

Conservation and Design Advice Leaflet No. 3



BRAMBER CONSERVATION AREA



Horsham
District
Council

December 1997

Please keep this leaflet
for future reference

HOW CAN YOU HELP ?

As most of the land is privately owned, we need your help to maintain and enhance the character of the Conservation Area. You can help by:-

- * suggesting possible enhancement measures and notifying us when problems occur;
- * contacting us before embarking upon any proposed alteration or extension to your property to establish whether planning permission and/or listed building or conservation area consent is required;
- * ensuring that any proposed alteration to your property and land respect the special character of the area, eg. by using the correct materials and details.

FURTHER ADVICE

If you need further advice or wish to discuss your ideas in more detail please telephone the Planning Directorate (01403 215100) or write to the Council at the following address:

Director of Planning,
Horsham District Council,
Park House,
North Street,
Horsham
West Sussex RH12 1RL

This leaflet is produced as part of a series of advisory notes on Conservation Areas and Design guidance and has been the subject of public consultation. For details of other literature available contact the Planning Directorate at the above address.

INTERESTING FEATURES

Some of the features which help give Bramber its unique character.



ENHANCEMENT SCHEMES

The Council wishes to encourage schemes which preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The key objective is to encourage the repair, re-instatement or retention of features which would reinforce the special character of the area. Grants may be made available to local organisations towards certain enhancement schemes.

In Bramber schemes which would be of particular benefit are:

1. The introduction of seasonal trailing plants within the car park and central area. This will help soften the hard appearance of the area.
2. The undergrounding of overhead wires and removal of redundant poles which would improve the visual character of the area and views to the Castle.

INTRODUCTION - LOCAL HISTORY

Location

Bramber is a small historic village located along an ancient causeway across the floodplain of the River Adur. To the north of the village the level meadows of Bramber Brooks form a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), and contain a Scheduled Ancient Monument. To the south the gentle sloping hills of the South Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide a dramatic backdrop. The village is situated 1 km south west of Steyning and is the main village within a Parish of approximately 800 people.

Origins and Development

The Motte and Bailey Castle was built by William de Braose to defend the administrative 'rape' of Bramber in 1073. Built near to the Saxon port of Steyning, sited on a strategic promontory, it had a commanding view of the River Adur and surrounding land. It was

probably deserted as a residence in the 15th Century. The castle was in ruins by the 16th Century and revived as something of a theme park by the Victorians. The castle and mound is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The Church of St. Nicholas was built soon after the castle, partly as its chapel. It is sited below the motte, overlooking the village. Its chancel and tower were rebuilt in the 18th Century and it has some 20th Century additions.

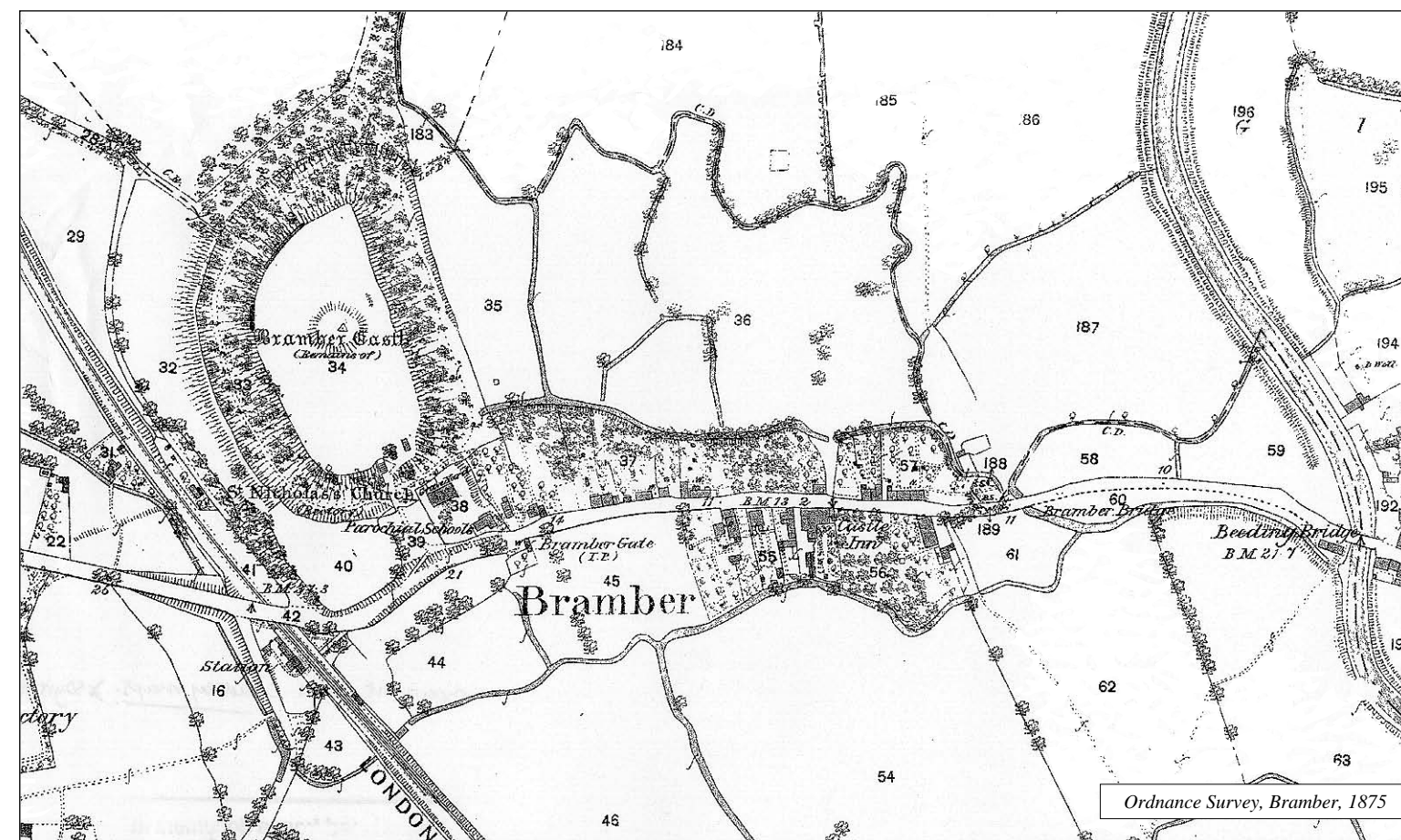
To enable the construction of the feudal stronghold a raised timber and flint cobble causeway was built across the mud flats of the River Adur for the delivery of materials. The security offered by the church and castle, along with a bridged crossing point over the river, attracted settlers.

During the early medieval period a market village formed beneath the castle, with a single street built on the causeway. The village was a focus for trade and the medieval salt making industry. The retreat of the sea and the silting up of the marshes by the 14th Century had an influence on the form of the village that is still present today. A matrix of drainage channels were introduced across the mudflats north and south of the village. The land was reclaimed for grazing, but was still prone to flooding. The original course of the river and ditches formed strong physical constraints to the form of the village.

A turnpike road was cut through the castle mound in 1780, improving access to the village. The village and its castle became tourist attractions from the 1800's onwards. The opening of the railway station in 1861 encouraged a period of re-building, visitors increased and the village was host to many tea rooms and gardens. The early 20th century saw the village at its peak of tourist activity.

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POLICIES FOR PRESERVATION

Any new development, alterations or extensions to properties should respect the characteristics set out in this leaflet. Special regard should be had to the following:

- Natural exterior materials, where unpainted, should remain so. The painting of such materials, e.g. flint walls and brick dressings, could harm the village's distinctive character.
- Repairs and re-instatement in natural materials, such as field flint, brick, clay tiles and slate, are preferred to re-building in modern materials. The re-use of 'in situ' materials or similar is to be encouraged on all traditional buildings.
- Repairs to existing windows are preferred to wholesale replacements. If alterations to windows or replacement windows are considered necessary, wooden casements or sash windows with traditional style glazing bars are preferred, and should be of a scale similar to those existing.
- Extensions to buildings should respect spaces between buildings and the linear nature of the village. In many cases they should be restricted to the rear of properties and should not dominate the scale of the original building.
- Curtilage, retaining and bridge walls are important linear features which should be retained. Repairs should be carried out in traditional materials wherever possible and the use of hard impervious concrete mortars should be avoided.
- Interesting features that add to the distinctiveness of the area should be retained and repaired in traditional materials when necessary.
- Simple wooden panelled doors with or without glazing should be maintained.
- Traditional gravel asphalt and gravel surfaces should be retained; these are more appropriate than the recent use of brick pavements used in several developments throughout the Conservation Area.
- Hedgerows, trees and other planting should be maintained, and in some cases enhanced.

Specialist advice on the above matters can be obtained from the Planning Department in conjunction with West Sussex County Council.

CHARACTER SETTING

Landscape Setting

The Conservation Area is situated within a broad U shaped chalk valley on reclaimed land on the valley floor. Gently undulating valley sides rise to the east and west. The castle is prominent in the landscape.

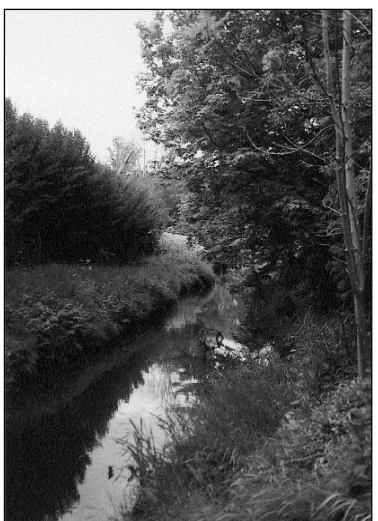
Spaces between buildings along The Street allow important glimpses across to the Downs. The floodplain separates the Downs from the village. Fields are large, divided by ditches or wire fences and used for grazing. The village is a focal point from the Downs, evident from the network of footpaths in the area.

To the north the level irregular shaped fields are bounded by hedgerows and trees and form part of Bramber Brooks SNCI. Some of these fields include remnants of medieval salt working mounds; these form a nationally important Scheduled Ancient Monument.

The Conservation Area's northern and southern boundaries are defined by ditches, hedges and trees. The ditches are now an important wildlife habitat. The medieval layout has been breached by informal extensions to gardens and in one place with the development of the caravan park. Adjacent to this, the former kitchen garden of St Mary's is bounded by trees that contribute to the overall setting of the Conservation Area.



The public car park allows important views across the floodplain, a reminder of the village's origin



The strong linear form contained by trees and ditches for many centuries should not be further diminished.

CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

Buildings and Materials

The gradual development and re-development of The Street has resulted in a variety of building styles and materials. Elements that are essential to the Conservation Area's distinctive character are:

- unpainted field flint buildings and walls;
- variety of natural building materials
- simple traditional architectural features
- variety of roofs and chimneys
- close proximity of buildings to the road
- vegetation along curtilage margins and in gardens
- walls, fences and hedges
- variety of building style, siting and age
- discontinuous footways



The oldest buildings, many on timber frames, retain a traditional scale and detailing. Generally 1 - 1½ storeys with dormer windows, except for St Mary's House. The buildings abut the road and are faced in field flint, brick, plaster or are tile hung. Windows are small wooden casements with brick dressings and glazing bars or leadwork. Roofs are often hip or half hip in hand fired clay tiles or Horsham stone. Catslide extensions are a feature.

The larger scale, 19th Century, two storey buildings are mainly in brick, faced in render or pebble dashed Portland cement. There are also a number of distinctive field flint buildings. Windows are large, either vertical sash or wooden casements set within 'bay' frontages. Low pitched slate roofs add contrast, often decorated with terracotta finials and brick or render chimneys. The buildings often have small front gardens with brick or flint walls, iron railings or hedges.



Modern buildings are often set behind the older buildings, with driveways and open gardens reducing the enclosed character in parts of the Conservation Area.

Early 20th Century buildings are mainly single storey dormer built in brick, which is often painted, with small front gardens, driveways and garages. Doors are simple and windows are mainly wooden casements with glazing bars, or leadwork. Roofs are gable or half hip, mainly in tile.

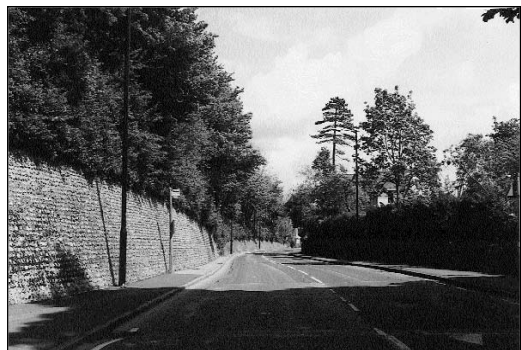
Buildings dating from later this century are predominantly two storey. Brick is dominant, with render, weatherboarding or tile hanging on upper storey's, with modern doors and windows. Roofs are gable or hip in clay pantile or tile.

TREES AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

The abundance of trees, shrubs and hedges within the Conservation Area are important in retaining the rural character. Attractive small and large gardens, informal road margins, and areas of trees around the Church and Bramber Bridge provide important green features throughout the Conservation Area. The village is enclosed by hedgerows and trees. These reinforce the Conservation Area boundary and are often glimpsed through spaces between buildings.

Throughout the area mature trees are found in gardens and alongside The Street, some have distinctive shapes due to surgery work. Yew and Lime trees are common along with ornamental and native hedges, small shrubs, and climbing and trailing plants on curtilage and building walls. Ivys form interesting features on dead trees and telegraph poles. The importance of several of the trees to the character of the area has been recognised by the introduction of Tree Preservation Orders.

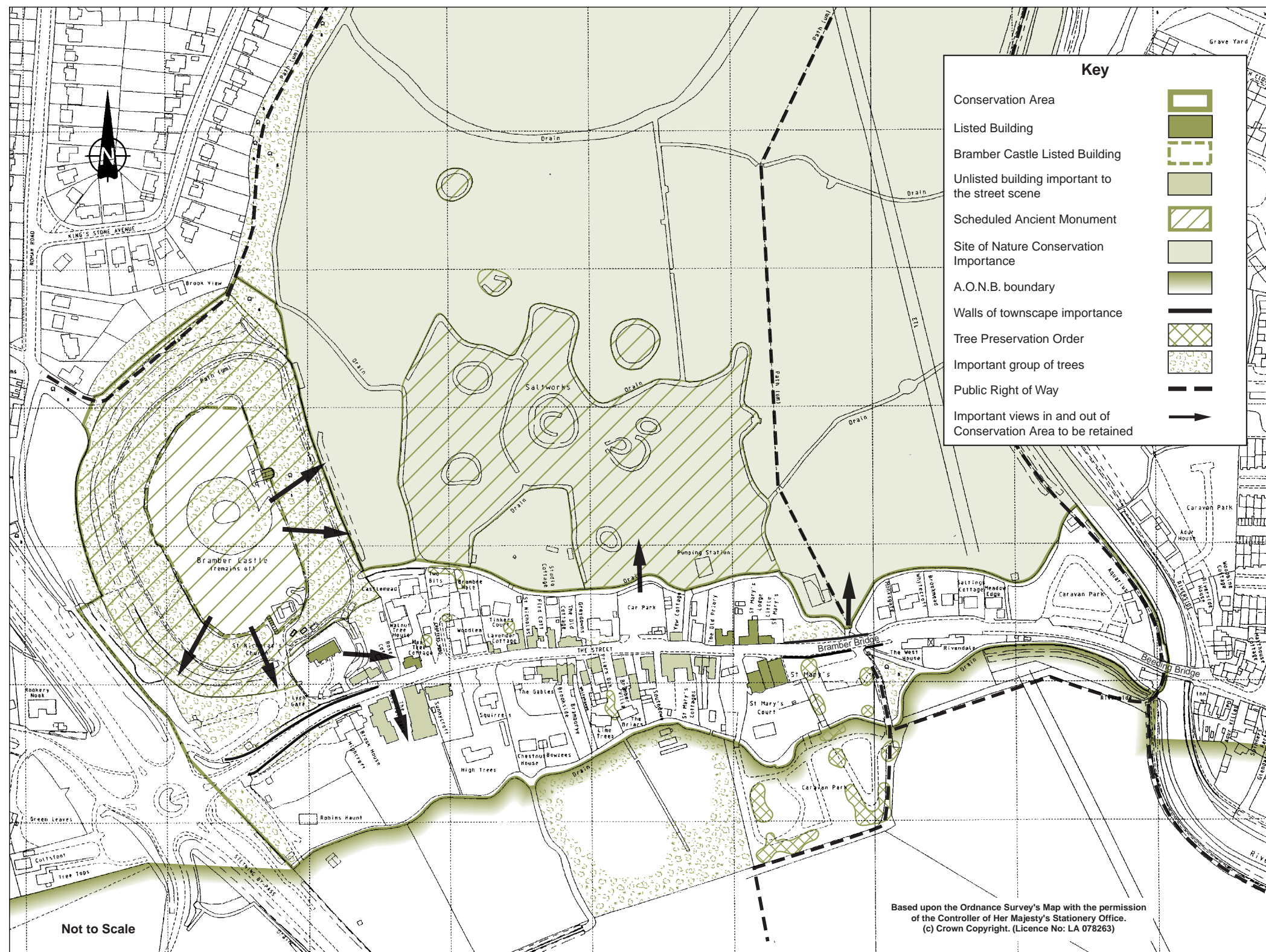
Some of the modern developments lack mature green features and are more 'urban' in character. The introduction of shrubs and trailing plants can help to soften their appearance and help integrate developments to reflect the general rural character of the Conservation Area. Assistance regarding suitable species can be obtained from the Planning Department.



The flint retaining walls and tree lined cutting are important features at the entrance to the Conservation Area. This linear character continues throughout the area.



The castle mound is an important green open space; the trees create an enclosed and isolated area.



DETAILED APPRAISAL OF THE VILLAGE

Castle and Church

At the western end of the village the historic core is formed by the impressive remnants of the Grade 1 listed Norman Castle and Church. Set on a small hill they are physically removed from the rest of the village; reinforcing their importance.

The castle was constructed around 1073 in flint, chalk and limestone; faced with Caen stone and knapped flints. All that remains now is a solitary monolith, an impressive local landmark, remnants of rooms and the collapsed perimeter wall. Buildings once existed on the treed mound in the centre of the hill. Despite the proximity of the Steyning bypass there is a tranquil character to this part of the Conservation Area. The castle is owned by the National Trust and managed by English Heritage.

The flint and Caen stone church was substantially rebuilt and altered in the 18th and 19th centuries. A bricked up Norman arch indicates the original cruciform shape. Some Norman features were re-used in subsequent alterations.



A narrow tree enclosed path leads from the road to the church, past the impressive flint schoolhouse, to the churchyard with its attractive oak lychgate.



The Church has several interesting features, including a hollow tower, stained glass and perpendicular windows.

The Street

The linear character is emphasised through sequential views along The Street. The variety of building styles and ages along The Street are often concentrated in groups creating contrasting elements within the Conservation Area and preventing a monotonous streetscape.

Beneath the castle mound, the Tollgate Restaurant and Hotel marks the location of the Old Tollgate that was introduced with the turnpike road. The sympathetic new building and extension to the Victorian building maintain a strong built frontage; gable ends abut the pavement. A strong vista has been created to the south of The Street. The retention of the traditional shopfront reflects a former use.

Nearby is a concentration of late 20th Century housing, built on land that was used for grazing or gardens, the retention of some of their more mature landscape features has prevented them from detracting from the special interest of the Conservation Area. The enclosed character is weakened slightly by houses, sited opposite each other, that are set back from the road in open gardens. The use of gravel on driveway respects the rural character of the area and is therefore a more appropriate material than the tarmac or brick pavements used elsewhere.



Modern infill development contrasts with the vernacular design of 16th and 17th century houses abutting the north side of the road

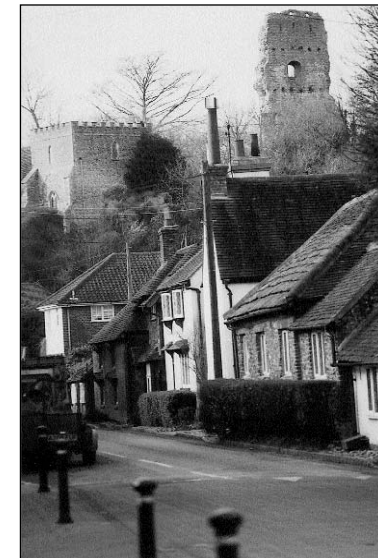


The mature trees and fence along driveways create narrow vistas, introducing alternative views along The Street; a characteristic common to recent developments in the vicinity

A collection of older buildings abut the north side of the road. Although all have a vernacular design each building has an individual identity which provides visual contrast. Their proximity to one another emphasises their group importance.

Lavender Cottage and Old Cottage are small scale dwellings built in flint and brick, possibly on timber frames. Old Cottage has an interesting Horsham stone and tile roof. St Nicholas and Firs Cottage are larger scale, rendered and painted dwellings with hipped tile roofs. Many still have traditional features and detailing, but some have lost detail due to alterations with modern style windows. Modern extensions have respected the vernacular character by largely being constructed to the rear of properties.

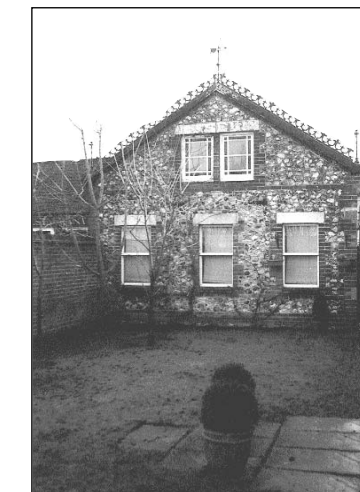
The painted rendered terrace of Brambury, Brookside and Gables contrast with the older vernacular buildings opposite. All retain traditional style sash windows and panelled glazed doors. Their small fenced gardens and gateways, continue the linear character. These features make a positive contribution to the character of the area and should be retained.



DETAILED APPRAISAL OF THE VILLAGE

Until recently Bramber formed part of the main route from Shoreham to Steyning, and as a consequence experienced heavy traffic flows. The opening of a bypass in 1981 and the subsequent introduction of traffic calming and environmental enhancement measures in 1993, have reduced the traffic and improved the general environment. The extensive use of brick pavements has, however, left the central part of The Street with a more urban appearance that contrasts with the traditional materials of the area. The central area's character has been influenced by both its former and current uses; a mixture of residential, commercial and public uses.

A number of detached flint faced Victorian buildings provide a distinctive character to the area. The buildings are set back from the road, this along with spaces between the buildings, driveways to infill development, the public car park and seating and planted areas emphasise the open character of this part of the Conservation Area. However the siting of the buildings, and their small curtilage walls still maintain the linear element.



The former Museum, adjacent to Bramber Villa, has interesting windows and ironwork on the roof.



The realigned road, pavements, car park and side road alongside Bramber Villa create an open feature

The Castle Inn is dominant. A public house has been located on the site since, at least, the 16th Century. Continual alterations and extensions have introduced a number of interesting and unique decorative features. These add diversity to the streetscene and should be retained.

Victorian infill gives way to a group of listed timber framed buildings. St Mary's House is a particularly fine example of a jettied timber building. This Grade 1 listed 15th Century house is nationally important. Not only is the house important to the character of the Conservation Area, it is an important tourist attraction within the County. All that remains of the original building is one wing of a central galleried courtyard; a former Inn for pilgrims. It still contains a number of historically important, and interesting details, both inside and out. A Victorian extension was added to the west.



Although St Mary's is set in attractive gardens, with a well screened car park, this represents a fraction of its original grounds. The screened caravan park and land to the west once formed the garden and kitchen gardens respectively. The kitchen garden area remains important to the setting of the Conservation Area.

The building and walled gardens abut the pavement continuing the built frontage, as do the smaller scale vernacular buildings opposite. These are historically associated with St Mary's, dating from the 16th Century.

The eastern end of Little St Mary's marks the beginning of Bramber Bridge. The bridge dates back, at least, to the 13th Century when a timber and stone bridge connected the village with Upper Beeding. Originally bridges crossed the three courses of the river. At one time a stone chapel was sited on Bramber Bridge. The existing bridge is now much smaller. Flint and brick walls are important and indicate the line of the original bridges and causeway. Behind the walls are wooded areas that reflect the more rural nature of this part of the Conservation Area. This is reinforced by views and public footpaths into the countryside.

Beyond Bramber Bridge the post war buildings maintain the linear historic feature as they are built in the vicinity of the Norman causeway and medieval bridge. The character changes; buildings are set back from the road with driveways and enclosed gardens. Recent buildings are larger in scale and closer to the road. Adjacent to Beeding Bridge is a former caravan site which is likely to be developed for housing.

Opposite St Mary's brick and flint faced timber framed buildings abut the road. The interesting tall chimneys are worthy of note and should be retained



East of Bramber Bridge, the road is wider and the sense of enclosure is reduced but hedges and walls maintain the linear character and sequential views.

