close, the vista is an uninterrupted view from the front façade of each dwelling to that of the buildings opposite. The open nature of this environment lacks any kind of wall or fencing, and is punctuated by the grass oval.



Vista into The Close from the entrance from Vicarage Road, between No 1 and No 20 The Park Close.

From the upper floors of the properties No.1 – No. 10, there exist commanding views over the town to the sea.

Building Styles and Materials

The dwellings numbered 1-10 inclusive are to the eastern side of the Close, and were built in one phase, with a garage block and generally follow the same layout with the porched side entrance. The houses follow the same principles of design, but each is subtly different. Houses numbered 11-20 have integral garages, or no garage and have steps up to a front door, located on the principal elevation. The two houses flanking the entrance are noticeably different and form a definite gate house formation, with their entrances facing the driveway into The Close. No.20 is illustrated on the preceding page. No. 1 has an especially ornate sequence of approach from the street. First through the gate way – which originally had wrought iron gates, then under a small gate – somewhat like a lych gate in style, formed of carved oak, with a cedar shingle roof and oak gate. The elaborately carved stone door surround, with Arts & Crafts style ironmongery, leaded lights door detail. The bricks used may have been re-used, perhaps from Northfield Grange after it was demolished. The bricks used in No 1-20, the garage block and in the boundary walls is fairly consistent, with a variation on the opposing side of The Close.



The entrance to No.1
The gate to the left and Arts & Crafts style detail
to the door and entrance

The garden walls are typical of the period and enable the dwellings to form a special and direct visual connection with the central area and homes opposite. They are low (typically 400mm in height) and formed of a mix of materials. Brick, stone, tile, flints and fissures left for plants to take hold are typical. The low walls give access to the garden entrances, up broad shallow steps of York stone, with low planting in a randomised pattern.



Top: Typical garden walls – mixed materials, low and allowing informal planting and growth

Bottom: low walls and shallow stone steps – the approach to the home from the Close

The houses themselves offer a range of details, which contribute to the variety and homogenous quality of The Close. In particular, the carved oak bargeboards and finials are a distinctive element. The earlier homes are more richly carved.



Typical carved bargeboards. Figurative carvings including pomegranates, birds and leaves feature on numbers 1-10, with the simpler trefoil design on the later phase.

Other forms of embellishment of design are to be seen, and are carved in wood or stone. Entrances have coloured glass, or are solid oak with a small, often grilled spy panel.



Doors and details. Use of maintenance free oak, and wrought iron which required no painting or maintenance was used on all joinery both exterior and interior.

Windows

The variety of windows is a contributing factor to the heritage value of The Close. Each dwelling has its own collection of fenestration, although they were all originally oak frames and interior cills. Some have metal window frames (Critall) with leaded lights. The use of high, eaves windows may be a gesture to the mediaeval weavers windows, where high and long windows were inserted to extend useful daylight hours for work. It also serves a modern purpose in allowing daylight in while allowing utter privacy. These windows are used in the interior walls to allow light to permeate to the stairwell. Although it is believed none now exist, the kitchen windows were frosted, to allow the lady of the house to perform domestic duties away from the gaze of neighbours.



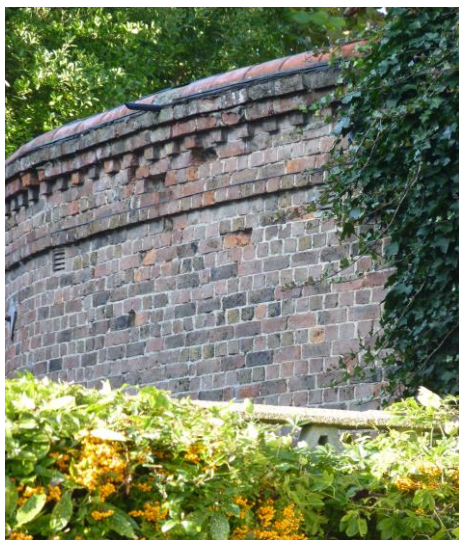
Roofs and Chimneys

The roofs at The Park Close were originally all clay peg tile, with the exception of the lych gate roofs found to some properties. The chimneys were constructed to a distinctive profile and most homes had one flue to serve the fire place in the principal rooms, and a service chimney from the boiler serving household heating and water. The latter chimney rose through the core of the building and is in the centre of the top floor room.



Garages

The garage block to the Southern end of the site is built of brick, possibly salvaged from Northfield Grange. The garages exhibit oak doors with ironmongery, and would have represented the height of modernity. The exterior face, which can be seen from Compton Place Road and the rear gardens of No. 6 & No. 7 has a decorative course of brick. The garages were made to be accessible from the central lawn of the Close, and via a small footpath and gate linking the Close to Gildredge Park,



Ironmongery

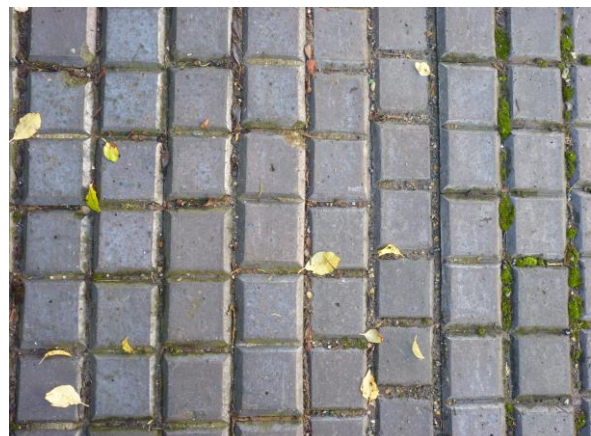
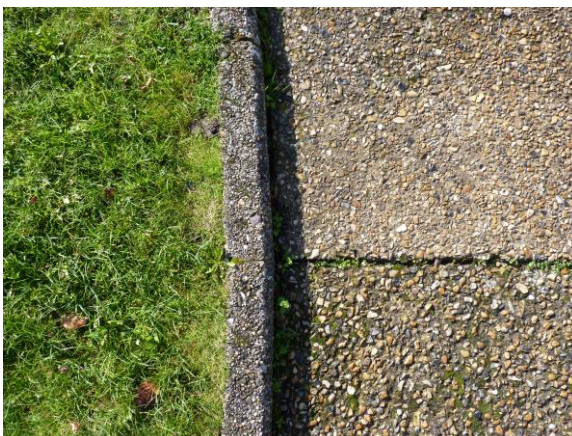
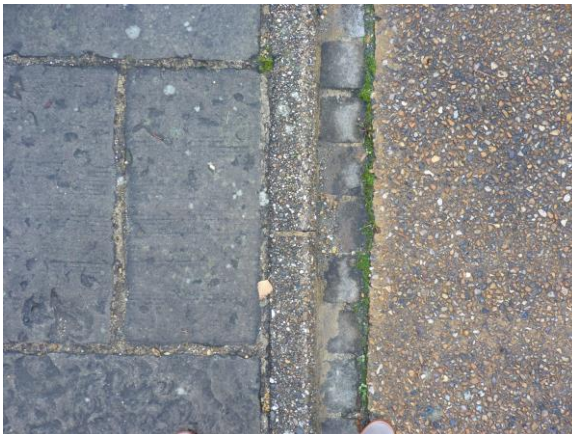
Two distinctive lamp posts were installed, and were made by the J Every Foundry in Lewes. Given the style with the lateral support for a ladder for the lampman, it is assumed these were gas lamps, and not an affectation of style.



The entrance gates are surmounted by lamps of similar style, and are original items, which appear in the promotional literature. Other ironmongery in the form of draincovers etc are from a variety of sources.

Surfaces

The concreted surface of the drive is a distinctive and original feature of The Close. The sales literature describes the nature and construction to be beneficial in the reduction of dust. The houses No. 11- No.20 were originally planned to have a separate garage block, as exists for numbers 1- 10. There are crossovers of Staffordshire block to accommodate this, and short drives to the integral garages. These would originally have been paved with York stone, to match the pavement and garden steps.



Boundary Wall

The boundary wall is the remaining wall from Northfield Grange. The main entrance appears to have been situated roughly where the garages are now located (see the 1899 Map Appendix D Map 4). The rise of the land North along Compton Place Road necessitates structural piers at various pints along the wall. It is constructed of knapped flint, set in a mortar rich in lime. This lends a characteristic whiteness in hue, and give enables the wall to move slightly. The flints are laid in courses, with a strike in the horizontal joint between each.

The boundary to the South, between the Close and Beachwood Crescent is of stone, capped with half-round bricks, with a brick pier at the return to Compton Park Road.

At the Junction of Vicarage Road and Compton Park Road, is a letterbox. Although it is post 1952 in date, a letterbox is marked on the 1899 map.

