

Ovingdean Conservation Area Appraisal

Designated: 1970

Extended: 2011

Area: 19.66 Hectares 48.58 Acres

Article 4 Direction: Proposed

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Introduction

Location and Setting

Ovingdean comprises a small agricultural hamlet, ~~with~~ a rural downland setting 4.2km to the east of Brighton and ~~approximately~~ 1km north of the coastline. The historic ~~part of the~~ village nestles at the base of a valley, ~~surrounded on three sides by open downland~~. ~~20th century residential development extends up the valley side to the south and east; however the surrounding downland remains the dominant feature~~. The topography creates a particularly inward-looking village, much removed from the hustle and bustle of neighbouring Brighton and the A259. Its location away from main routes in the area mean that the historic village is still a ~~relatively~~ quiet backwater, ~~although increased levels of traffic travelling through the village has affected this~~.

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Ovingdean Conservation Area was designated in 1970 and centres on the historic village. It is bounded by Longhill Road to the northeast, the grounds of Ovingdean Hall to the southeast, the woodland to the rear of St Wulfran's Church to the southwest and Hog Croft Field and the operational farm to the north. Amongst its heritage assets, the area contains 14 listed buildings, 2 locally listed buildings and an archaeological notification area ~~(Existing designations graphic)~~. 3 further archaeological notification areas are located in the immediate surroundings. ~~St Dunstan's – a centre providing support to blind ex-Service men and women – is a grade II listed complex situated at the junction of Greenways and the A259; to the south of the village~~. Hog Croft Field and the westernmost portion of the conservation area were designated as part of the South Downs National Park in 2010, along with surrounding downland to the north, south and west.

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'. The area has changed since designation. This document seeks to define and assess the current 'special interest' of Ovingdean Conservation Area, and make recommendations for its future management.

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Assessment of Special Interest

General Character

Ovingdean developed as an isolated farming community and manorial estate. The manorial estate was originally located on what is now the open field of Hog Croft, and closely associated with the church. The church itself is particularly historic – dating to at least the Norman period, ~~if not earlier~~. The Manor was rebuilt as the

current Ovingdean Grange in the 16th century, whilst Ovingdean Hall was constructed in the 18th century with its own associated farm. Greenways Corner was reconfigured in the 1930s, and residential developments occurred to the south and east throughout the 20th century. Historic farm buildings within the old village were replaced by purpose-built farm structures to the north in the 1980s, with the original farm buildings converted to residential use. Throughout these changes however, the village has remained a secluded rural village, albeit now predominantly residential in character.

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The old village retains its medieval street layout, which orientates towards the former manorial site at Hog Croft Field. A former village pond straddling the east boundary of this field suggests the possible presence of a spring – although this dried up in c.1934. The presence of a pond is probably an important factor in the origin of the village – which likely formed a watering hole for livestock.

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The main architectural pieces comprise St Wulfran's Church (and the buildings that flank its approach), Ovingdean Grange, and Ovingdean Hall. Other than these, the conservation area is comprised of farm buildings (of which the majority are converted to residential use), vernacular cottages and 20th century infill development. Although the historic farm buildings and cottages are not high status buildings they are nevertheless of special interest in themselves. Despite variance in form and function, the buildings are united through the use of traditional vernacular materials; predominantly flint elevations and clay tile roofs. The 20th century infill development varies in character and architectural quality. Since designation, the historic village has altered greatly due to the loss of a farming presence from the physical centre of the village and the conversion of the historic farm buildings to residential use. This has led to a change in its character. Nevertheless, the area remains of interest particularly due to the surviving flint structures, clay tile roofs and picturesque rural lanes. The historic village and surrounding downland are of great amenity value.

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Historic Background and Archaeology

The origins and historic development of the area

The name Ovingdean translates as the 'valley of Ofa's people'. The first record for Ovingdean is in the Domesday Survey, where the manor is identified as 'hovingdean', and the settlement comprised a small church and a population of approximately 50 to 100. After the Norman invasion, part of Ovingdean was held by Godfrey de Pierpoint, whilst part remained with its former Saxon owner, Brictrm. These two parts – described here as the western and eastern estates respectively – have distinct histories:

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The western part of Ovingdean was one of five Sussex manors granted to Pierpoint; the others being Portslade, Aldrington, Piddinghoe and East Chilington. Of these, he made Portslade his main residence and manorial court, and gave Ovingdean (which used the Portslade Court and therefore had no court of its own) to a relative. Ovingdean manor house was located on Hog Croft Field. In the 16th century this building was replaced with a new manor house; which was constructed using material from its predecessor. This manor house was renamed 'Ovingdean Grange' in the 19th century.

The history of the eastern part of Ovingdean is less well documented. About a quarter of Ovingdean Parish – including those parts that originally remained with Brictrmer – had been donated to Lewes Priory by 1252. A Lewes Priory Survey of 1445 and deeds conveying land show that after the dissolution of the monasteries in 1537, the lands consisted of the eastern third of Ovingdean Parish, known as the ‘eastern farmlands’. Records show that at this time the manor was well-stocked, with 2000 sheep, as well as oxen, cows, hogs and horses. This emphasises the importance of sheep pasture to the village’s economy throughout its history.

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Throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods the Lord of the Manor was rarely present in Ovingdean. Rather than being used as the residence for the Lord of the Manor, Ovingdean Grange was primarily a farmhouse to the neighbouring Grange Farm to the south. The Grange was immortalised by Harrison Ainsworth in his book *Ovingdean Grange, A Tale of The South Downs* (1857), which describes Charles II’s stay at Ovingdean Grange during his flight to France in 1651. The story is fictional (the Prince stayed in Brighton); however the Geere Family – who occupied the Grange at that time – are reported to have been involved in organising his return to England.

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The 1662 Hearth Tax returns show that there were three sizeable properties in Ovingdean at this time. The rectory and the farmhouse to the eastern estate (occupied by Robert Wildbore) are both recorded as having 3 flues, whilst Ovingdean Grange is the most substantial house, with 6 flues.

In the early 18th century, lands in Ovingdean remained divided into two estates. At this time, the eastern part was owned by Richard Beard, whilst the western part was owned by Richard Paine. Upon the death of Richard Beard in 1714, a map was drawn up of the eastern estate (Grover Plan, ESRO BRD 3/4). This shows that the current morphology was already mostly established: Greenways forms an ownership divide along a field boundary; with a track present along the line of Ovingdean Road. Ovingdean Grange and the Church are depicted as being in the western estate. Two further buildings are shown in relation to the church: that to the southeast is likely to be the parsonage. Another to the northeast is situated close to the known location of the Manor House on Hog Croft Field. This suggests that a building remained on the site of the Manor House. This building probably comprised an agricultural building, such as a cattle shelter. Buildings and small fields lining the northern side of Ovingdean Road, are identified as ‘The Upper Croft Close and Yards’ and ‘The Lower Croft and Closes’ on the Plan. These form the main farm buildings of the Beard (eastern) estate at this time.

Ovingdean Hall – originally called Ovingdean House - was built in 1792 for Nathaniel Kemp on lands forming part of the eastern estate. His nephew, Thomas Kemp junior, went on to design Kemp Town in 1825. Nathaniel Kemp’s son, Charles Eamer Kempe - born at Ovingdean Hall - was a notable stained glass window designer. CE Kempe designed various features of St Wulfran’s Church, including windows, the painted chancel ceiling, rood screen and the Kemp family tomb in the graveyard.

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The associated Ovingdean House Farm was built along Ovingdean Road, including its own farmhouse (Flints), farmyard and workers' cottages. The farm was constructed on the approximate site of the crofts and farm buildings shown on the 1714 map. It later became known as Upper Farm, before amalgamation with Grange Farm on Greenways.

The rectory was built in 1804 to replace the former 'mean thatched parsonage house' known to exist in c.1780. The tithe map of 1839 (MAP 1) shows the hamlet at this time. The Church, rectory, Ovingdean Grange, Ovingdean Hall and the two farm complexes are already evident, such that the historic village has taken on much of its current form. The map highlights how integrated the residential (shown in red) and non-residential buildings (shown in grey) were in the village, with barns and houses set cheek-by-jowl. A small village pond is shown at the corner of Greenways and Ovingdean Road, with the early 19th century 'Peartree Cottages' set opposite.

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The 1873 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) map shows little change from the tithe map. A smithy is depicted to the northwest of the village, and chalk pits to its east and west. The buildings to the east of the church, and to the rear of the Grange, have been altered.

A small 'National School' was constructed in 1873 on Ovingdean Road, and is shown on the c.1890 OS map. Due to falling numbers, it closed in 1907. It was then used as a 'Church Room', until 1993 when it was leased to Ovingdean Nursery School.

Following the death of Nathaniel Kemp in 1843, Ovingdean Hall continued in residential use until c.1890. At that point the Hall was converted to educational use, and opened as a 'Young Gentleman's School'. Numerous extensions were built in 1897, and are shown on the 1910-12 OS map (MAP 2). At this time, the settlement remained small, with a population of 248. However substantial residential growth occurred after 1928, when Ovingdean became part of the Borough of Brighton for administrative purposes. The first piecemeal development is shown on the c.1932-3 OS map (MAP 3), which shows Longhill Road set out on the line of a former track. Ainsworth Avenue is also shown on the line of the footpath depicted on the 1714 Grover Map. The ancient landownership divide between the eastern and western estates (as described on page 3) remains evident; with residential growth limited to those lands to the east of Greenways.

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Road improvements to the junction at Greenways Corner necessitated the demolition of Peartree Cottages, and a series of semi-detached properties were built at the Corner as replacement farmworkers' cottages. The adjacent pond also dried up at this time, when a mains water pipe was laid to connect Balsdean reservoir and Kemp Town. Infill development occurred along Ovingdean Road, and a Village Hall was constructed in 1932. This was replaced by the present Village Hall in 1986.

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Ovingdean Hall remained as a Preparatory School until 1941. During World War II it housed troops from the Canadian Army. The Brighton Institution for the Deaf and Dumb School opened in 1947 and remained in operation until 2010. The Hall now houses an international language college.

In the later 20th century, ~~a number of new agricultural enterprises were built to the north, many of the original farm buildings were converted to residential use and infill developments occurred. These included a poultry farm, built to the north of the village in the 1960s.~~ New farm buildings were also constructed ~~beside these~~ in 1981, releasing the Grange Farm complex for redevelopment. However, much of the historic layout of the settlement is still evident, and it retains much of its rural character and downland setting.

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Archaeological Significance

There is evidence for activity in the area since prehistoric times. The earliest evidence includes Iron Age field systems and a number of barrows, set upon the surrounding open downland.

Evidence for Roman field systems survives on Cattle Hill, to the west of the village. Fieldwalking undertaken on this site by Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society identified a scatter of Roman pottery, as well as a scatter of earlier Bronze Age flintwork. It is possible that a Roman villa or trading coastal station were located in the vicinity.

An Anglo-Saxon ~~burial with iron spearhead~~ was found close to Long Hill Road during construction of a house in 1935.

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Geophysical survey and excavations have been undertaken over recent years by Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society on Hog Croft Field. A medieval manorial site has been recorded, dating to late 12th and 13th century, and in use into the 14th century. The complex was closely associated with the church, and included the manor house, barns, a well and timber-framed outbuildings. Walls exposed during excavation were of dressed flint with Caen and chalk quoins, and a number of phases of construction were evident. Evaluation trenches elsewhere in the field exposed a trackway, earthworks and possible dovecote. The area was also used in the filming of 'Oh What a Lovely War' in 1969, when at least one World War I trench was recreated in the field.

Spatial Analysis

The existing morphology of ~~the historic~~ Ovingdean village relates to the ancient landownership divide that existed along Greenways. Land within the manor was divided into eastern and western estates; which were variously owned, occupied and farmed as separate entities. This led to the development of two farming nuclei; that on Greenways which was associated with the western estate (operating from the manor/Ovingdean Grange) and that on Ovingdean Road which was associated with the eastern estate **(Graphic)**. The eastern farm was largely rebuilt in the late 18th century as part of Ovingdean Hall, and operated from Flints. This ancient divide and the resulting binary farming focus remains evident in the morphology of the ~~historic~~ village today.

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The village retains a rural setting; with downland dominating the surrounding skyline. These ever-present views have a strong presence in the village and contribute to a clear sense of place. Long views to the woodland and open downland on Cattle Hill

in particular form the backdrop to views of the Church, which can be viewed in this context along Greenways and from as far away as Beacon Hill.

The roads in the area are generally narrow with irregular or non-existent pavements and grass verges; emphasising the rural character of the village. The narrow, winding and sylvan Ovingdean Road in particular retains the appearance of a quiet, medieval country lane; creating an intimate atmosphere. Houses are generally set behind flint walls, at a distance from the road. The flint walls and thick vegetation create a strong boundary to the road. Many of the buildings are set at right angles or are loosely set around former yards – having been converted from farm buildings or originally built to orientate towards the farm rather than the road. Due to later infill and conversion, the overall layout of buildings appears rather ad hoc.

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Hog Croft Field and the grounds to Ovingdean Hall are particularly important green spaces in the conservation area. They are, however, important for very different reasons: Hog Croft Field is located at the main junction in the village, and is of particular archaeological significance as the original location of the manor. It now forms a grassed field bounded by a flint wall, and marking the start of open downland to the west of the village. Its former importance as part of the village's civic centre remains evident in the surviving morphology of the village, which orientates towards the space: Ovingdean Road – the main residential axis of the village – leads directly towards it, whilst Ovingdean Grange, St Wulfran's Church, the buildings flanking the approach to the church and the former Grange Farm all orientate towards the space. The village pond (since dried up) was originally situated on the east boundary of the field – emphasising still further its function as an original part of the village centre.

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In contrast to Hog Croft Field, the grounds to Ovingdean Hall are not visually prominent in the area. They form a secluded space on the edge of the historic village, bounded by flint walls and mature vegetation. It is these walls, vegetation and the entrance and lodge on Greenways that are most apparent in the conservation area. To the south and west, the space forms a green 'buffer' between the historic village and surrounding 20th century development.

Important views in, and of, the conservation area include (Spatial Analysis Graphic – see page [insert page number] and Figure 1 below) (Figure 1):

- V1. Views between open downland and the village. These include those to and from (a) Cattle Hill, (b) Greenways, (c) downland to the northwest of the village and (d) Beacon Hill. Within these, views of the Church with woodland backdrop are important.
- V2. Views to Church and the buildings flanking its approach from Ovingdean Grange and across Hog Croft Field.
- V3. Unfolding views along Ovingdean Road
- V4. View of Ovingdean Grange from St Wulfran's Church

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

- S1. Hog Croft Field
- S2. Grounds to Ovingdean Hall

S3. 'The Green'

S4. Land at Greenways Corner

S5. Woodland and land to the rear of the church (Cattle Hill)

S6. Surrounding downland dominating the setting and the skyline of the village; particularly Cattle Hill

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Local landmarks in the conservation area include:

L1. St Wulfran's Church

L2. Ovingdean Grange

L3. Barns set throughout the area, particularly the Olde Barn and Tythe Barn

Public Realm

Road and pavement surfaces in the area are mainly generic. However, gravel surfacing to Byre Cottages and The Ridings emphasises its rural character, as does the use of minimal road markings and soft verges throughout the area as a whole. Sarsen stones and white bollards have been used to deter car parking on the green and outside Ovingdean Grange respectively. There is minimal street lighting in the village, which contributes to the retention of a rural character at night. Lighting to Ovingdean Road is of a modern design whilst a single swan-necked design is evident outside Ovingdean Grange. This informal, low key approach to the public realm contributes to its character.

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The narrow width and irregular pavements in the area contribute greatly to the character of the area, emphasising their origins as rural farming tracks and lanes. This is particularly true of Ovingdean Road. The roads are, however, now subject to heavy traffic levels relative to their size and character. This has a harmful impact on the character of the area. The lack of pavements in some areas also brings the needs of pedestrians and car users into direct conflict.

Character Analysis

The area can be divided into four distinct character areas (Character Area Graphic): The *Church and Manor* to the southwest includes the oldest buildings associated with the Church, Manor, western estate and its farm. *Ovingdean Road* Character Area comprises the fine grain of cottages and converted farm buildings associated with the eastern estate and Ovingdean Hall Farm as well as later infill development. To the north and northwest of Ovingdean is the *The Farms* Character Area, comprising the late 20th century replacement farm complex, and associated agricultural enterprises. To the southeast is the *Ovingdean Hall* Character Area, comprising an 18th century residence, with associated grounds and later school buildings.

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These four character areas together make up the historic village of Ovingdean.

Character Area I: The Church and Manor (Graphic)

The Church, Manor and associated farm buildings form a compact cluster of prestigious buildings, and are the surviving part of the village's medieval civic centre.

The original Manor was situated on what is now Hog Croft Field; and the surviving buildings still orientate towards this space.

The importance of the buildings in this area is reflected in their individual scale and architectural quality. Relationships between the manor, church and agricultural community are reflected through the proximity of these buildings.

Important Spaces

Hog Croft Field

Hog Croft Field (Figure 2) comprises a large grassed field, located at the junction of Greenways and Ovingdean Road. It is bounded by a flint wall, with a stile providing access from beside the church. It is of spatial and archaeological importance to the village as it is the site of the early medieval Manor complex. The site has been subject to excavation by the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Society. Earthworks remain noticeable within the field, which is given over to grazing. These relate almost exclusively to the deserted manorial complex, but some are the consequence of later use as part of the film set for 'Oh What a Lovely War'.

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The area is protected through a tenancy arrangement as permanent pasture. This allows both the appearance of the field and the surviving archaeological features to be preserved in situ.

'The Green'

A small green space is situated on the approach to St Wulfran's Church. Although actually forming Church land, this space is often nevertheless referred to as 'The Green', 'The Village Green' or 'The Church Green'; and is used for a variety of community and Church events. The space is an important part of the setting of the Church and the buildings flanking its approach, and helps establish this area as the historic civic heart of the village.

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St Wulfran's Wood

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St Wulfran's Wood comprises a small rectangular-shaped wood located to the immediate west of St Wulfran's Church. The majority of the surrounding landscape comprises open downland; and therefore this small area of woodland is particularly striking, and forms an important backdrop to many views of the church. Designated as a Local Wildlife Site, it mainly contains broad-leaved trees, and is an uncommon habitat in Brighton & Hove.

The Allotments

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The allotments – although their current appearance is not historic – occupy a small field which is already evident on the 1890 Ordnance Survey Map. They are highly visible at the entrance to the historic village. They provide a reminder of Ovingdean's historic links with farming and food production.

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Important Buildings and Groups of Buildings

The Church

The Church (Figure 3) is the oldest building in the village. The earliest reference to a church at Ovingdean is in the Domesday Book, which refers to an 'ecclesiola' or 'little church'. There is a suggestion that the surviving St Wulfran's Church retains Saxon fabric; certainly it is one of only two churches in the country named after this Saxon saint. The nave and chancel date primarily to the early Norman period, whilst the low square tower is a 13th century addition, with 14th century bell chamber. Many of the internal features are the work of Charles Eamer Kempe, including the painted ceiling and five stained glass windows. It is set within its own churchyard, which contains several notable incumbents; including Brighton inventor Magnus Volk, William Willett (inventor of British Summer Time), Helena Normanton (first female Barrister), Sophia Jex-Blake (one of the first female doctors) and the Kemp family tomb.

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Set back from Greenways, it is in fact the lychgate and churchyard boundary that are most prominent in the streetscene. Nevertheless, the church's location on higher ground means that it is clearly visible from many locations in the village and its surroundings, when it is viewed in relation to St Wulfran's Wood to its west. As such, it forms a prominent landmark in the area, and is of particular community, architectural and historic significance.

Buildings flanking approach to church

'The green' is flanked by a number of individual prestigious buildings of particular architectural quality (Figure 4). Set at right angles to Greenways itself; both the front and rear elevations of this group have prominence and contribute to the character of the area; in particular their varied pitched tiled roofs. The buildings can be divided into two groups; those that relate to the Church and its Rectory, and those relating to the Grange Farm.

The Rectory group comprises the Rectory itself, Rectory Cottage and Rectory Lodge. Rectory Cottage and Rectory Lodge face on to the green. Of these, Rectory Cottage is the most visible; a detached cobbled house of three storeys, it was built by Rector John Marshall for his son in c.1825. Rectory Lodge is a one storey building built in 1848 as a gardener's cottage, and marking one of its original entrance drives.

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The Rectory is set back from the road within its own mature, landscaped grounds, such that it has little presence in the streetscene; instead promoting a clear sense of privacy and prestige. The roadside boundary is formed by a flint wall, with mature vegetation behind. A red letter box is set in to the wall, and adds character to the streetscene. The Rectory is more prominent from the churchyard, from where the south (side) and west (rear) elevations are particularly visible. They are faced in red mathematical tiles in header and Flemish bond respectively; highlighting that the building dates to a number of phases. The building has a classical cobbled frontage. A listed coach house survives in association.

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Associated with Grange Farm, The Granary and Manor Cottages form a cluster of buildings on the corner of Greenways and the green, and comprise workers' cottages and farm buildings. The buildings display varied clay tiled roofslopes and gable ends to the street front, which make a significant contribution to the character of the area.

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Tythe Barn comprises an 18th century barn also associated with Grange Farm, probably with earlier foundations; converted to residential use over three floors in the early 20th century. It presents a flint gable end to the road. Historic photographs indicate a single hay loft entrance to each floor; these have been replaced with leaded windows when converted to a dwelling; substantially altering the character of the building. The building nevertheless retains much aesthetic appeal and historic character.

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Ovingdean Grange

The numerous older ranges of Ovingdean Grange (Figure 5) are disguised behind a three storey c.1835 façade – of which the third storey is a dummy. This façade comprises an extensive remodelling of the building to update its appearance in line with modern fashions of the time. Prior to this, the main elevation – including a two storey porch – was that to the north. This alignment matched that of the original manor building on Hog Croft Field.

Set back from the road behind a formal garden, high hedge and grass verge, the building is located directly opposite the green. As such, there is a clear visual relationship between the Manor and the Church, despite the physical distance between them.

The relocation of the Manor from Hog Croft Field to the current site greatly influenced the development and resulting form of the village. The building is of archaeological interest due to the many phases of building evident behind the formal façade. It is, however, the formal façade that retains the greatest presence in the street scene.

Ovingdean Grange Farm

To the immediate south of Ovingdean Grange, numbers 1 to 10 Beacon Court and numbers 9 and 10 Grange Cottages comprise the former manorial farmyard (Figure 6). Numbers 9 and 10 Grange Cottages were the former stables, and were later converted to use as farmworkers' cottages. Their interest is reflected in designation as listed buildings.

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Numbers 1 to 10 Beacon Court comprise a mixture of converted former barns and new build development dating from the mid-1980s, and retain a farmyard arrangement. The two surviving 19th century barns (now comprising numbers 6 to 10 Beacon Court) are designated as locally listed buildings. One of the two barns backs on to the road to create a relatively secluded enclosure. Of one and two storeys, the new dwellings (numbers 1 to 5 Beacon Court) are constructed from traditional vernacular materials, which are in keeping with the character of the area. Although the development retains something of its agricultural character and form,

its conversion to residential has diluted this character, through the inevitable introduction of additional openings, small front gardens, purpose-built garages and a generic tarmac surface.

Further buildings associated with Grange Farm – The Olde Barn and The Hames - are set at the eastern end of Ovingdean Road (Figure 7). The Olde Barn is the former Shearing Barn, whilst The Hames constituted another lower barn structure. Both were separately converted to residential use during the mid to late 20th century, but have retained their traditional form and materials. The Hames fronts directly on to Ovingdean Road, whilst The Olde Barn is set at right angles. The form and roofscape of The Olde Barn are prominent in views from Greenways Corner, and act as a reminder of the agricultural history of the area.

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Infill development at entrance to **historic** village

Aldingbourne Farm and Field End comprise two later detached dwellings. They are located at bends in the road at the entrance to the village, and are therefore prominent in the streetscene. Aldingbourne Farm is of a somewhat standard late 20th century architectural style. In contrast, Field End incorporates some more unusual features, with shiplap weatherboarding to its gables. Of no historic precedent, the buildings are of a greater scale and massing than is typical for the **old** village. They nevertheless retain flint boundary walls that are in keeping with the area.

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Conclusion

The Church and Manor Character Area comprises the original civic heart of Ovingdean, and includes the most significant historic buildings; including St Wulfran's Church, the Rectory, Tythe Barn, Ovingdean Grange and the former Grange Farm. The buildings are generally of high architectural quality and individual design; yet they are unified through the use of a limited palette of wall materials – predominantly flint. The variety of steeply pitched clay tile and slate roofs also contributes to the character of the area. The now open space of Hog Croft Field is also of significance to the history, development and current morphology of the village.

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A number of intrusive features have, however, had an impact on the character of the area:

- Although the former Grange Farm retains some of its original agricultural character, in terms of its form and materials; conversion to residential has diluted this character.
- Aldingbourne Farm - at the entrance to the village - is a disappointing addition to the village which has a neutral impact on its character.

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Character Area 2: Ovingdean Road (Graphic)

Ovingdean Road Character Area comprises vernacular cottages, converted farm buildings and modern infill development, strung out along and to the north of Ovingdean Road in a somewhat irregular arrangement. The character area developed from a second farm yard associated with the eastern estate and then with

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Ovingdean Hall. From the end of the 18th century it was known as Ovingdean Hall Farm and then Upper Farm, before its amalgamation with Grange Farm. This second farm complex is shown on the 1839 Tithe Map and c.1875 1st edition Ordnance Survey map; when the two yards remained as largely distinct entities.

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Ovingdean Road rises steeply to the east, and forms a narrow road with few pavements and overhanging vegetation creating an intimate atmosphere. The southern side of the road is dominated by the large 20th century school buildings of Ovingdean Hall School, which are of variable architectural quality. Although these buildings are situated in Character Area 4 (Ovingdean Hall), they impact greatly on the Ovingdean Road streetscene. The location, large scale and overall design of the buildings mean that they are dominant features which detract from the intimate scale and rural appearance of the street. It is the rear elevations to the buildings that front on to the street, forming a largely inactive frontage which does not address the street.

Small scale buildings are located to the north, including small flint cottages, converted farm buildings and later infill development. These are generally set back from the street behind front gardens with high levels of vegetation and flint boundary walls. The walls and vegetation combine to reaffirm a clear distinction between public and private space.

Important Buildings or Groups of Buildings

Flints, The Cot and The Nook

The irregular form and plan of Flints, The Cot and The Nook reveal the piecemeal development of this terraced group over time. They are unified through flint elevations, red brick dressings and pitched clay tile roofs. Originally comprising the farmhouse or 'Bailiff's House' to Ovingdean Hall farm, Flints was constructed in 1792 and comprises a substantial two storey building. The Cot is also of two storeys but is much lower in height. All three properties were present by 1805, and likely were built between 1792 and 1795. They have, however, been extended over time. They are set behind grassed front gardens with flint boundary walls.

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Upper Cottages

Upper Cottages is a short terrace of three cottages (Figure 8). The two end buildings are evident on the 1839 tithe map; the central building appears to be a later addition that is first evident on the c.1870 Ordnance Survey map. The difference in construction date is reflected in the height of the buildings; with the end cottages substantially lower than that to the centre. Extensive alteration through time means that the buildings (including particularly their roof form) now form a unified group. They retain a rendered front with flint to the roadside.

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The buildings are set at right angles to the road; behind small front gardens with flint boundary walls. They face towards the former Ovingdean Hall farmyard - although they do not form part of the yard itself - and therefore likely originally formed farmworkers' cottages.

The terrace is set hard against the roadside, at a kink in the road, which strengthens its presence in the streetscape.

The Smithy

Set upon the grassed area in front of Greenways Corner Cottages, the Smithy is a small, one storey flint structure with a gabled flint roof (Figure 9). The structure is first evident on the c.1870 OS map; where it is identified as a smithy. As such, it acts as a reminder of the area prior to redevelopment in the 1930s, and would have performed an important function within this farming community. It is now used as a garage, and is in need of repair.

National School/Church Room

The current Nursery School on Ovingdean Road comprises a small flint building with brick dressings and a pitched clay tile roof. It was built in 1873 as a 'National School'. Due to dwindling pupil numbers, it closed in 1907 and was instead used as a Church Room. It opened as Ovingdean Nursery School in 1993 – returning it to educational use. Set back from the road behind a tall flint wall; its late Victorian architecture contrasts with the remainder of the village (despite matching materials); and provides an indication of developments in the village at this time.

Later developments

The Ridings and Byre Cottages

The Ridings and Byre Cottages were developed in the late 20th century on the site of Ovingdean Hall farmyard and comprise converted 18th and 19th century agricultural buildings (Figure 10), as well as new buildings. Orchard Court forms a further terrace of modern buildings, located at the entrance to The Ridings and Byre Cottages. The buildings are all constructed in traditional vernacular materials, with knapped flint and brick walls with clay tile roofs. A well house survives (although the original open sides have been boarded) to the side of number 1 Byre Cottages and adds interest to the area. Number 1 Byre Cottages originally held a carriage and 3 or 4 horses. Numbers 2 and 3 formed a granary, whilst numbers 4, 5 and 6 were barns. The addition of modern buildings partly disguises the original farmyard arrangement. Numbers 1 to 6 The Ridings (Figure 11) in particular form large detached dwellings that are somewhat oversized in comparison to the traditional workers' cottages of the area. The use of informal road surfaces nevertheless retains something of the original rural agricultural character.

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Greenways Corner Cottages

Four semi-detached pairs of farmworker's cottages (Figure 12) were built at Greenways Corner in the 1930s; in conjunction with the widening of the road. One of these semi-detached properties is set at the bend of the road itself. The other three buildings flank the approach to the farm to the north of the village. They are set back from the farm track. The buildings are each of a similar, symmetrical English Vernacular design. They are of two storeys with brick and tile hanging to the elevations. The roofs are hipped and covered in tile, with a prominent central

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shared chimney stack. Set at a sensitive central location, their symmetry is particularly important, as is the use of matching traditional materials to provide a uniform architectural unit.

A further detached residence of later date has been constructed to the north of the cottages. Although of less architectural merit, it responds to the materials and design of the cottages.

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Other infill development

In addition to the larger residential schemes of The Ridings, Byre Cottages and Greenways Corner, other individual dwellings have been built along Ovingdean Road over the course of the 20th century. In general, these respect the form of the streetscape; being set back from the road behind flint walls and verdant front gardens. The dwellings are generally detached, and vary in form and style. They are generally of limited architectural quality. However, the flint walls and gardens are most prominent in the streetscene, reducing the impact of these houses on the conservation area.

Village Hall

Constructed in 1986 as a replacement to the original 1930s Village Club Room, the current Village Hall is brick-built with a pitched roof. It is of little architectural merit, but preserves the characteristic relationship between the street and buildings in this character area; being set back from the road behind a wall and vegetation. It functions as an important community hub for the village.

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Important Space

Land at Greenways corner

A large grassed and gravelled area, bounded by a flint wall, is set to the immediate north of Greenways corner. The Smithy is located on this space, and Greenways Cottages front on to it. The space contributes to the rural character of the village. Combined with Hog Croft Field and The Green, it provides an open aspect to the historic village centre.

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To the north of the village, a number of modern farm buildings comprise the current late 20th century farm and other rural enterprises. The existing buildings are of no architectural or historic merit, and the area remained wholly undeveloped until the late 20th century. The retention of a farm within the village is however an important reminder of its agricultural past. The associated sights, sounds and smells would have always very much been a part of the character of the village. ¶

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The farm now forms the northern limit to the village. It is accessed via a track set alongside Hog Croft Field and Greenways Corner, at the very heart of the village where a signpost introduces 'Bulstrode Farm'. This entrance track forms part of the streetscene, and marks the original divide between the eastern and western estates. The actual buildings are however largely removed from the village centre, both physically and visually.¶

Conclusion

Ovingdean Road Character Area is characterised by small vernacular cottages, farm buildings and infill development, set along and to the north of Ovingdean Road. The conversion of traditional farm buildings to residential use has largely been executed in a sensitive manner, but it has nevertheless led to a change in character. Despite much infill development, the area remains distinctive, with the majority of buildings unified through use of traditional materials; predominantly flint and clay tile roofs. Most buildings are set back from the road, with the narrow street clearly defined through flint walls, vegetation and the dominant rear elevations to the buildings of Ovingdean Hall School.

A number of negative features nevertheless detract from the character of the area:

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- The rear elevations to Ovingdean Hall School detract from the streetscene, and would benefit from improvement and a more holistic management approach.
- Ovingdean Road is subject to heavy levels of traffic relative to its size and nature. There is direct conflict between the needs of pedestrians and car users due to the lack of pavements.

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Character Area 3: The Farms (Graphic)

The area to the north and northwest of the conservation area comprises a 20th century farm and other rural enterprises. Historically, the area is shown as a series of small fields on the 1714 Grover Plan; associated with the neighbouring farm complex on Ovingdean Road. This situation persisted until the late 20th century, when a series of farms and enterprises were constructed on the site.

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Although set back from the main routes through the village and therefore removed from its physical heart, the area – particularly the farm - is visible from the church and from surrounding downland. It is accessed via a lane set at the main junction in the village. It also marks the entrance to the village from the north; forming a prominent gateway feature in this direction. Although the buildings are of no architectural merit and their location has no precedent; their uses are a strong reminder of Ovingdean's agricultural past, and continued rural setting. The associated sights, sounds and smells would have always very much been a part of the character of the village.

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The area can now be described as three separate groups of buildings or spaces; the relocated farm to the northwest, the former poultry farm (and now stables) to the centre, and an area of open-sided barns and storage space to the northeast.

Groups of Buildings

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The Farm is located to the northwest of the area (Figure 13). It was constructed in 1981, when – due to the changing requirements of modern farming practices – Ovingdean Grange Farm was relocated from its original location on Greenways. It comprises a series of large – generally open-sided – sheds and barns which are typical of 20th century farming complexes. They indicate the changes in farming practice, with a general trend from function-specific buildings, to multi-functional buildings which take on a more generic size and shape. The continued presence of a farm in Ovingdean is an important reminder of the significance of agriculture to the origin and development of the village.

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The central portion of the area comprises the stables, and the buildings of the former poultry farm (Figure 14). The poultry farm was established in c.1960, and comprised of six large poultry houses. These were demolished in the 1987 hurricane, but some parts of these buildings survive in a dilapidated condition. These remains detract from the area and would merit reuse or removal. A stables has been established on part of the former poultry farm site, contributing to the rural character of the area.

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The field to the northeast of the area (Figure 15) has been cut into to provide both internal and external storage space; including the erection of open-sided sheds. This area is in a somewhat neglected state, and would benefit from improvement and maintenance. A track along its northeastern edge provides access from Ovingdean Road into the surrounding downland.

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Open Space

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Although there are no public open spaces within the area, the space between the buildings forms a network of spaces that contribute to the area's overall green character. The spaces are generally left in a largely 'wild' state, which – although giving a somewhat neglected appearance – provides a haven for many types of wildlife.

Conclusion

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The Farms Area – forming the northern limit of the village and gateway to the Downs – contains groups of functional buildings which are largely of no architectural of historic merit. Some of those buildings remain in use as a farm and stables. These uses contribute greatly to the character of the area, and act as a strong reminder of Ovingdean's agricultural past. Other buildings – particularly those of the former poultry farm - are under-used or dilapidated, and detract from the area.

Character Area 4: Ovingdean Hall (Graphic)

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Ovingdean Hall is a grade II listed building set within its own contained grounds which form its primary setting. It fronts on to a large grassed parkland, with the drive entering from the southwest. Its boundary is formed by tree belts and high flint walls. Later use as a school has led to the construction of many 20th century school buildings of little architectural interest, which back on to Ovingdean Road, whilst a small late 20th century housing development (Woodland Walk) has been constructed in the northeast corner of the grounds. The Hall orientates away from the village and the location of woodland belts mean that the Hall and its grounds retain little visual relationship with the village itself. The flint wall, entrance and lodge to Greenways are prominent features that identify the entrance to the Hall within the streetscape, and the predominance of flint in these features emphasise the historic character of the estate.

Important Buildings

Ovingdean Hall

Ovingdean Hall (Figure 16) was constructed in the late 18th century for Nathaniel Kemp. The main formal facade orientates south and is faced in yellow mathematical tiles. Of a symmetrical 6 bay design, the two central bays project forward and are housed beneath a parapet. The building retains a shallow hipped slate roof set behind a parapet.

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The formal façade is the Hall's most important elevation. It fronts on to the driveway and a large open green space (former parkland; now playing field) which comprises its primary setting. Later additions to the building extend to the rear, such that they do not interfere with the symmetry of the front elevation.

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Ovingdean Hall Lodge

The Lodge (Figure 17) at the entrance to Ovingdean Hall comprises a two storey flint building with red brick dressings and a tiled roof. It is set in the curtilage to Ovingdean Hall, and is significant due to this association. The use of traditional materials and flint boundary walls is in keeping with the character of the area.

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School Buildings

20th century school buildings have been built to the northeast and southwest of Ovingdean Hall. The incremental development and expansion of the site is reflected in the different styles and materials apparent in these buildings, which are generally of limited architectural merit. Nevertheless, most of the buildings are set back from the main elevation of Ovingdean Hall, and are of a lower height, such that they appear subordinate to the main building. This limits the harm caused by these buildings on the setting of the listed Hall.

The northernmost buildings on the site back on to Ovingdean Road. Here, the buildings are up to three storeys in height, and are mostly built directly on to the streetfront or immediately behind a flint wall; without room for pavements. Their large scale and massing, and strong building line, mean that they form a dominant feature in this streetscape, which detracts from its character. Use of traditional vernacular materials such as tile hanging is nevertheless in character with the area.

Woodland Walk

Woodland Walk comprises a small residential development constructed in c.1990 and located in the northeastern corner of the Ovingdean Hall estate. Accessed from Longhill Road, and comprising a short cul-de-sac of detached two to three storey dwellings, it is of an uncharacteristic form and arrangement for this rural location. The buildings are constructed in flint with red brick dressings. They retain a mixture of gabled, hipped and half-hipped roofs; the latter being more typical of agricultural rather than domestic architectural forms. Due to changes in ground level, the neighbouring school buildings are set at a lower level than this development, such that only their roofs are visible from within the cul-de-sac. The development retains a secluded character much removed from Ovingdean Hall and from the village.

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The original flint boundary wall to the Ovingdean Hall estate survives to the perimeter of the cul-de-sac. The flint wall and the high levels of mature vegetation are in keeping with the character of the area as part of the historic estate.

Important Space

Ovingdean Hall Grounds

Ovingdean Hall is situated within its own c.9 hectare historic parkland estate. The Hall fronts on to a large open grassed area; with tree belts set to its perimeter. The main drive accesses the grounds from the southwest corner. This design and layout were already evident by the time of the c.1840 tithe plan, and form a generous parkland setting to the Hall. In contrast to the design shown on the tithe plan, however, the grassed area has been divided by a further tree belt, with the area to the east allowed to revert back to its natural state. Such a division is first shown on the c.1898 Ordnance Survey map, and it therefore now forms a historic landscape feature in its own right. An early 20th century cricket pavilion is set at the centre of the ground and is a positive historic feature, despite being in need of repair. The grounds are designated as a Local Wildlife Site, supporting a range of habitats including woodland, scrub and rough grassland.

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The majority of later school buildings on the site are concentrated to the north of the site such that the parkland estate remains as a cohesive whole. Areas of parking along the northern section of the drive do impact on the parkland and on the setting of the main façade to Ovingdean Hall. Similarly, the tennis courts to the east of the Hall also impact on the parkland and setting of the façade.

Mature vegetation and high flint walls provide a sense of boundary and high level of privacy for the site; screening views between it and the surroundings. As such, it is these boundary treatments which are most visible in the conservation area. The tree belts were severely damaged in the 1987 storm; and have been subject to further thinning since. They would merit further strengthening.

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The western boundary to the estate fronts on to Greenways, and is particularly visible when approaching Ovingdean village from the south (Figure 18). Combined with the main entrance, this stretch of tall flint wall and vegetation creates a clear visual break from the neighbouring 20th century residential development to the south and forms an entrance feature to both Ovingdean Hall and to the village. Two late 20th century houses are discernible within the tree belt. Of no architectural merit, they are partly screened from views by the tall flint wall and vegetation, but still detract from the green, undeveloped character of this space.

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Along Longhill Road, the eastern boundary retains a similar tall flint wall and tree belt. Raised ground level along this boundary, combined with the vegetation, mean that there are few views into the grounds from this location. Some portions of the wall are in poor condition and would benefit from repair and maintenance. A small children's playground has been constructed in the southeast corner of the grounds.

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In addition to its own intrinsic interest as an historic estate, the grounds to Ovingdean Hall form an important visual separation between the historic village and later residential development to the southeast; helping to retain its rural setting.

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Conclusion

Ovingdean Hall Character Area comprises a large 18th century residence, its associated lodge and parkland setting. Located at the entrance to the village, the estate forms an important gateway feature to the historic village and safeguarding its rural sense of place. The area is predominantly green in character. Tree belts and

high flint walls create a strong sense of enclosure and privacy; and a clear definition between public and private space.

A number of intrusive features are however evident, which are damaging to the special historic and architectural interest of the area, and to the setting of the listed Ovingdean Hall:

- Numerous later school buildings on the site detract from the setting of Ovingdean Hall. This impact has been reduced through setting the buildings back from the main elevation of the Hall, and through their subordinate scale and massing.
- Parked cars along the drive and the tennis courts to the east detract from the setting of the Hall
- Tree belts ~~around the Hall have thinned during the later 20th century;~~ reducing their effectiveness in screening views from the surroundings.
- Houses of no architectural or historic interest are located in the tree belt along Greenways, and are visible from the ~~road.~~ Housing in this location has no historic precedent ~~and detracts from the sylvan and prestigious character of the Hall's grounds.~~

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Special Interest of Ovingdean Conservation Area

Ovingdean Conservation Area comprises a downland farming village, set upon an ancient landownership divide. Due to this divide, the village contains two separate farming units; which from the 18th century formed part of the estates of Ovingdean Hall and Ovingdean Grange respectively. The Manor was originally located close to the Church on Hog Croft Field, and the ~~old~~ village still orientates towards this space. The Church ~~is~~ the most historic building – with parts dating to the 11th century – whilst Ovingdean Grange is also particularly historic. Ovingdean Hall was built in the late 18th century and represents a major change in the morphology and significance of the village. There is much later infill development in the village, which has partly blurred the boundary between the two farming nuclei, to form the ~~historic~~ village seen today.

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Whilst the Church, Ovingdean Grange and Ovingdean Hall are the main prestigious buildings in the area, the majority of the building stock comprises more modest flint cottages, converted farm buildings and later infill developments. Later infill developments and farm building conversions have led to a dilution of the agricultural character of the conservation area since designation. Use of traditional materials – predominantly flint walls and clay tile roofs – nevertheless works to unify the character of the area.

The relationship between buildings and roads ~~is~~ not always direct; with many buildings instead set around former farmyards or at right angles to the street and creating an irregular village form. This emphasises the rural, agricultural antecedents of the area. A strong boundary and hard edge to the roads is created by flint walls, belts of vegetation and irregular pavements. These combine with their narrow width to create picturesque rural lanes.

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Strong views to and from surrounding downland emphasise the village's rural setting, whilst the grounds of Ovingdean Hall create a visual distinction with later development to the southeast. Overall, the area retains much of its character as an isolated agricultural village.

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Article 4(1) Direction

Of the historic buildings in the old village, many retain historic features such as original windows, roof coverings and boundary walls. These make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the area. There are however examples where incremental change has had a harmful impact on the conservation area:

Poor modern windows (eg uPVC replacements) have been installed in properties including The Hames, Ovingdean Road and The Lodge, Greenways. This erodes the historic integrity and appearance of the buildings and the area.

Clay tile roofs 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 vents on the Olde Barn, Ovingdean Road and on the rear slopes of numbers 6 to 10 Beacon Court (as visible on Greenways). 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 distinction between public and private space 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 historic building lines and the character of the area.

These incremental changes highlight the 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

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.

Traditional forms and materials – particularly flint walls, timber casements and pitched clay tile roofs - should be utilised in extensions and new development.

Roads in the village were not originally designed for vehicular traffic. The narrow width and lack of pavement – especially evident along Ovingdean Road - creates

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Boundary Review (Graphic)¶

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The current boundary to Ovingdean Conservation Area largely reflects the extent of the historic settlement; distinguishing the village from surrounding suburban development and open downland. Although the area has changed greatly over the 20th century, most of this development is integrated within the village. Woodland Walk is most removed from the heart of the village, but still reads as part of the Ovingdean Hall estate due to the retention of flint walls and vegetation which screen views of the development from Ovingdean Road.¶

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The modern farm to the north of the village, however, is of no historic or architectural merit. It is visually removed from much of the village, and there is no precedent for buildings in this location before the 1980s. Its current character and appearance dilutes the special interest of the area. Built since designation of the conservation area, the farm no longer meets the tests for inclusion and therefore is recommended for removal. ¶

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The farm area – and especially the retention of farm use in the village - remains an important part of the setting of the conservation area, and also the South Downs National Park; which bounds the area to the north, east and west. ¶

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direct conflict between the needs of pedestrians and car users. Further growth in the amount of vehicular traffic on the roads in Ovingdean should be deterred. Any future traffic management will need to be sensitively handled and sympathetic to the historic character of the area. Resurfacing of roads and pavements should be in keeping with the area and signage should be kept to a minimum. Positive proposals should be formulated for traffic management and reduction.

Farming is important to the historic development and character of the village. Retention of a farming presence in the village is important to retaining this character. Agricultural uses of the farm buildings to the north of the village will therefore be encouraged.

The farm area to the north of the village would benefit from enhancement. Redundant modern farm structures should be brought back into use or their structure removed and reinstated as grass. The area forms the interface between the village and the National Park, and links between the village community and with the National Park would be encouraged. Any future proposed developments in this area would need to be considered in light of the character of the conservation area and setting of the National Park.

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The Ovingdean Hall College site occupies a large site and has a strong presence in the area. The piecemeal addition of buildings in various designs and styles impacts on the setting of the listed Hall and on views along Ovingdean Road. The site forms a single historic estate, and should, as such, be considered as a single unit. Production of a holistic management plan is encouraged. The historic parkland should remain predominantly green. Buildings should be set back from the main frontage of Ovingdean Hall; such that it retains its primary setting. Tree belts to its boundaries form an important part of the character of the conservation area and of the setting of the listed Hall. These should be maintained and strengthened where possible. The extension of the tree belt along the drive to the immediate west of the Hall would reinstate the historic planting scheme whilst screening some of the later school buildings in views of the Hall. Improvements to the appearance and condition of the Ovingdean Road frontage would be encouraged.

Business signage and lighting in the conservation area should be in keeping with its rural, historic and now mainly residential character.

Numbers 50 and 52 Greenways (Figure 12) comprise a semi-detached pair of flint cottages. Dated 1892, they incorporate a stone crest. The pair is located outside the conservation area, but is of sufficient special architectural and historic interest to be considered for inclusion on the list of buildings of local interest. The Hames, The Olde Barn, The Smithy, The Church Room and 1 to 6, Byre Cottages should also be considered for inclusion on the local list.

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Existing tree cover contributes positively to the character of the area. Tree cover should be maintained and strengthened where possible; except where this obscures important views to and from surrounding downland.

The open spaces around the village that form part of the 'green buffer' are important in distinguishing the village from the surrounding 20th century development and

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highlighting its originally rural setting. These areas should remain predominantly open and green. Views between the village and the South Downs National Park should be protected and enhanced.

Where farm buildings have been converted to residential use, a farmyard setting should be promoted. The curtilage of the buildings should remain uncluttered and an open aspect retained.

Further Reading

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