

# Conservation Area Appraisal

## Ringmer



£3.50

# Conservation Area Appraisal

**Name of Conservation Area :** Ringmer  
**Date of Designation :** 1976

## What is a Conservation Area?

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.” Such areas therefore represent a key part of the district’s cultural heritage.

## The Purpose of this Conservation Area Appraisal

Conservation Area Appraisals are considered by English Heritage to be vital to the conservation of these special areas. The content of this statement is based on the preferred approach set out in English Heritage’s publication Conservation Area Appraisals – Defining the Special Architecture or Historic Interest of Conservation Areas, English Heritage 1997.

The Council has a duty to pay special attention to preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning powers. This statement will therefore provide a consistent and sound basis upon which to determine planning applications. It will also help in defending appeals against refusals of planning applications, which could have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area. This statement also identifies what contributes towards the character of the area and any negative features. This provides a useful base upon which to develop proposals for preservation and enhancement if the opportunity should arise through the planning system.

The preparation of the statement also enables local residents to participate in the identification of features, which are important to the special character of the area in which they live.

Visitors to the area also may find this statement provides interesting information about special and interesting local features.

## Objectives in Conservation Areas

There are tighter controls over cutting back or felling trees, demolition and alterations or building works in Conservation Areas. These are outlined in more detail in the leaflet “*Planning Controls in Conservation Areas*”. In Conservation Areas the District Council has various objectives such as seeking to preserve buildings that are historically important, securing design and use of materials that are sympathetic to the area and protecting important vegetation and spaces.

# Introduction

Ringmer is one of the largest villages in Sussex, having greatly expanded over the last fifty years. It is situated in the heart of Lewes District in the rolling downland and weald of Sussex and is located close to the county town of Lewes, approximately 3 miles away, and is 10 miles south of Uckfield.

The village is set within the backdrop of the downs and surrounded by open agricultural land, there is a strong sense of community and identity in the village. It is also of sufficient size to have a good range of services and local activities.

The original core of the settlement was around The Green, which is now designated a Conservation Area. The green forms the core of the conservation area and reflects the traditional village feel of the area.

The busy Lewes Road bisects the village, and the nearby centre contains a range of modern local shops and services. However, the original character of the rural settlement can be seen in the conservation area, which contains a wide range of buildings and an important church. Many of the buildings along Vicarage Way are generally large impressive buildings reflecting the prosperous past of the village.

The conservation area is large when comparing to others within the district and contains several different areas with diverse characters. Along the Lewes Road is a high concentration of historic buildings, several of which are listed, these buildings are of a differing character, some with large plots some with small some terraced and some detached, they are all however built in the 17th and 18th century.

In the south west of the conservation area, along Vicarage Way, are some large houses set in large grounds with large plots and walls with extensive vegetation and trees. The most notable buildings are Little Manor and The Vicarage. The character of this area has been changed with the development of flats within the old grounds of 13-16 Vicarage Close, however the grand large villa style to this area is still evident today.

To the north of this area is St Mary’s church and its grounds set within a large graveyard. This area of the conservation area feels like the historic core of the village, the church is the central focus of village life.

The centre feels quite open due to the large open space. Following the western boundary of the green there are substantial mature trees many of which have Tree Preservation Orders covering them, the mature trees and other vegetation screen the green from the impact of development on this boundary and give the green the feeling of enclosure.

## Origins and pattern of development

The Saxon settlement of Ringmer Parish was based in Wellingham, Gote-Middleham, Ashton and Norlington, all on cultivable geological strata, with the heavy gault clay around the Ringmer Green left as common land. The settlements of Gote-Middleham and Norlington steadily encroached on the common land over the centuries until in the

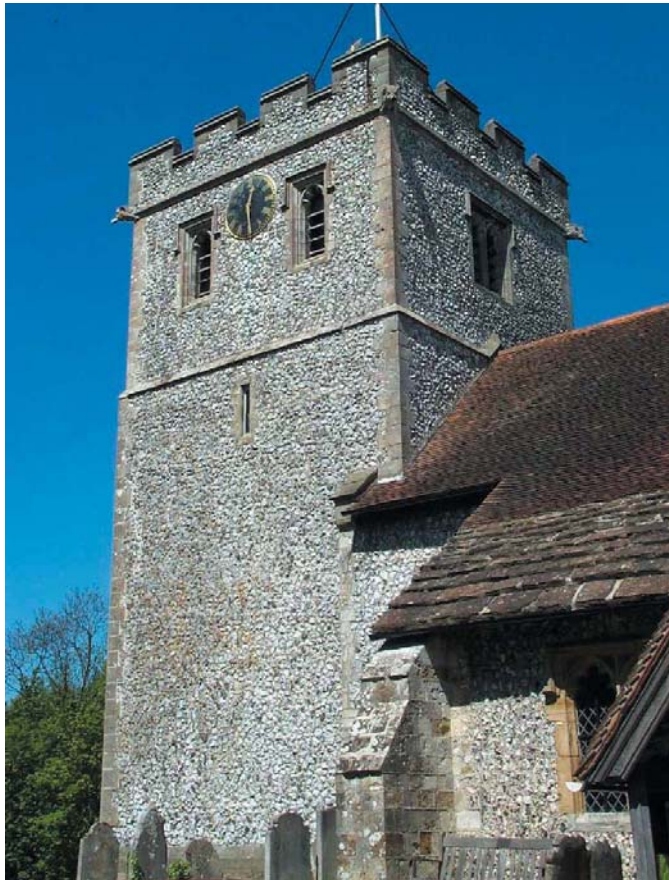
13th century a halt was called. The first documentary record of Ringmer is when Ringmer church was established in the 13th Century. The subsequent development of Ringmer Green was slow until a significant population increase in the 18th century, when an absence of genteel control and the entrepreneurial property development activities of local artisans and shopkeepers allowed a dramatic expansion of the population in the parish, especially to the south and west of the Green. From the late Georgian period this proliferation of development at Ringmer Green progressively eclipsed the much older peripheral agricultural settlements.

## Archaeological Interest

The soil around Ringmer is renowned for having a high clay content, and much of The Green and land to the north and east of it is designated as a Medieval pottery site. This is reflected today in local fields such as Potters Field, Pottborowe, Crockendale and Bishops Field, the latter taking its name from a recorded 13th century Norlington potter.

The site is a recognised as an archaeological trigger site. This is a non-statutory designation made by the County Council. As a result, should any such area be affected by development proposals a watching

*St Mary the Virgin Church Tower*



brief should be set up and rescue archaeology implemented in order to record details of the site.

## Buildings

There are a total of 14 buildings within the Conservation Area that are on the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest within Ringmer conservation area, ranging from the Grade I listed Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin to the Grade II listed village pump.

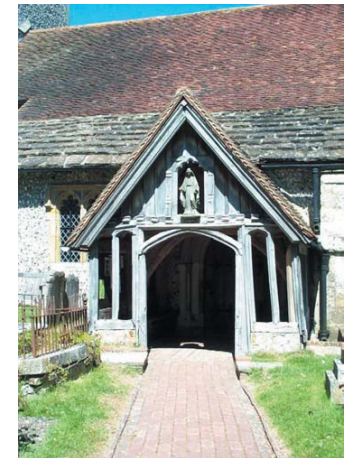
### The Church of St. Mary the Virgin:

The most important and notable building in the Conservation Area is the grade 1 listed Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin. This comprises a chancel with north and south facing chapels, a nave with aisles, a south porch and a west tower. The chancel, nave (except the westernmost bay) and the porch are medieval. The north and south chapels are early

sixteenth century. The westernmost bay of the nave and the tower were rebuilt in 1884 at the expense of William Langham Christie of Glydebourne to replace the medieval tower, which was burned down. It was designed by architect Ewan Christian. The gallery and organ were given by John Christie of Glydebourne in 1922. There is an attractive wooden porch on the southern elevation and a flint tower with slit windows on the western end of the church.

The church has evolved and been added to over time, often in varying materials. The main parts of the church are built of flint and stone, but where the building has been enlarged, this has often been done via the addition of brick courses on top of the flint/stone. Similarly, the roof is a mix of Horsham slabs and clay tiles. This range of materials has mellowed well, and instead of being a discordant mix, the varying materials give the church an 'organic' feel.

The church is located in a well-kept graveyard, which is bounded by flint and brick retaining walls. There are a number of mature trees in the front of the churchyard, including Yew trees and Willow, and to the rear of the church the density of tree cover increases to form thick tree belts along the rear and side boundaries.



*St Mary the Virgin Church South entrance with detailed wooden carving*

### Vicarage

The Vicarage Close in Church Lane includes the former Vicarage, but has been converted into flats. This Grade II Listed Building is L-shaped, with the south wing probably built in the early 19th century. The north wing was built in the mid 19th century and the whole building is two storeys high. The building is faced with knapped flints with long and short stone window surrounds and quoins and has a tiled roof.



*The Vicarage*

### The Almshouses

The former Cheyney Charity Almshouses are situated on the village green. Above the door there is a plaque inscribed "These almshouses were founded and endowed by Mrs Elizabeth Cheyney 1611, rebuilt 1848". They are a pair of single-storeyed almshouses, with an attic. The cottages have two gabled dormers, faced with knapped flints with long and short window surrounds and quoins of Roman cement. The windows are casement windows with diamond shaped latticed panes.



*The Almshouses*

### The Small House

To the rear of the almshouses is an early nineteenth century dwelling known as The Small house. This Grade II Listed Building is of two storey construction, and is predominantly tile hung. The front is flanked by pilasters of cement, and the building has a hipped slate roof.





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# Ringmer Conservation Area



### Little Manor

The Little Manor is found in Lewes Road and is thought to be the best house in Ringmer. It is an L-shaped building with an 18th century front to a probably earlier rear. It has two storeys and an attic. It has five windows and two hipped dormers. It's front is red brick and greyheaders alternately. It has a Horsham slab roof and a doorway with flat hoods on brackets with a rectangular fanlight.



The Yews

### The Yews

The Yews, situated in Lewes Road, is an L-shaped 17th century timber-framed building faced with painted brick on ground floor and plaster above. It has a weather-boarded gable at the north end and has a tiled roof. It has casement windows. The doorway in the north is set in moulded architrave surround with a flat hood on brackets and a door of six fielded panels.

There are two trees covered by protection orders in the grounds.

### Old Cottage

The main range of Old Cottage was built in mock-Tudor style in the 1920's by the artist Henry J. Kinnaird. It replaced a medieval hall that had been demolished some years earlier. The corner wing of the hall house still survives within the present structure, as does a 17th century or earlier cross wing.

Old Cottage



### Sylvester Cottage

This building has an 18th century front to a probably older cottage. It is stuccoed, has a tiled roof and has its glazing bars intact. It has a small gabled ground floor portion built out in front of the north end and has a garage formed out of the ground floor at the south end.

### Briar Cottage

This property is an 18th century, two storey, three windowed, painted brick cottage. Its glazing bars are intact. Its doorway is a flat hood on brackets with a low rectangular fanlight and a door of six fielded panels.

### The Firs

The Firs is a 17th century or earlier timber-framed building with red brick filling on the ground floor and on the first a tile-hung and painted. It has a tiled roof and casement windows.



Village Pump

### Village Pump

The pump has an octagonal iron pump with Gothic decoration and an ogival cap. The noticed attached says that it was erected in 1852 by W P Boxall of Delves House, Ringmer.

### Cheyney House

Cheyney House is an early 19th century three storey, three windowed house. It is faced with red mathematical tiles and has a slate roof. It's glazing bars are intact and it's doorway is flat hooded and has a door of six fielded panels.

### The Chestnuts

The Chestnuts in Lewes Road were originally four cottages when it was built in the 18th century and was then converted into two houses. It is an L-shaped modernised block with two storeys and three windows facing south, and five windows facing west. It is red bricked, with the first floor of the angle tile hung. It has a tiled roof and modern casement windows.



Well House

### Well House

The village well house and iron wheel and pump are situated on the Green. They are housed in a small building of lychgate type, built of wood on brick piers with a hipped tiled roof. An inscription records that it was "Constructed

and presented to the parish of Ringmer for the use of inhabitants and wayfarers by R and S H Rickman 1883. Charles A Wells, Engineer, Lewes".

## Building not listed but contributes to the character of the Conservation Area

### Delves House

In the 18th Century Delves House adjoining the church was occupied by Henry and Rebecca Snooke. A notable resident of Delves House garden was Timothy the Tortoise that belonged to Mrs. Rebecca Snooke, whose nephew Gilbert White (1720-1793) was the noted naturalist. White spent much time at Ringmer, and chronicled the lifestyle of Timothy, eventually taking him to Selborne. His book 'The Classic History of Selborne' (1789) features many of his observations made at Ringmer about the 'old Sussex tortoise', whose remains are honoured with a place in the British Museum. It is hardly surprising that the tortoise features widely as Ringmer's village emblem.

### Building materials

There is no apparent consistent use of building materials in the village, they vary from flint walls, stone walls, brick and tile hanging; roofs with slate and plain tiles.

### Natural elements

The village, particularly within the conservation area, has a good relationship with the natural environment. There are extensive areas of trees in the vicinity of the church and Delves House that have group merit and have group Tree Preservation Order (TPO) protection. Bounding the village green there are also over 20 trees with TPO and these trees give the green area a leafy feel. The Holm Oak on the Village Green is particularly attractive.

## Important Spaces

The main important space in the conservation area is the village green, which is also the main focus for the village. A large area in the centre of the village, and at the eastern edge of the conservation area, it is regularly used for sports including cricket. The tree fringed green with its pump, well and cricket pitch, is an archetypal Sussex village green which gives a strong sense of identity to Ringmer village.

The Cheyney Charity Field, Crockendale, which is adjacent to the Green now houses the bowling green, the scout hut and a new cricket field. It has become increasingly important part of the villages recreational facilities and due to its open nature, public use, and visibility from the Green and the B12192, makes an important contribution to the survival of the village 'feel'. Also important in creating this are the relatively informal management of North Road and Blshops Lane, which fringe the Green, and despite very regular traffic still manage to retain the air of the country lanes they once were, rather than the estate roads they could so easily become.

The entrance to Delves House and the pond adjacent to the green is also an important space within the conservation area. The house stands with an impressive entrance leading from the house out to the village green, while the pond also provides a secluded area for quiet reflection.

## Relationship between built form and its surroundings

Ringmer sits within the low weald countryside, in the shadow of the South Downs, and has a close relationship with the surrounding countryside. Despite its expansion in the 20th century, Ringmer retains its village character. The Green and the historic buildings are at the heart of the village are an important factor, together with the views of the downs, which are visible throughout the village.

## Negative Features

The Lewes Road, which runs through Ringmer has quite a heavy flow of traffic through the village, and undoubtedly has a negative effect on the conservation area.



## Planning Policies

The **Adopted East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan** [1991] contains broad policies which require the impact of proposed development on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings to be given due consideration. This plan can be viewed at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes.

Switchboard number: (01273) 481000.

Website : [www.eastsussexcc.gov.uk](http://www.eastsussexcc.gov.uk)

These policies are reflected in more specific detail in the **Adopted Lewes District Local Plan** [2003]. Chapter Eight of the plan specifically covers 'The Historic Environment' and these planning policies clearly outline the criteria that will be applied to development in, or affecting, a conservation area and the approval or refusal of any planning or conservation area application will be determined against them.

Anyone thinking of applying for consent within a conservation area is therefore strongly advised to consider these policies first. The Local Plan can be viewed at the offices at the below address or on the website at : [www.lewes.gov.uk/coun/planning/index.html](http://www.lewes.gov.uk/coun/planning/index.html)

Pre-application advice can also be obtained, free of charge, from Development Control Officers or the Conservation Officer.

### Further Information

For further information on this leaflet, please contact:

#### Policy and Projects Team

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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 web site ([www.lewes.gov.uk](http://www.lewes.gov.uk)), or from Lewes Tourist Information Centre (TIC) High Street, Lewes and Seaford Tourist Information Centre (TIC) Clinton Place, Seaford.

Visitors can find out about walks and facilities in the area from Lewes and Seaford TIC's.

#### Lindsay Frost

Director of Planning & Environmental Services

November 2003