

**CONSERVATION AREA  
APPRAISAL**

**DENTON**

**DESIGNATED 17.6.92**

# **DENTON CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL**

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# **1 SUMMARY**

## **1.1 Key Positive Characteristics**

- Location between the South Downs and the River Ouse;
- Small linear village based around two streets;
- The architectural and historic interest of the area's buildings, many of which are listed;
- The prominent position of St. Leonard's Church;
- Graveyard detached from the church;
- Concentration of historic buildings around church;
- Attractive mix of cottages, houses and converted farm buildings;
- Semi-rural character reinforced by the flint walls and tree groups;
- Use of vernacular materials including flint, brick, clay tiles and slate;
- 20<sup>th</sup> century development, while prominent, has not spoilt the historic core of the village;
- The lack of significant vehicular traffic through the village;
- The tranquil atmosphere.

## **1.2 Recommendations**

- That the quality of new development, particularly residential alterations and extensions, be better controlled through the planning process. Suggested that an Article 4 Direction to reduce permitted development rights and allow the Local Planning Authority greater control over minor development.
- That the semi-rural character of the conservation area be protected.
- Minor alterations to the conservation area boundary are proposed.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

### **2.1 The Denton Conservation Area**

Denton would have once been a small downland village and retains much of this feel. However, it has been affected by modern suburban sprawl. The Denton Conservation Area was designated by Lewes District Council on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1992 and its boundary has remained unaltered or extended since this time. The boundaries of the Denton Conservation Area have been drawn to include its historic core and the surviving surrounding historic buildings. Most of buildings and land within the conservation area are located along Denton Road and Heighton Road, see Townscape Appraisal Map.

### **2.2 The Purpose of a Conservation Area Appraisal**

This document seeks to record and define the special architectural and historic interest of the Denton Conservation Area, to help ensure that the conservation area is both preserved and enhanced, not only for people today, but also for future generations to enjoy. The content of this appraisal is based on best practice as advised in English Heritage's publication "Understanding Place: Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals" (2005).

Conservation areas are designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 where a conservation area is defined as "an area of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". It is the quality and interest of a whole area and not just individual buildings which are important considerations when designating conservation areas.

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

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

This appraisal will help satisfy the requirements of the Act by defining the special character and appearance of the Denton Conservation Area and by setting out a number of recommendations for its preservation and enhancement. It therefore provides a consistent and sound basis on which to determine applications for development within, or that affect the setting of, the Denton Conservation Area.

### **2.3 Community Involvement**

The first draft of the Denton Conservation Area Appraisal was produced following a meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008 with the area's District and Town Councillors. Copies of this draft appraisal and maps were provided for consultation purposes to District Councillors, Newhaven Town Council, relevant amenity groups, East Sussex County Council and English Heritage. A copy was been posted onto the Council's website and a press release will be sent to local papers. Two months were allowed for comments to be submitted, after which the comments were be taken into consideration and the draft was amended for adoption.

### **2.4 The Planning Policy Context**

The policies which seek to preserve and enhance conservation areas and other relevant planning policies are set out in the Lewes District Local Plan (adopted March 2003). This Conservation Area Appraisal needs to be read in conjunction with Lewes District Local Plan. The Local Plan is available from Lewes District Council offices or online at [www.lewes.gov.uk](http://www.lewes.gov.uk).

The Council is currently drawing up revised policies as part of its Local Development Framework (LDF), which will ultimately replace the Local Plan. This appraisal will form part of the evidence base for the LDF and will be supplemented in due course by a further document, the Barcombe

Conservation Area Management Plan, which will set out a programme for improvements and monitoring.

This document should also be read in conjunction the East Sussex Structure Plan and national Planning Policy Guidance and Planning Policy Statements, particularly Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15) – Planning and the Historic Environment or any documents superseding these.

### **3 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE SETTING**

#### **3.1 Location and Activities**

Denton is a village less than a mile away from Newhaven, 3 miles from Seaford, 8 miles south of Lewes, 15 miles east of Brighton and 60 miles from London. The settlement is located close to open countryside. Denton is situated on the north of the Newhaven to Eastbourne coastal road and close to the A26 which runs north to south from Lewes. It was formerly a small downland settlement located, like so many others, along the line of a spring, where fresh water from the downs filtered through to the more level ground, and the marshy floodplain provided grazing of pasture. Now most of the area between the coast road and Denton has developed and has more of a suburban character.

#### **3.2 Topography and Geology**

The Denton Conservation Area is set in a valley within the Downs, with Denton Road running along the bottom of the valley which rises gradually toward the east and more steeply to the north and south.

The geology in and around the conservation area consists of valley gravels and alluvium at the bottom of the valley with upper chalk which contains white soft chalk with many flint nodules.

### **3.3 Relationship of Conservation Area to its Surroundings**

Denton and its surrounding area are defined mainly by residential use, there being significant suburban development in the surrounding area. The historic core of the village is the area around St. Leonard's Church and the small cluster of historic buildings along Heighton Road acts as a focal point for the wider suburban area, being distinct from it.

There is a valley setting of the conservation area and its surrounding area. The southern side of the valley is notable because it rises steeply and has not been significantly affected by suburban development, it instead forming a skyline of dense woodland, an attractive backdrop to the conservation area when viewed from the north. This backdrop is important as it counters the effect of suburban sprawl and helps retain the traditional downland character of the area.

### **3.4 Biodiversity**

The Denton Conservation Area is identified in the Lewes District Local Plan as being within the Planning Boundary, meaning that it is not within the countryside.

There are no other statutory landscape conservation designations either within or close to the conservation area. However while there are no statutory designations this should not undermine the contribution that the countryside makes to the character of the conservation area.

## **4 HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

### **4.1 Summary of Historic Development**

In Roman times a road ran through Denton, along Denton Drive, (part of which remains as a flint track), and up Cantercrow Hill. This was the old road

from Newhaven to Seaford. When the new route through Newhaven along the coast was formed the old route was used less although it is still a pathway.

The land at Denton formed part of the estate of a royal monastery at Beddingham. The Saxon King Alfred bequeathed the land at Beddingham to his nephew Aethelm. The village settlement originally dates from Saxon times with a charter for the church land dating from 801AD. The Manor was held by Earl Godwin, the father of King Harold II, who was killed at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. .

There is no mention of Denton in the Domesday book, and it is likely that the original settlement was destroyed by the Normans during the Saxon Rebellion of 1068. The land was subsequently split up to form the parishes that remain today.

Denton was originally a fishing village, as the sea used to be much further inland. However today the sea has receded and the village is inland, with little evidence remaining of this past identity.

## **4.2 Historical Personalities**

Ralph Reader b.1903 - d.1982 lived on Heighton Road. He was a choreographer, lyricist, director producer and notable for his involvement in the Scout movement, in particular as founder of the Scouting Gang Shows. The Denton Scout Group is still known as Ralph Readers Own.

## **4.3 Archaeology**

There is an area of Archaeological Interest in most of the conservation area. The particular interest is that the area is a late Saxon or early medieval shrunken settlement. The original settlement is thought to have been larger than it is today.

## 5 SPATIAL ANALYSIS

### 5.1 Plan Form, Site Layout and Boundaries

The Denton Conservation Area is semi-rural, although there is much surrounding suburban development. The conservation area is based around two roads Denton Road and Heighton Road. Denton Road has a gentle bend taking the road from an east-west direction to the northeast-southwest.

Most of the properties in the conservation area are set back from, but facing onto, the street however there are some exceptions. These exceptions tend to be the former agricultural buildings that have now been converted to a residential use. These include 3-5 Vicarage Close, which is set away from Heighton Road as a result of later infill development and just outside the conservation area White Rose Cottage which has its front elevation at a 90 degree angle to the road. 46 and 48 Denton Road also differ from this typical layout having their side elevations facing onto Denton Road and Denton Drive. Another notable exception is the modern properties in the conservation area, notably those in Vicarage Close which have their backs turned to Denton Road and Heighton Road.



3-5 Vicarage Close former barn now converted to residential use

There are a number of other converted dwellings in the conservation area. For example, the former farmhouse is now a terrace comprising 60-66 Denton Road, and Denton School (with a date stone of 1875) is now a single dwelling house.

Flint boundary walls are an extremely important feature of the conservation area and need to be retained. They are typically constructed of field flints bedded in a lime mortar.

## 5.2 Focal Points, Views and Vistas

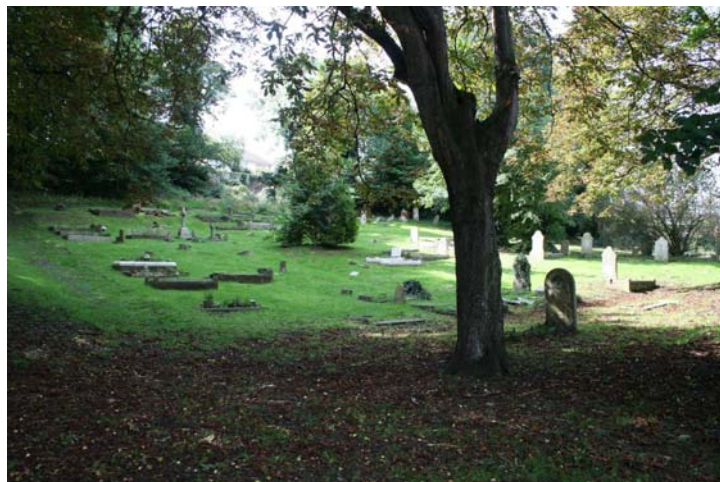
Listed below are some of the key focal points, views and vistas. However these are indicated in more detail in Townscape Appraisal Map.

- St. Leonard's Church and 10 Heighton Road immediately adjacent, form strong focal points in the conservation area. The closeness of the church and the cottage along the narrow road restrict the open view and create a very attractive visual, as well as physical pinch point, with a backdrop of trees. This is one of the most important views within the Conservation Area.
- A notable focal point is the Flying Fish public house which is located at the junction of Denton Road and Rectory Road and has the appearance of being set apart from its neighbours.



Flying Fish public house, Denton Road

- There are attractive glimpsed views from Denton Road and Denton Drive of the graveyard which is otherwise largely obscured by mature trees. The graveyard is detached from St. Leonard's Church.



Glimpsed view of graveyard from Denton Road

- Views along Denton Road are pleasant, particularly when seen with your back to the modern dwellings on the northern side of the road.
- The view along Denton Drive is enclosed by trees and particularly atmospheric.



Denton Drive with its characteristic flint surfacing

- The woodland to the south of the conservation area is on the southern side of the valley giving it an elevation position and resulting in the views to the south having an attractive green backdrop.

### **5.3 Open Spaces, Trees and Landscape**

Although the settlement would have originally been open downland, there are few open spaces within the conservation area and the character is largely due to the traditional buildings framed by established trees. The one exception is the graveyard, although this is surrounded by trees. Due to its discreet presence the graveyard plays a minor role in the character of the area.

Notably there are several trees and groups of trees within the conservation area that have Tree Preservation Orders. These trees are located;

- In the area around the graveyard.
- Within the rear gardens of properties in Vicarage Close, which face onto Denton Road.
- Along the garden boundary of 46 Denton Road.
- Within the curtilage of 11 Heighton Road.
- The woodland to the south of Denton Road and Denton Drive.

There are many other trees and groups of trees that make an important contribution to the character of the conservation area. Trees within the conservation area are protected. Important trees and tree groups are identified in the Townscape Appraisal Map. However this should not be read as a comprehensive identification of all the trees of importance. Prior to the commencement of any tree works the Local Planning Authority Tree and Landscape Officer needs to be notified.

## **5.4 Public Realm**

There is a lack of anything of particular interest within the public realm, it for the most part having a modern road and pavement layout with grass verges. The exception to this is Denton Drive, a flint track, and apparently the old Roman Road, running west-east along the line of the contour of a bank leading gently down hill from Denton Drive to Denton Road, close to its junction with Heighton Road.

## **6 DEFINITION OF THE SPECIAL INTEREST**

### **6.1 Building Types**

Denton contains a mix of building types, mostly residential dwellings. The most notable large house is the attractive, Georgian Manor House. The other residential properties are more modest houses or cottages. Betraying the villages more rural past are the surviving agricultural buildings including the former farmhouse, now a terrace of four at 60-66 (evens only) Denton Road. There is also Cedars House and 3-5 Vicarage Close and, just outside the conservation area, White Rose Cottage, all of which were once barns, now converted to a residential use. Also converted to a residential house is the old school. The other buildings in Denton include St. Leonard's Church and the fortunately hidden, unattractive church hall and interesting ruins including the Priest's House to the west of the church.

### **6.2 Listed Buildings**

A number of the buildings in the area are listed by English Heritage as being of special architectural or historic interest. All are grade II listed with the exception of the Parish Church of St. Leonard's which is grade II\*.

The Parish Church of St. Leonard's was built in the thirteenth century, possibly including earlier elements. The parsonage nearby was built in 1288 for the first resident priest, and is now a ruin. The church has been extended

and restored since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century with Victorian and later improvements and additions. It is a flint and stone building with some interesting features, particularly the Norman font and rood-stair. The church has a modest timber weather-boarded bell tower at the western end. Notably part of the boundary wall of the church is listed in its own right. It is late medieval and eighteenth and nineteenth century and is constructed of field flints. The part of the wall between St. Leonard's and Manor House has ruins from an unidentified medieval building.

The Priest's House, the remains of which still stand in the north western corner of the Churchyard, is a medieval building with flint and Caen stone dressings. There is also a surviving trefoil-headed lancet window. This is one of many medieval buildings which originally surrounded the church, most of which were lost in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. After years of neglect, the ruins have now been consolidated and turned into a tranquil garden with benches, providing a pleasant, secluded space.



Remains of the Priest's House

Other listed buildings in the conservation area include the former Manor House to the south of the churchyard. Dated 1724, it is built with knapped flints with brick dressings, with clay tiles to the front roof slope and slate to the rear. The manor house has a fine pair of decorative cast iron gates which front onto the street. Areas of the cast iron are deteriorating and would benefit from

repair. The gates are framed by sturdy brick pillars with glazed curved copings of vitrified clay. These are an attractive feature in the street and denote the high status of the manor house.

Opposite the Church, 10 Heighton Road is a two storey Grade II listed cottage dated 1724. It has two storeys with a very steeply pitched tiled roof. The cottage is positioned gable end on to the edge of Heighton Road with the result that the front elevation is very prominent when viewed from Denton Road to the south. The front elevation of the cottage is knapped flint with brick dressings and cement faced quoins. The first floor central bay is blocked and a date-stone inserted inscribed "1724 F/WE." A twentieth century front porch has been added and leading introduced to the windows which detract from the appearance of the house. The gable end elevation is cement rendered.



The visually imposing 10 Heighton Road

To the south of the Manor House is the original barn to the main house. It is flint with red brick and part tile, part slate roof. Previously a joinery shop it has been converted to residential use, now numbers 3, 4 & 5 Vicarage Close, a small modern residential development based around a cul-de-sac leading off Rectory Road.

A former farmhouse, also listed Grade II, on the southern side of Denton Road

now forms a row of cottages (no.s 60-66, evens). The building is faced with a roughcast render over flint rubble, with stepped cement quoins to the window surrounds, pebble-dashed returns and tiled roof with overhanging eaves. This building is of added importance to the wider conservation area as it closes off the view southwards from the main cluster of listed buildings around the Church and completes the cluster of historic buildings around which more modern development encroaches.



No.s 60-66 (even), Denton Road formerly a farmhouse

It should be noted that it is a criminal offence to execute, or cause to be executed, without first obtaining listed building consent any works for the demolition, in whole or part, of a listed building or any works of alteration or extension which would affect its special interest, or to fail to comply with the terms of any condition attached to a consent. This includes the theft of architectural fixtures. It is advisable to seek advice from the Councils Design and Conservation Officer.

### **6.3 Positive Buildings**

In addition to the conservation area's statutory listed buildings, a number of unlisted buildings have been noted as being positive buildings, i.e. buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the

conservation area. These buildings have been identified during the survey process and, as recommended by PPG15, are recorded in the Townscape Appraisal Map.

Buildings identified as making 'positive' contribution to the conservation area vary, but commonly they will be good examples of relatively unaltered historic buildings where their style, detailing and building materials provide the conservation area with architectural and/or historic interest.

The Flying Fish public house is one of the most prominent buildings as one enters the conservation area from the west along Denton Road. It is a two-storey flint faced building painted white, which stands on its own in front of a steep wooded bank, framed by the foliage of mature trees.

Cedars House, the cottage on the corner of Denton Road and Heighton Road is a former barn dating back to 1790-1810. It is faced with flint and red brick dressings with a cedar shingle roof. Although altered too drastically to justify listing, the building does nonetheless make a valuable contribution to the character of the area by reason of its prominent location, use of traditional local materials and its domestic scale which are compatible with the surrounding development.

Beyond no.s 60-66 Denton Road, a further terrace of four houses and a detached house all make a contribution to the character of the area as a group with local distinctiveness characterised by their traditional materials, form, scale and detail. The group form an attractive edge to this part of the Conservation Area.

As stated in PPG15 there is a presumption that positive buildings within the conservation area will be protected from demolition and the Council will only grant consent for applications for alterations or extensions to these buildings where they preserve or enhance their character and appearance.

## 6.4 Building Styles, Materials and Colours

Flint is a prevalent traditional local material used for both buildings and boundary walls throughout the conservation area. There are many different styles of flint work, and style and use of the flint can often reflect the affluence of the owner or the importance or prominence of the building or structure. Fine knapped flints are used on the Manor House, with less worked field flints used on farm buildings and boundary walls, these flint walls contributing significantly to the areas character.



Heighton Road showing a flint wall, a strong feature of the conservation area

Brick is also a feature, typically red, used as dressings on buildings and occasionally to help reinforce stability of boundary walls. Some properties have a cement based render over the walls with cement quoins, although the more historic type should not be confused with modern cement renders. Roofs are mostly clay tiled or slate.

Modern and historic buildings sit side by side for the most part comfortably, the modern buildings, not only being built to a scale that is comparable with many of the historic buildings in the conservation area, but also attempting to use traditional materials.

## **7 ISSUES**

The Denton Conservation Area encompasses an attractive settlement with few obvious threats to its character, although incremental change could adversely affect the quality of the environment if not controlled properly. The buildings are generally in good condition and the area is clearly a desirable location in which to live. However, there are a number of issues which will need to be resolved if the conservation area is to be protected from unsympathetic changes. These are:

### **7.1 The Quality of New Development**

Inappropriate development is one of the most significant concerns in the conservation area. The inappropriate development not only includes new dwellings but also extensions and outbuildings to residential properties where their location, scale and character are considered to be harmful to the character of the conservation area. There are several buildings that have been subject to changes in materials and architectural detailing that harm the character and appearance of the conservation area.

### **7.2 Protecting the Semi-Rural Character of the Conservation Area**

The area has been significantly affected by suburban development which has encroached into the conservation area which would have historically had a much stronger rural character. The low density of development in the conservation area and the trees help to retain a semi-rural feel although further development, or the loss of trees, could harm this character.

### **7.3 Conservation Area Boundary Review**

A review of the historic and architectural interest of the existing conservation area and the area immediately outside the conservation area was carried out to establish whether the existing boundary defines the areas special interest. A brief summary of the boundary review is detailed in section 8.3.

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the various issues identified in the Chapter 7, the following recommendations are made:

### **8.1 The Quality of New Development**

The Local Planning Authority needs to ensure that all new development in the conservation area adheres to Local Plan policies and to the advice contained in PPG15 and any subsequent guidance.

Applications for extensions to residential properties, garages and other outbuildings will only be allowed where the proposal preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and its curtilage and the wider street scene.

The Local Planning Authority will ensure that all new buildings and extensions include traditional materials and architectural detailing or materials and architectural details of a similar high quality.

Consideration should also be given to the designation of an Article 4 Direction which would reduce permitted development rights and allow the Local Planning Authority greater control over minor development to ensure that the character and appearance of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced.

### **8.2 Protecting the Semi-Rural Character of the Conservation Area**

The semi-rural character of the area needs to be given special attention when alterations to the conservation area are being proposed. Any new development will need to be of a scale and massing that does not detract from the historic core of the settlement. Trees need to be retained and any works to them need to ensure that the character of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced.

### 8.3 Conservation Area Boundary Review

As part of the appraisal process, the conservation area boundary was reviewed and the following extensions, shown in the Townscape Appraisal Map, are recommended;

- Most of Vicarage Close is already within the existing conservation area however 1 and 2 Vicarage Close and the street itself are excluded. These two properties are significant in that they affect the setting of 3-5 Vicarage Close, a converted barn originally associated with the Manor House, which although within the conservation area have become visually detached from it. Extending the boundary here would allow a greater opportunity to maintain the setting of 3-5 Vicarage Close and bring the barn more firmly into the conservation area.
- The extension also incorporates the church hall to the west of St. Leonard's Church, a modern flat roof 'demountable' type building that detracts from the interest of both the listed church and the conservation area. It is proposed to include this building to allow greater control over any replacement.
- An extension to the northeast along Denton Road to include White Rose Cottage, a residential conversion of a flint barn and 88-96 (evens) as 92-96 is an attractive early 20<sup>th</sup> century terrace of brick, pebble dash and hanging tile.

## **Map of Denton Conservation Area**

Please see associated attachment.

## **LOCAL GENERIC GUIDANCE**

Advice for owners of properties in conservation areas on the relevant planning legislation which affects them can be found in the leaflet Planning Controls in Conservation Areas, available online at:

<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/environment/1098.asp>

Further information on Listed Buildings can be found in the leaflet Listed Buildings: An owner's guide to alteration and repairs, available online at:

<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/environment/3600.asp>

Both leaflets are also available from the Planning and Environmental Services Department of Lewes District Council.

## **USEFUL INFORMATION AND CONTACT DETAILS**

For further information and advice, please contact the Design and Conservation team at Lewes District Council:

Planning and Environmental Services  
PO Box 166  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 9EY  
Tel: 01273 471600

This is one of a series of leaflets about the 35 Conservation Areas in the Lewes District. A full list can be obtained by contacting the above officers, or by visiting the Council's website ([www.lewes.gov.uk](http://www.lewes.gov.uk)).

Historic records and Ordnance Survey maps of the area can be viewed at:

East Sussex Records Office  
The Maltings  
Castle Precincts  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 1YT  
Tel: 01273 482349

## **FURTHER READING**

- *Understanding Place: Guidance on conservation area appraisals*, English Heritage, 2005.
- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 15