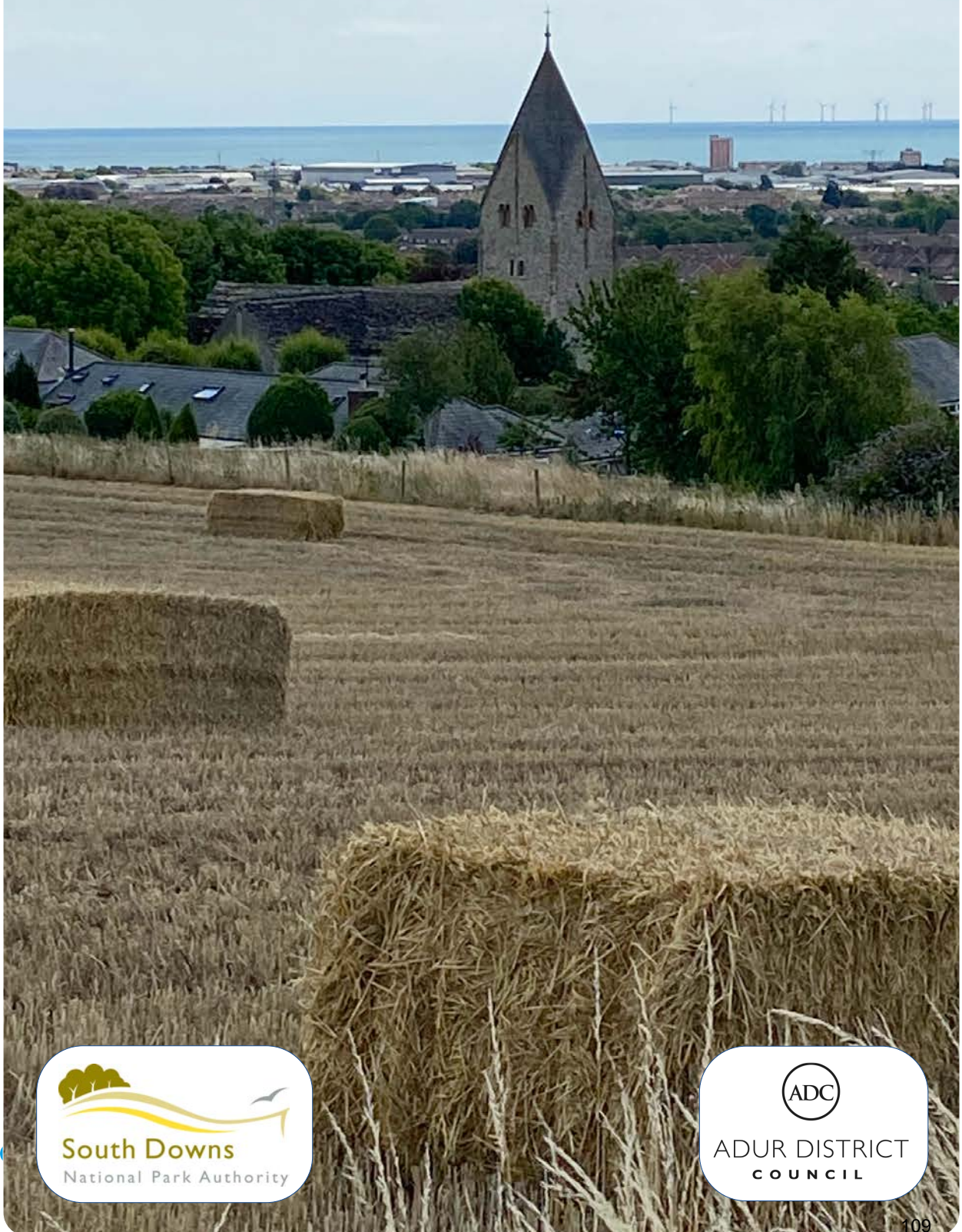


SOMPTING

Conservation Area Appraisal



SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sompting is a village of medieval origins, with an architecturally significant and visually striking church dominating near views from the Downland slopes on which it sits.

The northern part of the village retains a verdant and rural character, punctuated by a selection of good buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries.

The linear village proper, stretching from Church Lane at the eastern end to Lambleys Lane at the western edge presents a more mixed picture, but includes several fine 18th century buildings, and other buildings of merit from the early to late 19th century, along with modern infill buildings throughout. The village is unified by the characteristic flint walls, including very substantial survivals north of West Street that once enclosed the nurseries which supported the burgeoning market garden industries until the middle of the 20th century.

Sompting Abbots is noted for the visit of Queen Caroline, consort of King George IV in 1814; and the author and explorer E. J. Trelawney was resident at the eponymous cottage on West Street in the late 19th century.

The village has suffered from poorly coordinated infrastructure modernisations, the ill-considered use of modern and/or uPVC windows and doors which has eroded the historic character of Sompting, and an excess of through traffic.

The village was first designated by Adur District Council in March 1976. Some minor amendments were made to the boundary in 1992. This review and appraisal does not suggest any further changes to the boundary.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” (Section 69 (1) (a) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

1.2 The Local Planning Authority, which in this case is Adur District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority, has a duty to determine which parts of their area have that special architectural or historic interest, to designate those parts as Conservation Areas, and to keep the Conservation Areas under review. It is also required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area when performing its planning function in, for example, determining planning applications.

1.3 Sompting was first designated as a Conservation Area by Adur District Council in March 1976. With the creation of the South Downs National Park Authority in April 2011, it became the Local Planning Authority for that part of the Conservation Area to the north of the A27, with Arun District Council remaining the planning authority for the village south of the A27.

1.4 The Conservation Area was last reviewed in 1992, when some minor boundary changes were made. This Appraisal forms part of the review process required and seeks to set out what the Local Planning Authorities consider are the most significant elements which define the character of the Conservation Area. It has an important role in making informed and sustainable decisions about the future of the area. Whilst comprehensiveness may be sought, however, the omission of any particular feature should not be taken as meaning that it is of no significance.

1.5 It sits within a wider policy context comprising:

- i) The Adur Local Plan or the South Downs National Park Local Plan, as appropriate.
- ii) The National Planning Policy Framework.
- iii) The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

and for that part of the Conservation Area that falls within the National Park only:

- iii) The Purposes and Duty of the South Downs National Park.
- iv) English National Parks and the Broads UK Government Vision & Circular 2010.

1.6 In looking at the area, issues which pose a threat to the quality of the area and any possibilities for improvement and enhancement have also been identified.

1.7 The draft document was the subject to a public consultation. This was undertaken by Arun DC on behalf of both authorities. The consultation sought views and comments on the

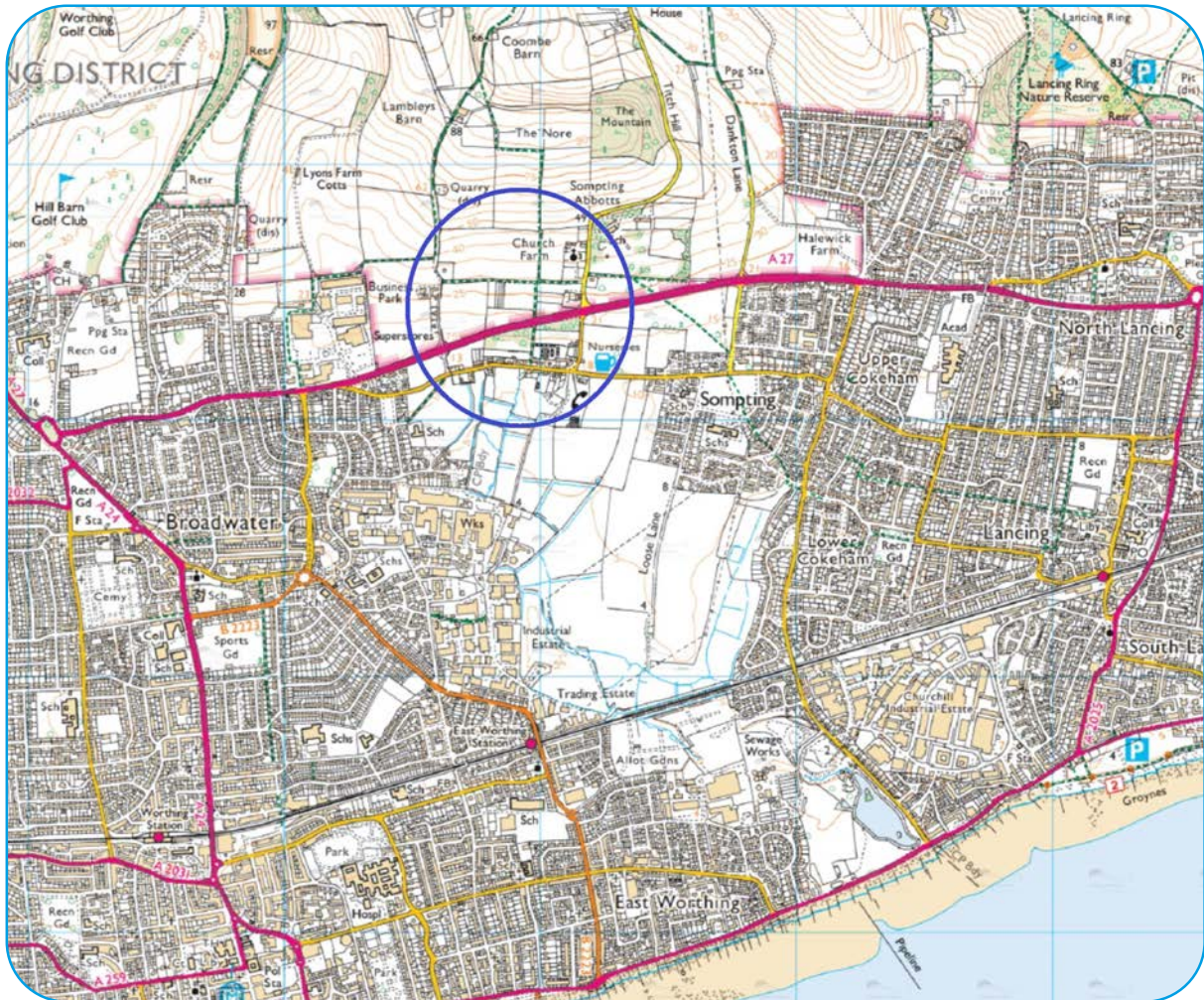
appraisal and management plan.

1.8 The draft document was available on the Adur DC's website. Letters were sent to all properties within the Conservation Area giving notice of the consultation and specific consultations were sent to Sompting Parish Council, West Sussex County Council, National Highways, Historic England and Adur District Community Advisory Group

1.9 The document was revised as appropriate in response to the comments received. The revised document was adopted by Adur DC in May 2024 and by the South Downs National Park Authority for the purposes of Development Management and to inform the wider activities of the National Park Authority and its partners on 11 July 2024.

SOMPTING IN THE LANDSCAPE

2.1 The village of Sompting sits on the dip slope of the South Downs at the westerly edge of the district of Adur, where it abuts the National Park, and separated from Worthing some three miles south-west by an open green gap. The old boundaries of the parish were broadly considered to run as far east as Boundstone Lane and to the west as far as Charmandean Lane.

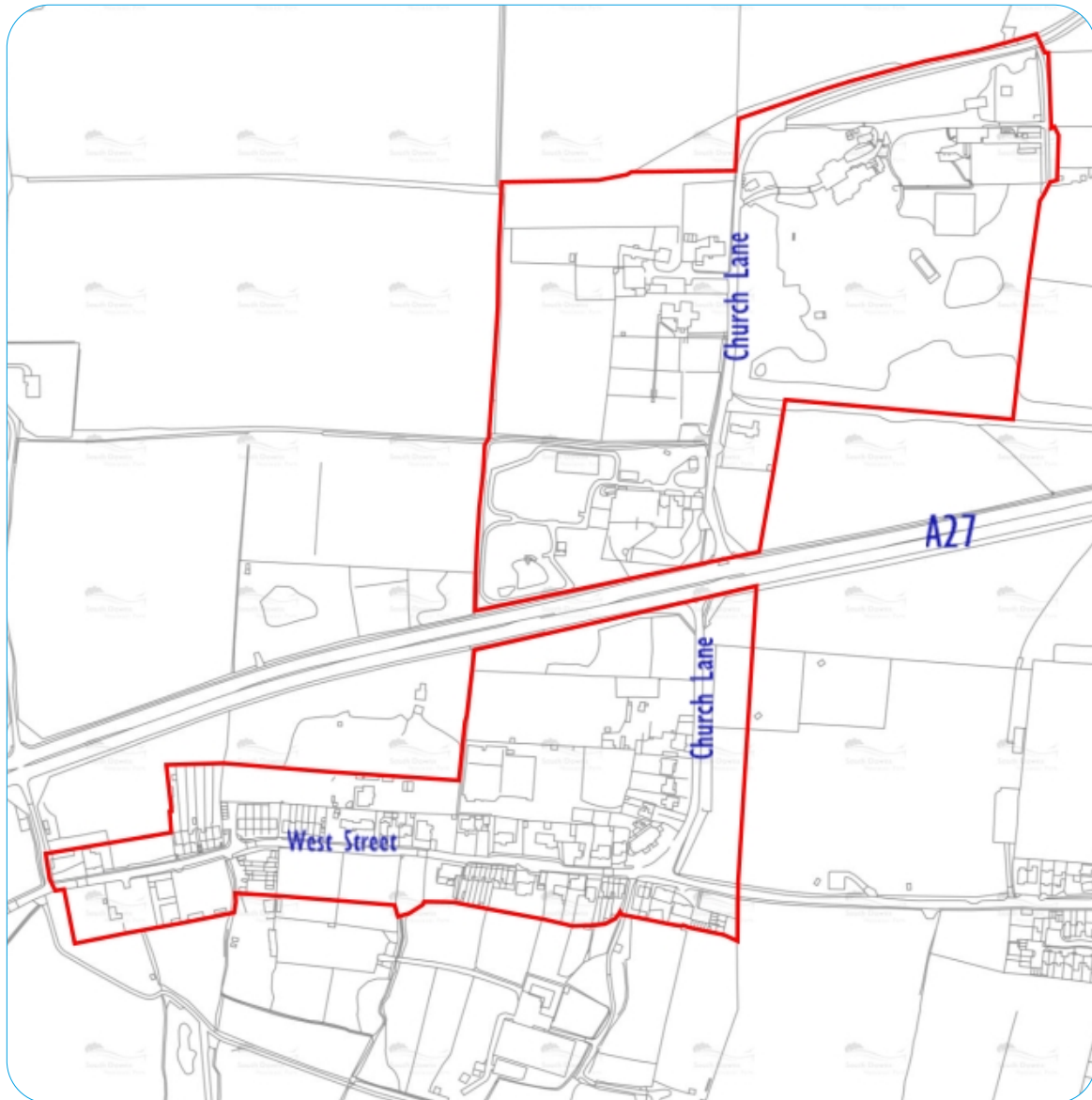


2.2 Today, the village is severed by the A27, with the northern part of the village sitting within the South Downs National Park boundary and extending into the grassland slopes of the Downs, and the southern half of the village within the developed coastal plains of Adur. East of the conservation area is the modern village of Sompting, incorporating the surviving elements of Cokeham, which in turn merges with Lancing.

2.3 The southern part of the parish was once part of the tidal estuary of the Broadwater and Sompting brook, and the name 'Sompting' is reputedly derived from the marshy characteristics of the land. The land rises gently to a low plateau where the historic villages

of Sompting and Cokeham lie, before rising more steeply up the chalk downland to altitudes of 400-500 feet at Park Brow, some two miles north of Sompting. Prehistoric, Romano-British and Bronze Age field systems have been recorded here.

2.4 The Sompting Conservation Area boundaries on either side of the A27 are shown below. South of the A27 it comprises the mainly residential part of the village west of Church Lane along West Street as far as Lambleys Lane which encloses Upton Farm. North of the A27 it incorporates the Church of St Mary and Sompting Abbots School, along with the intervening buildings along the northern part of Church Lane.



The boundaries of Sompting Conservation Area.

It should be noted that the carriageway of the A27 is excluded from the Conservation Area. These boundaries have been in place since 1992 and no amendments are proposed in this appraisal.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Early History

3.1 There is evidence of early and probably continuous settlement in the Parish of Sompting, where remains from late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Romano-British farmsteads and field systems and a Bronze Age bowl barrow have been discovered on the higher ground of the Downs at Park Brow in the north of the parish.

3.2 The settlement of Sompting has Saxon origins, and before 1066 was held by Lewin of King Edward. After the Norman Conquest, Sompting became part of the Rape of Bramber, under the control of William de Braose. At the time of the Great Survey in 1086, it had a population of 53 households, putting it in the largest 20% of settlements recorded in Domesday Book

3.3 The parish was divided into three manors: Lychpole, in the north of the parish; Sompting Abbots, granted first to the Abbey of Fecamp, and from the 18th century owned by the Crofts family and; Sompting Peverel (now Church Farm) owned by the Peverel family.

3.4 Sompting has long supported arable farming activities in the south, including the cultivation of barley, wheat, peas, oats and vetch; and pasture on the downland hills mainly of sheep, and some cattle. Such practices persisted from the 11th century, right through to the 19th and early 20th centuries.

3.5 The church of St Mary remains the earliest surviving building in the parish, dating from the 11th century and is a fine example of a 'Rhenish helm' pyramidal roof. As the name suggests, this roof form is largely found in the Rhineland and examples are very rare in Britain.

17th & 18th Centuries

3.6 Agriculture continued to dominate the economic life of the village throughout this period, and growth of the village was modest. The village comprised just the old streets of Church, Dankton and Busticle Lanes running north from West Street, and Cokeham, Lotts and Boundstone roads further east.

3.7 The manor of Sompting Abbots passed into the Crofts family in the mid 18th century, and was by this time a large house with a symmetrical south front of five bays with a central pediment and curved flight of steps to the piano nobile. Church Farmhouse, which was the manor house for the Sompting Peverel estate, is believed to still retain an earlier 17th century timber framed building beneath the flint and brick facades present today. This makes it one of the earliest surviving buildings in the conservation area. Within the southern part of the village, a number of 18th century houses survive including the listed buildings of Brooklands, the very fine Upton Farmhouse on West Street, and The Hermitage on Church Lane. Some buildings appear also to have been re-fronted in later years and may conceal earlier vernacular buildings.



Sompting as it appears on Yeakell and Gardner's Map of Sussex, published in 1778 -1783 (above) and Thomas Gream's map of 1799 (below)



3.8 The image below is an extract of the Sompting Estate Map of 1772 showing Sompting Abbots Manor House, and the church to the north and West Street largely undeveloped save the buildings at the junction of Church Lane, and Upton Farm at the western end of the settlement.



19th Century

3.9 Even for much of the 19th century, the principal economic activity continued to be agriculture, and the land use pattern was little altered with most of the land held by seven farms incorporating downland, arable and low-lying pasture. The New Shoreham to Worthing Railway line opened in 1845 and crossed the southern tip of the parish of Sompting. While this likely fueled some increase in development, the boundaries of the village were in large part kept intact.

3.10 Also emerging from the early 19th century was the market garden and glass house industry, where the longer history of orchards was expanded to include cultivation of soft

fruits, including grapes, peaches, melons, strawberries and figs, and vegetables, particularly mushrooms and peppers. The very high flint walls north of West Street enclosed these nurseries and provided shelter for the cultivation of the crops. In the village, terraced housing was constructed for the populations supporting these activities.

3.11 Accompanying the population increases was the rise of protestant worship, and a small chapel was built on West Street in 1887. This survives, although no longer in use for worship.

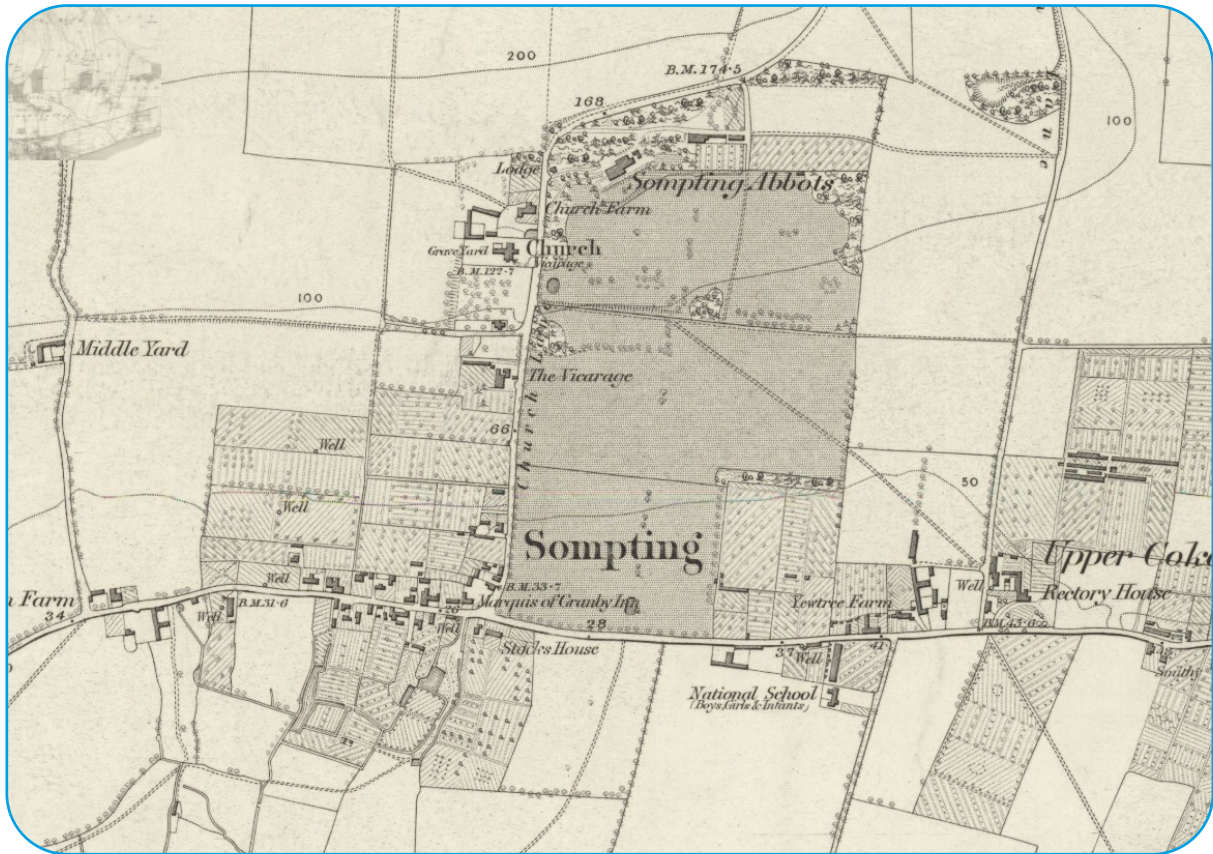
3.12 In the northern part of the conservation area, Sompting Abbots manor was rebuilt in 1856 in the gothic style. Built to the designs of P.C. Hardwick with money left by J.S. Crofts, the house is a spirited interpretation of vernacular flint houses, with stone dressings and an ornate ironwork coronet forming a landmark with the church tower in views from the north and east.

20th Century

3.13 Agriculture continued to be the principal industry of the village into the mid 20th century. Several acres of glasshouses were in use north of West Street operated by local firm G. Linfield Ltd. Worthing, along with the villages of Lancing, Sompting and Cokeham, all expanded rapidly during the 20th century, fueled by structural economic changes, and a mass housebuilding programme following the end of the Second World War. The scale of change to surrounding areas can be seen in the two maps on the following page. The northern part of the village, physically separated by the bypass, and the land ownership of Sompting Abbots has escaped significant development. Sompting Abbots became a school in 1921. West of Church Lane to the south, West Street too retains its historic form, albeit it with considerable infill development.

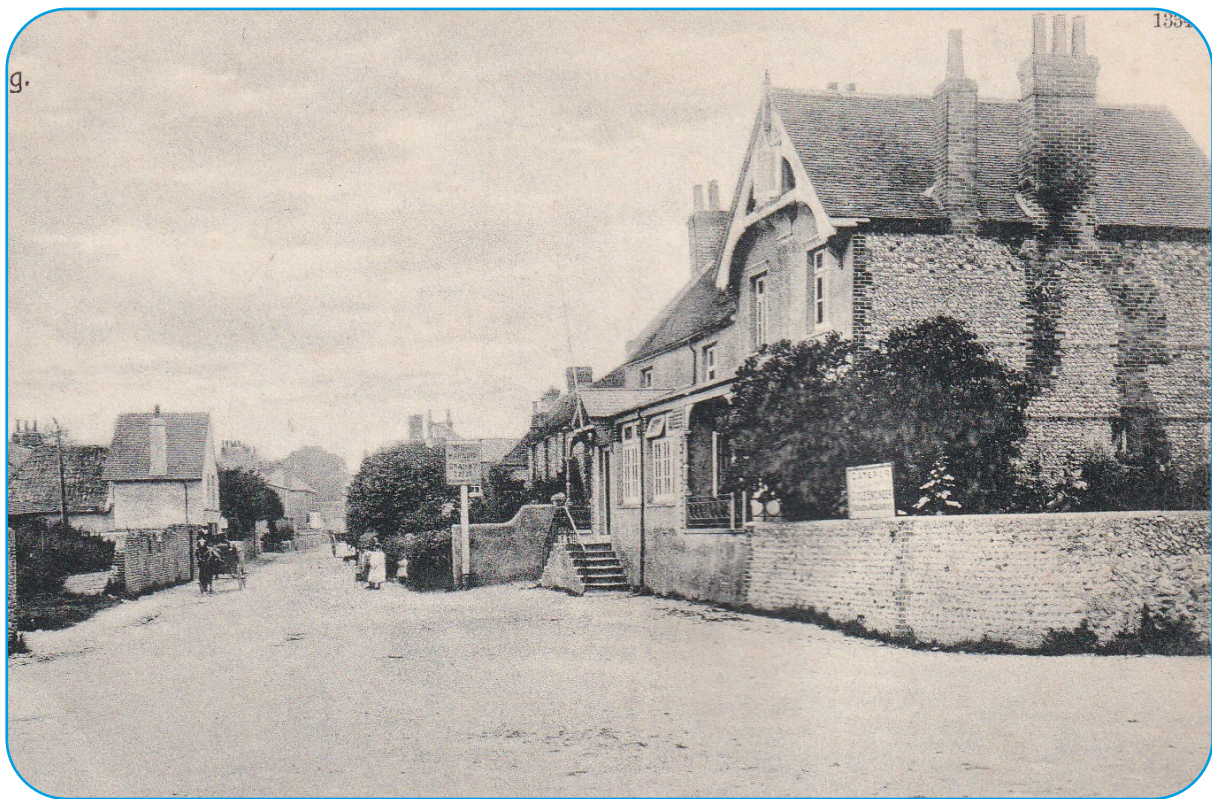
Historic Associations

3.14 In 1814 Queen Caroline, consort of George IV, stayed at Sompting Abbots before embarking for the continent. Edward John Trelawny, an adventurer, biographer and novelist well known for his friendships with the Romantic poets Shelley and Byron, lived in Sompting between 1870 and in 1881. His house in West Street continues to be known as Trelawny's cottage.



OS Maps 1879 (top) and 1930-1961 (bottom)





The original Marquis of Granby pub and part of West Street, as they appear in old postcards.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Landscape Context

4.1 Sompting is a village that spans two distinct landscape character zones: the alluvial tidal plains to the south, and the chalk downland slopes to the north. The physical separation of the northern part of the village by the present day A27 has separated the manors from the agricultural cottages that served the old estates, but this, along with the longevity of the Sompting Estate landholdings, and more recently through AONB and National Park landscape designations, have maintained the rural character of this part of the conservation area.

4.2 South of the A27, Sompting is a linear village, running west from Church Lane to Upton Farm in the west. South of the village is a diminishing wedge of open land stretching to the coast, allowing glimpsed views across the tidal plains from parts of the village. East and west of the conservation area are open fields associated with the farms of the present-day Sompting Estate. These provide an important rural context to the village otherwise now encroached upon by the expansion of Lancing to the east and Worthing to the west.

Settings & Views

4.3 Views within the conservation area itself are generally close, or kinetic as one moves through the narrow and sinuous streets of Church Lane, and West Street. These townscape views provide a sense of the overall character of the village, and the architectural qualities of it. In the southern character area, there are some attractive views across fields to the south as the buildings become more dispersed at the west end of West Street.

4.4 In the northern part of the conservation area, views are similarly tight. Key buildings are set well back from or face away from the road and views of listed buildings are glimpsed through trees or over hedgerows and flint walls.

4.5 There are some exceptional views from the downland footpaths above the conservation area, including that from 'The Mountain'. These long views take in the church and Church Farm, and afford glimpses of the decorative tower of Sompting Abbots; West Street can be made out in the mid view, beyond which are the tidal plains and built-up coastal area; and finally, the sea.

4.6 Also important in these long views from the north is the appreciation of the historic edges of Sompting defined by Upton Farm to the west and Yew Tree Farm to the east. In particular the fields north of Upton Farm and those crossed by the footpath southwest of Upton Farm provide an important rural context to the listed farmhouse and its outbuildings.

4.7 The remnant historic field patterns to the east and west of the southern part of the village are important to the appreciation of Sompting as a distinct historic settlement of rural origins. At the west end of the village, the fields north of Upton Farm, and those crossed by



Two views from 'The Mountain', towards Church Farm and St Mary's Church (above) and showing Upton Farm in the mid-ground separated by fields from the suburbs of Worthing (below).



footpaths south west of the village provide an important rural context to a village which for almost all of its history relied on farming and horticulture. Similarly, the approach from the east retains a pastoral character, and views towards the church, Sompting Abbots and the buildings along Church Lane to the south are visible at field edges.

Character Areas

4.8 The Conservation Area falls into two distinct character areas, that to the north of the A27 and that to the south. This is a function of the contrasting topography - dip slope and coastal plain - and the different scale, nature and form of the built heritage between the two areas.

4.9 This division has been compounded physically by the construction of the A27 and administratively by the creation of the National Park.

Character Area 1: North of the A27

4.10 The northern part of the conservation area is a loose, linear settlement, with buildings spaced quite widely along Church Street. It has retained its historic rural character.

4.11 It contains the most historically and architecturally significant buildings in the conservation area, including the parish church of St Mary's (grade I), along with Sompting Abbots School and Church Farm (formerly the manor associated with the Peverel family). The buildings are set spaced well apart in what can still be appreciated as their former agricultural or parkland settings.

4.12 Sompting Abbots School is an attractive gothic revival building with an inventive use of vernacular flint and brick building materials. It was built in 1856 to the design of a well-known architect, Philip C Hardwick. It is Grade II listed.

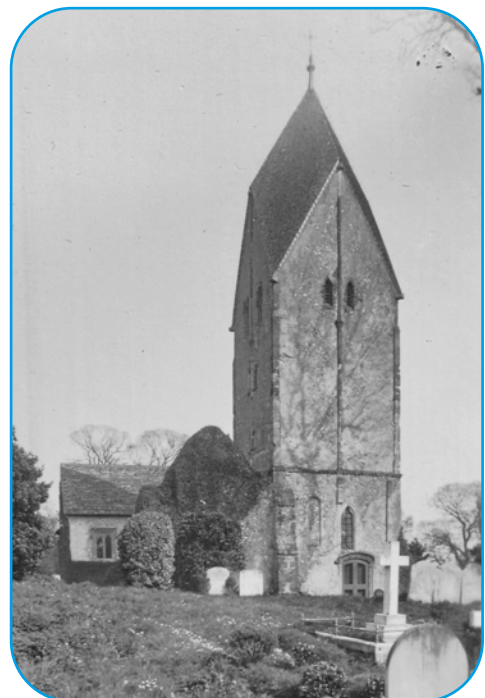
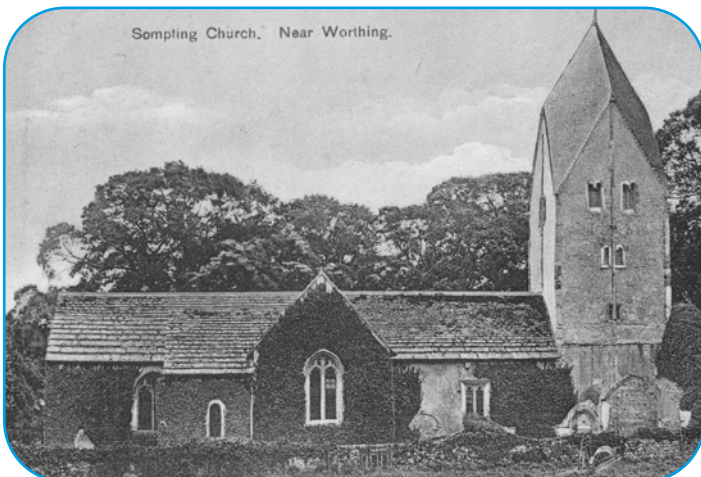
4.13 Surviving within the school grounds are remnants of the farmstead and gardens associated with the old manor house including barns, stables and even a pigsty and glasshouse within a walled garden. A ha-ha also survives along with flint walls and a ruined part of a building which now serves as a folly. The survivals are attractive brick and flint structures, some more altered than others. Few are publicly visible. The Lodge on Church Lane is also an attractive, and ornate building of the 19th century, complementing the architectural style of the 'new' Manor.

4.14 These buildings are complemented by the old vicarage (now Sompting Peverel's) at the southern end of Church Lane, and a handful of other buildings either in residential or school use. The building pattern is loose, and the historic houses tend to be detached, dating from the 18th century or earlier (excepting the rebuilt Sompting Abbots).

4.15 The flint walls which line the sinuous street denote the extent of manorial holdings.



The Parish Church of St Mary is a Grade I listed building with origins in the 11th century. Particularly notable is the Rhenish helm roof structure on the tower.





A typical lychgate stands at the entrance to the churchyard. Prior to the start of a funeral, coffins were often kept under the lych gate and, as here, a central pier was provided on which to rest the coffin.



Less usual is the use of such a pier as a war memorial. More information about those commemorated can be found at: <http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Sussex/Sompting.html>



Church Farmhouse is a Grade II listed 18th century structure, although an earlier timber-frame may survive encased within the later flint structure. It formed the manor house for the Peverel Estate.





Sompting Abbots (above) was built in 1856 to the design of architect P C Hardwick. It is Grade II listed.



Other buildings associated with Sompting Abbots include its lodge on Church Street and various structures linked to farming. Only the lodge is visible from the public realm.





North of the A27, Church Lane comprises a small number of fairly substantial buildings which are set back from the road and enveloped in verdant spaces. The substantial flint walls, mature trees, and other greenery are all important elements in defining the character of the street. Kerbs and pavements are limited.





The property now known as Sompting Peverel was originally the old Vicarage. It is now largely screened from public view from Church Street, with only its front door and boundary flint wall being visible.

The old photograph gives some sense of its appearance in the early 20th century.



Character Area 2: South of the A27

4.16 The southern part of the conservation area comprises two streets: the southern section of Church Lane and leading west from it, West Street. The streets are linear, mostly residential, with a number of terraces that once housed the agricultural workers of the Sompting Estate, or the market garden industry.

4.17 Church Lane south of the A27 is characterised on the west side by buildings of various ages, ranging from the 18th and 19th centuries to modern infill development.

4.18 To the east, and on higher ground are the fields belonging to Yew Tree Farm.

4.19 Church Lane terminates at its southern end with the site of the former Marquis of Granby pub, which dated from the 1930s and was itself a rebuild on the site of an older Inn. This has recently been demolished and will be replaced by a residential development which takes some inspiration from the form of the 1930s building. At the junction of Church Lane and West Street, is a mini roundabout, encircled by development of varying ages and quality including modern terraces, the 1930s pub and 19th century buildings. The forecourt of the public house is an open, but currently unkempt space.

4.20 Immediately north of West Street are the tall flint walls associated with the old market garden industry. The spaces they enclose are inaccessible, and at the time of survey, are used for grazing horses.

4.21 West Street is at the eastern end a linear village of continuous, fairly tight knit development on both sides of the street. West of the Gardeners Arms, the southern side of the street is enclosed either by characteristic flint walls or mixed native hedgerows and there is a looser agricultural building pattern allowing views across the fields of the tidal plain. On the north side of West Street at its western end are terraces of various ages and quality. Along its length within the conservation area, West Street is narrow with an intermittent footway on either side, and buildings with short front gardens often sit hard on the road.

4.22 Upton Farm (grade II listed) at the western end of the conservation area is undoubtedly the finest of the buildings within this character area, and it retains its agricultural setting.

4.23 The flint boundary walls are an important unifying feature within this character area, even where modern, or fragmentary.



Upton Farmhouse: The five-bay south front shown above is early to mid 18th century in construction. Parts of the rear of the house and some of its interiors are probably considerably earlier.

Original farm buildings which formed part of Upton Farm lie to the west of the house.





An impressive farm complex sits on the opposite side of the road to Upton Farmhouse and presumably was part of the whole farmstead.





Terraced housing, of varying designs and quality, is a significant feature of the southern character area.

They are largely 19th or early 20th century in date and often accommodated workers in the horticultural industry.





Other buildings in the southern character area are mostly constructed in a palette of traditional buildings materials.





Street views in the southern character area.

The ubiquity of cars, both parked and through traffic, has a significant impact on the quality of the southern character area.

The contrast with the rather more bucolic scene shown in a photograph of 1922 is striking.





The Old Post Office is now in residential use but has retained a rather unattractive shopfront.

Recreation of the original shopfront, shown below, as well as the sash windows, represents an opportunity to enhance the building and its contribution to the wider Conservation Area.





Flint walls make a significant contribution to the quality of the southern character area. These include walls which form front boundaries to properties and land facing West Street.

Paths running north from West Street gave access to the horticultural areas beyond and these too often have flint walls. The flint walls that enclosed the nurseries north of West Street provided shelter for the crops.

Some of the walls are not in good condition and require repair and maintenance.



Buildings of the Conservation Area

4.24 The historic built form of Sompting is relatively rich, considering the small size of the conservation area, and clearly illustrates the many layers of the history of the village. There are two landmark buildings in the conservation area, both in the northern character area. They are St Mary's Church with its distinctive 'rheinish helm' pyramidal tower and Sompting Abbotts School, an attractive gothic revival building with an inventive use of vernacular flint and brick building materials. Both these buildings are highly visible from the low-lying surrounds of the village, particularly in the winter months. They represent the long history of the church and manorial lands of Sompting.

4.25 Sompting Abbotts includes within its ground's remnants of the farmstead and gardens associated with the old manor house including barns, stables and even a pigsty and glasshouse within a walled garden. A ha-ha also survives along with flint walls and a ruined part of a building which now serves as a folly. The survivals are attractive brick and flint structures, some more altered than others. Few are publicly visible. The Lodge on Church Lane is also an attractive, and ornate building of the 19th century, complementing the architectural style of the 'new' Manor.

4.26 Elsewhere throughout the village the principal architectural styles are of the 'polite' Georgian architecture of the 18th and early 19th centuries, and the vernacular revival styles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There are also a number of modern buildings throughout the conservation area, which while appropriate in scale, vary in the success of their integration with the historic settlement.

4.27 The 18th century buildings are generally detached, have uniformity in appearance, or have sought to impose visual order on older vernacular buildings, as at Church Farm and Sompting Peverel's in the northern part of the conservation area. These buildings are generally constructed in the prevalent building stone of flint or brick, occasionally with stone dressings. Some examples are rendered, and have timber sash windows, and classical doorcases or porches. Most have shallow pitched roofs, some behind a pediment as at The Hermitage. Nearly all buildings have been altered or extended over their lifetimes, which in some cases has resulted in inappropriately detailed joinery.

4.28 The majority of the remaining historic buildings in the conservation area date from the 19th century. They tend to be terraces, semi-detached properties or occasionally, villas such as Trelawney's Cottage. The buildings are again generally two storey and flat fronted although some are ornamented with bow windows, continuous porches or shopfronts.

Heritage assets

4.29 There are eight listed buildings within the Conservation Area. All are Grade II, except for the Grade I Parish Church. The link against each connects to the list entry for each building on the National Heritage List for England, and they are shown on the map at the back of this document.

North of the A27 are:

- Sompting Abbot - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1027881>
- Church Farmhouse - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1193284>
- Parish Church of St Mary - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1353763>
- Sompting Peverel - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1193261>

and South of the A27 are:

- The Hermitage - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1027880>
- Brooklands - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1027848>
- Myrtle Cottage - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1353750>
- Upton Farm House - <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1250625>

4.30 Heritage assets are commonly considered to be buildings or structures, monuments, places or landscapes that have sufficient significance to warrant consideration in the planning process. They include designated assets such as scheduled monuments, conservation areas and listed buildings; and non-designated assets such as locally listed buildings. Conservation Area Appraisals provide an opportunity for local planning authorities to also identify unlisted buildings that contribute positively to the character or appearance of the conservation area. Similarly, appraisals can also identify buildings that negatively contribute to the conservation area, usually because of inappropriate scale, poor design or incongruous materials.

4.31 Those buildings that have been identified as positive contributors within Sompting are identified on the map on page 3. In general, positive contributors have a degree of architectural and historic integrity, which may be derived from a street-facing elevation, or from another viewpoint; and they therefore illustrate an important part of the history of Sompting. The images below show some of the buildings that contribute positively to the conservation area. Most of the flint boundary walls should similarly be considered to contribute positively to the character and appearance of the Sompting Conservation Area.

Building Materials

4.32 There is a generally consistent palette of building materials used throughout the village. There are very few buildings dating from earlier than the 18th century, although Church Farm is likely to have earlier origins than its external appearance suggests. There are therefore no timber framed buildings that are identifiable externally.

4.33 The most characteristic of the local building materials is flint, found in the chalk beds of the downs, or on the beaches. The most commonly found broken flints are known as field flints, and would have been revealed as a by-product of ploughing the fields. In higher

status buildings there are examples of knapped and coursed flints. Flint is used extensively in both buildings and boundary walls throughout the conservation area.

4.34 Elsewhere, brick is the predominant building material, either in local red clays, or in later 19th century buildings, yellow London clays. Where visible bricks are usually laid in Flemish bond, but have also frequently been rendered. Red bricks are commonly used in window and door dressings on flint buildings. There are examples of tile hanging, although often on more modern buildings, and roofing materials include both clay tiles and slates.

Boundaries and Streetscape

4.35 The unifying feature of the conservation area is the extensive use of flint boundary walls, which line Church Lane and West Street on one or both sides, if not continuously, then for much of the length of the conservation area. The flint walls are not homogenous, but vary in terms of their height, intactness, quality, and age. Some are built of coursed cobbled flints, while others are built of broken field flints laid in a more random arrangement. Older walls tend to be taller and bonded with granular lime mortars, while the more modern walls are generally lower, with brick dressings and cement mortars. Flint walls are used both to enclose residential properties and farms, and importantly in Sompting, to enclose the gardens and orchards used in the 19th and 20th centuries for the commercial production of fruit and vegetables.

4.36 Roads and pavements throughout Sompting are in modern tarmac, and there is no historic street paving. There are few pavements in the northern part of the conservation area, and in the south, they are modern, narrow and intermittent rarely lining both sides of West Street. The footpaths that wind through the old market gardens in centre of the village north to the A27 are unmade and lined by the tall flint walls of the market gardens.

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 The condition of the conservation area can broadly be summarised as good in the northern character area, and moderate to poor in the southern character area. The northern area benefits from most of the historic buildings carrying a statutory designation, which affords them greater protection from inappropriate alterations and development within the setting of listed buildings. The status bestowed by the National Park designation provides a further layer of protection in terms of development constraints within that area.

5.2 Sompting Abbotts School, as a single tenant responsible for a large number of buildings and much of the land within this area, similarly allows for a consistent approach to managing change. The main listed building and grounds are well maintained, although the extension of the stable block has resulted in harm to this curtilage listed structure. There would be benefit in the school undertaking a Conservation Management Plan to guide future development needs at the school if this is absent or out of date, in order to appropriately conserve the listed and curtilage listed buildings on the school's estate.

5.3 The A27 is one of the most significant problems for the conservation area as a whole, severing as it does the church and manors from the village proper. The junctions of the A27 with Church Lane to both the north and south are poor markers of access points to the conservation area, marred by poorly maintained grass verges, traffic signage and self-seeded trees and shrubs.

5.4 The southern part of the conservation area presents a number of issues that threaten the historic integrity of the village. These are summarised below:

- In spite of the A27 relief road, there remains heavy traffic through the village which also suffers from significant on-street parking pressures, and single lane traffic movement along most of West Street
- Excessive traffic signage and street furniture, particularly at the junction of Church Lane and West Street
- Some modern infill housing exists of inappropriate design and/or materials
- Damaged or missing sections of flint walls, particularly along Church Lane south of the A27
- Inappropriate modern flint walls, or loss of enclosure to some building plots
- Nearly all original windows and doors to unlisted historic buildings have been lost with inappropriate, or uPVC replacements.

- Pedestrian movement along West Street is hampered by traffic, and intermittent pavements. The street is a hazardous and hostile space for pedestrians.
- Poorly maintained tarmac between historic nursery sites leading from West Street to A27
- Development pressure on the edges of the village

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The overall character of the conservation area is compromised by the cumulative effects of the issues outlined above, which largely relate to the southern part of the conservation area. The area north of the A27 has seen little harm, probably because of the listed status of the main buildings and, more recently, by virtue of its location within the National Park.

6.2 The following is a set of recommendations, some of which are aspirational, to improve the future management of the conservation area.

The Impact of Traffic

6.3 The volume of traffic on West Street has a serious negative impact on the quality of the village, both as a historic settlement and as a place to live. Much of this is through-traffic trying to avoid the traffic lights on the A27 i.e 'rat running'.

6.4 National Highways has consulted on options for improvements to the A27 in the area. West Sussex County Council has consulted on improvements to cycling and walking facilities in the area.

Recommendation: Any proposed highway improvement schemes in the area should have regard to the character of the conservation area.

The loss of traditional architectural features & traditional materials

6.5 Minor developments such as domestic alterations and extensions can normally be carried out without planning permission under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (GPDO). Article 4 of the GPDO gives local planning authorities the power to limit these 'permitted development rights' where they consider it necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area. An Article 4 Direction is therefore a tool available to a local authority to allow greater control over the types of changes that can cumulatively erode the historic character of a conservation area, for example loss of traditional windows or boundary treatments.

6.6 The loss of traditional architectural features and traditional materials has been identified as an issue which is harming the character of the southern part of the Conservation Area. In particular, most of the original windows and doors to historic buildings within the southern character area have been lost and have frequently been exchanged for uPVC or historically inaccurate replacements. The creation of an Article 4 direction may be justified covering the area south of the A27. It would not be necessary for the northern character area.

6.7 It is not suggested that any such Direction includes further controls on windows because most of the historic windows have already been lost. However, there are other

alterations to properties in the conservation area, particularly those that relate to boundary treatments, which have harmed the area. The flint walls throughout Sompting are particularly important to the historic character of the village and their loss or replacement with inappropriate substitutes is harmful to its special character.

6.8 In addition to any Article 4 Direction, there would be merit in producing a settlement-specific Design Guide, which could set out advice for homeowners about appropriate alterations, which might over time reverse some of the more harmful alterations.

6.9 At the same time, there would be considerable benefit in raising awareness of the conservation area designation and what it means for buildings within Sompting. This could be achieved through a public consultation exercise for an Article 4 Direction and Design Guide

RECOMMENDATION – Within the part of the conservation area south of the A27, imposition of an Article 4 Direction should be considered to allow additional planning controls for any works fronting a highway or public right of way and which would involve:

- Any alteration to a roof including roof coverings, rooflights and solar panels.
- Building a porch.
- Enlargement, improvement or alteration such as an extension, removal or changes to architectural features.
- The provision of a hard surface.
- The erection, construction, improvement or alteration (including demolition) of a fence, gate, wall or other means of enclosure.
- Removing totally or partially walls, gates, fences or other means of enclosure.
- Exterior painting of previously unpainted surfaces or changes of external colour schemes, or covering walls by render or like finishes.
- and the following whether or not it fronts a highway or open space:
- Removing or altering chimneys.

Infrastructure and public realm

6.10 The conservation area also would benefit from a comprehensive approach to installation of, or alteration to, road, street, telecommunications, and lighting infrastructure. A survey of the current situation should inform production of a Design Guide and lead on to proposals to rationalise and improve the quality of the various elements of infrastructure. All relevant authorities should be reminded of the Conservation Area designation and the Design Guide promoted to encourage a more thoughtful approach to installation of signage, street markings, telephone and broadband boxes, litter bins and road surfaces.

6.11 If it proves feasible to reduce the through traffic, an opportunity will arise to

undertake a more extensive public realm enhancement scheme for the road, perhaps some form of shared surface to make the village more 'pedestrian friendly'.

6.12 Historic England's Guidance 'Streets for All' provides a framework for managing change to the public realm in historic areas:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/heag149-sfa-national/>

RECOMMENDATION – That a Design Guide be prepared and promoted to all relevant authorities with an objective to rationalise and raise the quality of insertions into the public realm, including signage, street markings, telephone and broadband boxes, litter bins and road surfaces.

RECOMMENDATION – That the feasibility of a public realm enhancement scheme for the main road be explored. This would include proposals to rationalise assorted infrastructure, road signs, telecommunications apparatus, street lighting etc.

New development & alterations to existing buildings within the conservation area

6.13 Within the conservation area, development opportunities in the northern character area are limited, because of the landscape and heritage designations. In the southern character area, there is some potential for limited infill development, although the looser spatial arrangement of buildings at the western end of West Street, particularly to the south, should be respected. Applications for development within the walled garden areas of the historic nurseries should be informed by an understanding of the historic values of these areas and should respect the high level of enclosure afforded by historic flint walls.

6.14 Some of the modern development throughout the conservation area is poor quality and makes little reference to local vernacular materials and designs. As proposals come forward for redevelopment, or alteration of buildings in the conservation area, the design guide issued with this appraisal should be used to inform decision taking.?

6.15 Regrettably, most of the original windows and doors to historic buildings within the southern character area have been lost and have frequently been exchanged for uPVC or historically inaccurate replacements.

6.16 ADC has produced generic design guidance for residential extensions and alterations within the district, which can be found on its website at :

<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/Media,98785,smxx.pdf>

and guidance more specifically related to Sompting will also appear on its website once it has been completed. The SDNPA has adopted a similar general guidance document at:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/supplementary-planning-documents/adopted-design-guide-spd/>

RECOMMENDATION - that (i) due regard be paid to the duty on the Local Planning Authority by Section 69(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 when considering planning applications within the Conservation Area; (ii) that planning and Listed Building Consent applications be determined in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance, including this Appraisal; and (iii) that any opportunities to secure improvements during negotiations be secured as far as possible.

Development affecting the setting of the Conservation Area

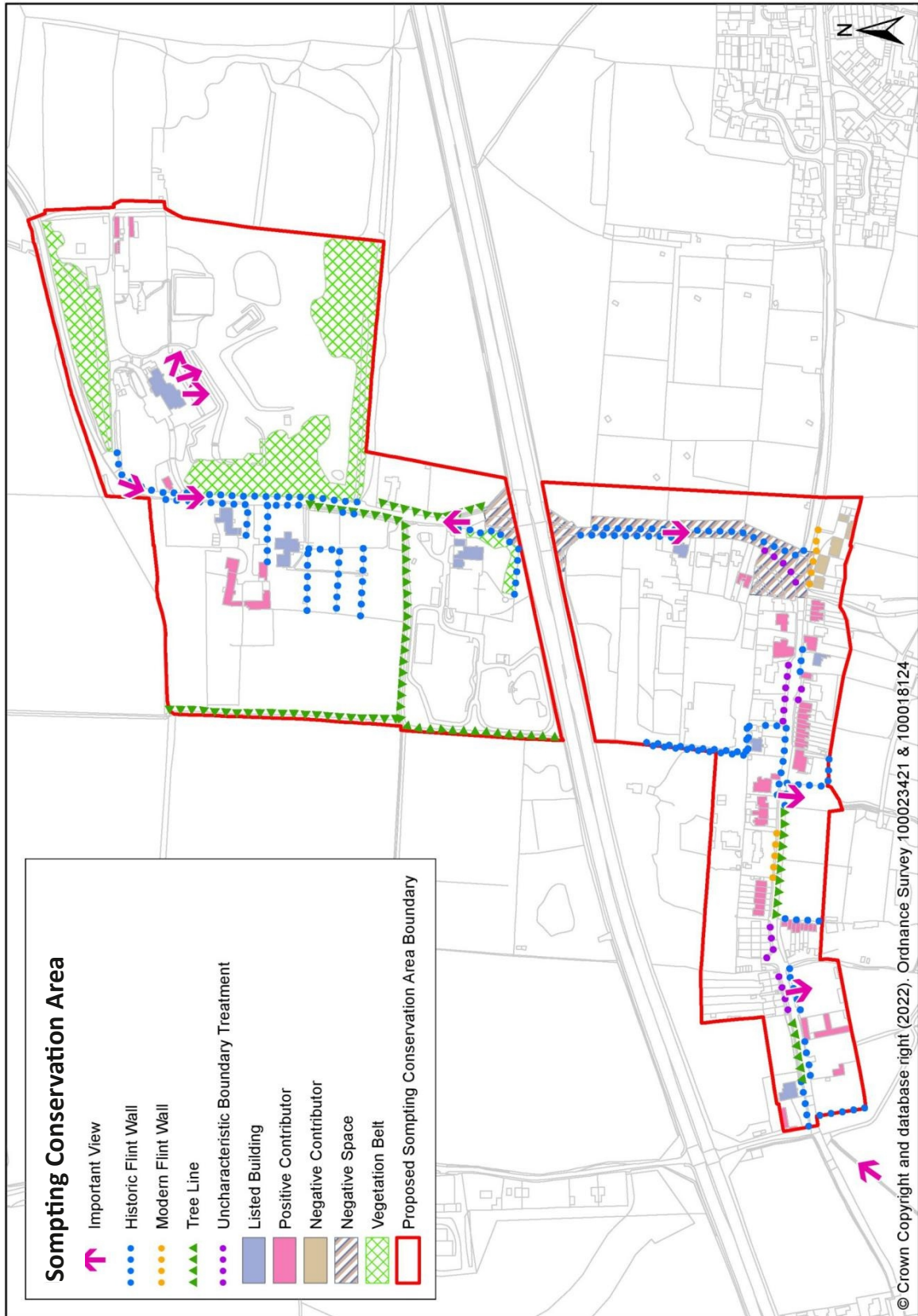
6.17 Development on the fields east of Sompting, those north and south-west of Upton Farm, and south of West Steet should be resisted. The surrounding landscape provides a rural context and setting to the conservation area, which has for most of its history relied on agriculture and horticulture. The historic and aesthetic values of the village would be eroded if the landscape setting of the village is diminished.

RECOMMENDATION: That development on the fields east of Sompting, those north and south-west of Upton Farm, and south of West Street and which would erode the setting of the conservation area should be resisted.

Management of Sompting Abbots School

6.18 Sompting Abbots School is responsible for a large number of buildings and much of the land within the northern character area. At present, the main listed building and grounds are well maintained but there would be long-term benefit in the school undertaking a Conservation Management Plan to guide future development needs at the school if this is absent or out of date.

RECOMMENDATION: That Sompting Abbot School be encouraged to, and assisted with, the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for its site to ensure that any future development appropriately conserves the listed and curtilage listed buildings on the school's estate.





CONTACTS

For general conservation issues relating to the area south of the A27:

**The Conservation Officer,
Adur District Council,
Worthing Town Hall, Chapel Road,
Worthing BN11 9SA
email: planning@adur-worthing.gov.uk**

For general conservation issues relating to the area north of the A27:

**The Conservation Officer,
South Downs National Park Authority,
South Downs Centre, North Street,
Midhurst GU29 9SB
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