

## Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

# Malling Deanery

March 2016



## Summary of Significance

The primary focus of the conservation area is on St Michael's Church, Malling Deanery and dwellings along Church Lane.

Trees and woodland create a strong sense of enclosure within the area, restricting wider views and vistas out. A quiet village ambiance persists, despite close proximity to the suburbs of Lewes.

The River Ouse flows immediately to the south, still tidal at this point. The former railway line from Lewes to Uckfield dissects the conservation area in a deep cutting.

Local distinctiveness is enhanced by the use of vernacular building, cladding and roofing materials for most buildings.

The simplicity of the public realm, with its gravel roads, is marked by a lack of street clutter, road markings or signage.

Potential threats to character include the creep of suburbanisation and gradual, incremental change to unlisted residential properties.

# 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 South Downs National Park Authority has a duty to determine which parts of the Park have that special architectural or historic interest, to designate those parts as Conservation Areas and to keep those Conservation Areas under review.

1.3 The Malling Deanery Conservation Area was first designated by Lewes District Council on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1974. In 2011 it was reviewed by the conservation officers of Lewes District Council and their draft forms the basis of this character appraisal. With the creation of the South Downs National Park in April, 2011, the National Park Authority became the Local Planning Authority for the settlement.

1.4 This Appraisal seeks to set out what the National Park Authority considers the most significant elements defining the character of the Conservation Area; it has an important role in making informed and sustainable decisions about the future of the settlement. While comprehensiveness may be sought, the omission of any particular feature should not be taken as meaning that it has no significance.

1.5 This document sits within a wider policy context, including:

- The Lewes Joint Core Strategy, (Proposed for adoption 2016)
- The National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012.

1.6 In looking at the area, issues which pose a threat to its character and appearance, as well as any potential for improvement and enhancement have also been identified.

1.7 The consultation draft of this document was published for public comment between 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 and 15<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

1.8 The amended document was adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority for the purposes of development management and to inform its other activities on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2016.



*Church of St Michael*

## Location & Topography

2.1 The Malling Deanery Conservation Area is a settlement located adjacent to the tidal River Ouse at a point where it flows south through a gap in the South Downs. It stands on the south western slope of a chalk hill between the five and fifteen metre contours. There are alluvial deposits along the bed and banks of the river.

2.2 The settlement stands immediately adjacent to Lewes, the county town of East Sussex, within its administrative boundaries. The village is accessible by road either from the east, through the modern housing estate of South Malling, or from the south, through the Malling Industrial Estate.

2.3 The conservation area is also accessible by pedestrians from the south from the Pells area of Lewes, over Willey's Bridge. Pedestrians can also access the settlement from the east using Jenners Walk, which follows the River Ouse along its northern bank beside Mallong Recreation Ground,

2.4 To the north and east of the conservation area lie modern housing estates, as well as the Sussex Police Headquarters. Mallong Recreation Ground is located to the immediate south east, beyond which stands the Tesco superstore and the Mallong Industrial Estate. To the south, over Willey's Bridge, lie the Pells and beyond that, Lewes town centre. Stretching along the opposite bank of the river as it runs east is an industrial area, likely to be transformed into a predominantly residential urban extension, the 'North Street Quarter'.

2.5 In time, the urban fringe of Lewes could come to threaten the character of the Mallong Deanery Conservation Area. However, up until now it has retained a separate identity, distinct from Lewes, despite its very close proximity.

2.6 Physical barriers within the landscape have constrained development around the conservation area and contributed to the retention of its village identity. The first of these two main barriers is the River Ouse, still tidal at this point. The land to the south and north-west of the river is flood plain and open country, restricting development to this side.

2.7 The second barrier which constrained development was the former railway line which once connected Lewes with East Grinstead and Uckfield. This feature now consists of a deep railway cutting, at the bottom of which is a footpath enclosed by wooded banks. Church Lane is carried across the cutting by a Victorian bridge. The redundant railway line has been designated a Site of Nature Conservation Importance.

2.8 The entire conservation area has a pervading sense of enclosure provided by a concentration of trees and woodland both within and around it. These trees help to screen the area from the surrounding suburban development and give the area a secluded character. A number of these were planted with grant aid from the County Council using public funds raised after the Great Storm of 1987.





*Above; View of River Ouse from the south end of the Conservation Area*

*Below; View north from Church Lane across a paddock toward hedgerow trees*







*Entrance to the Conservation Area from South Malling*



*View north along the former railway track bed from the road bridge*

# Historical Development

3.1 Iron Age farmers ploughed the fields on Malling Hill, when the land between the hills to each side of the Ouse was covered with water. When the sea retreated sometime before the Fifth Century land was exposed, on which part of South Malling now stands.

3.2 Early settlement on this flood plain is not well understood. The manor of Malling was bestowed upon the Archbishop of Canterbury by Baldred, King of Kent in the early Ninth Century and a Saxon secular college was established. By the time of the Domesday Survey, the Canons of St Michael held four hides at Malling and more elsewhere. The early history of the establishment and even its precise location are uncertain but we know the Collegiate Church of South Malling was re-founded about 1150 by Archbishop Theobald. It has been supposed that the Church was rebuilt at that time.

3.3 The foundation was suppressed in 1547 and the site and its possessions were granted to Sir Thomas Palmer, although the Archbishop of Canterbury successfully recovered the property in 1553. The Church was recorded as dilapidated in 1555.

3.4 There were several buildings associated with this ecclesiastical history. It is recorded that the Dean and Canons had a manse with a garden. In addition, an Archbishops mansion was once thought to occupy the site of *Malling House*, now the centrepiece of the Sussex Police Headquarters, but this location is now disputed. The current building, just beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area, dates from the mid-Seventeenth Century, though was re-fronted between 1720 and 1726.

3.5 Within the Conservation Area, *Malling Deanery* is notable. A house here was originally built by Archbishop Warham in 1515 to provide accommodation for vicars who accompanied the canons when in residence at the Collegiate Church. Until the construction of the Deanery, these vicars had had to lodge with laypeople in the locality, an arrangement which the Archbishop described as offensive to God, the church generally and especially to the Collegiate Church of South Malling. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I the house eventually passed into private hands. Thomas Sackville, who was to become the first Earl of Dorset acquired it in 1590. Subsequent owners have undertaken successive campaigns of alteration in the Seventeenth, Eighteenth and early Twentieth Centuries.



3.6 The current Church of St Michael is thought to retain some fabric of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, but was rebuilt between 1626 and 1628. A foundation stone was laid by John Evelyn, the famous diarist. Until relatively recently it had the status of a 'peculiar' of the Diocese of Canterbury because of its complex ecclesiastical history.

3.7 The wider landscape on the edge of the Ouse valley has potential for archaeological remains of most periods of human history from the early prehistoric to the present day, but there has been no recent survey to test this. However, there is good reason to suppose that future investigation could reveal evidence of buildings related to the Collegiate Church from the Saxon period through to dissolution, both within the Conservation Area and beyond its boundaries.

3.8 There have long been river crossings across the River Ouse from South Malling. It is recorded that Henry III used one such ford between Old Malling and Landport when fleeing Simon de Montfort's troops after the Battle of Lewes in 1264.

3.9 Twin anchor points beside the river survive to testify to the existence of a private suspension footbridge of 1934 which once linked the settlement with the south bank. This elegant bridge, built for Sir Frank Sanderson and designed by the architects Wratten & Godfrey, replaced a tall Victorian timber bridge of 1868, constructed for Edmund Currey and in perilous condition by the early 'thirties. The inter-war bridge was eventually removed in the mid-1970s.

3.10 The London Brighton and South Coast Railway line from Hamsey Junction, engineered by Frederick Bannister, sliced through the settlement by means of a deep cutting in 1868. After years of slow decline, it was finally closed to traffic in May 1969.

3.11 A paper by Barbara Merchant, *'From Green Croft to Riverdale: the story of a Sussex meadow'* has been web-published by the Lewes History Group. It describes the Malling Deanery estate in its various forms and follows its owners from 1623, using property deeds and a variety of primary and secondary sources. <http://leweshistory.org.uk/projects/the-lewes-street-stories-initiative/from-green-croft-to-riverdale-the-story-of-a-sussex-meadow/>

# Character Analysis

4.1 The Malling Deanery Conservation Area is notable for its scatter of houses along Church Lane. This development has taken place sporadically and informally over an extended period. Over time, this has shaped the plan form and layout of the settlement.

## Entrance and Boundaries

4.2 Views into and out of the conservation area are surprisingly limited. It has an exceptionally enclosed nature, being surrounded by trees and woodland within both the public and private realm.

4.3 Church Lane is the primary access point to the area, though paths also exist from the recreation ground to the south east. One of these climbs the slope to join Church Lane beside *Glebe Cottage*, while the other follows the former railway track bed under Church Lane towards Hamsey.

4.4 The River Ouse flanks the settlement to the south. From the river bank looking out from the conservation area, glimpsed views of the open floodplain with the Downs beyond may be appreciated, though most of these vantage points are within private gardens.

4.5 A further view over open country is available from the churchyard of St Michael, toward the rear of the church.

## Settlement Form

4.6 Church Lane is the most prominent feature of the settlement, with most of the properties in the Conservation Area located along it. It runs east-west, before turning at ninety degrees beside the churchyard, to run north-south.

4.7 The key open space within the conservation area is the churchyard, broadly oval in shape, which is often an indicator of early origins. Opposite, stands the largest building in the conservation area, *Malling Deanery*, in many ways the dominant feature. All other properties are more modest in scale, disposed in a broadly linear manner along the lane.

## Buildings and Structures

4.8 The buildings in Malling Deanery Conservation Area comprise a mixture of historic and modern dwellings, together with their ancillary outbuildings. Some of these buildings have historic ecclesiastical links, while the Vicarage has a current connection with St Michael's Church.

4.9 St Michael the Archangel, the parish church of South Malling is the notable exception to this residential context. Faced predominantly with field flints and rebuilt in the early Seventeenth Century, it is listed at Grade II\*. The porch is dated 1628. A vestry extension, of some subtlety, has been added to the north side.

4.10 Most marked burials in the churchyard are of the Nineteenth and earlier Twentieth Centuries, but older stones may be found at the west end. There are also a small number of scattered military burials.



4.11 The Conservation Area is dominated by *Malling Deanery*, which has Elizabethan origins but now dates from the mid-Seventeenth Century, with some Eighteenth Century and early Twentieth Century modifications. Listed, at Grade II\*, it is built on a U-plan, of two tall storeys, constructed of red brick under a hipped, clay plain-tile roof. The prominent, well-proportioned sliding sash windows date from the Eighteenth Century. The house has been subdivided into three dwellings, *East Wing*, *West Wing* and *North Wing*, set within generous, mature gardens, themselves subdivided in a reasonably sensitive manner. Glimpsed views of these gardens and the Deanery from Church Lane, through the



decorative pier and arched openings which punctuate the high boundary hedges, are highly notable.



4.12 Ancillary outbuildings, historically associated with the Deanery are also visible from Church Lane, the most notable of which are located to the south.

4.13 Other houses within the settlement are typically two storeys in height, with a wide variety of roof forms including hipped, half hipped and cat-slide. Inventive roof forms are characteristic of Sussex. Strong gables appear on the occasional building, mostly of later date.

4.14 *The Old Vicarage* dates from the mid-Eighteenth Century and was extended in the mid-Nineteenth. The elevation facing Church Lane is of coursed field flints and red, plain tile cladding with timber sliding-sash windows. The south elevation is of coursed flint cobbles. The main roof is covered with slate, with red, plain tiles on a later extension. The building is Listed, at Grade II.

4.15 *Glebe Cottage* has a complex evolution. The formal, red brick Georgian frontage facing south, complete with original, timber sliding-sash windows started life as a separate property of 1789. To the rear, stands the original house, an unusual slate-roofed cat-slide element with coursed, knapped flints and Caen stone quoins facing Church Lane. (Locally, Caen stone is known as Priory stone, as it was material salvaged during the demolition of Lewes Priory following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538). The reported survival of medieval framed elements in the roof of this part of the building may also indicate early origins. The small detached outbuilding within the curtilage of *Glebe Cottage*, constructed

of flint cobbles with red brick dressings, was originally a coach house and stable with hayloft above.

4.16 *River House* is a Victorian property with random fenestration and rendered walls, under a clay plain-tile roof. These tiles are also used vertically-hung within the gable.

4.17 *1-2 Deanery Cottages* were built by Andrew Duncan Macneill, a former owner of the Deanery, between 1906 and 1910. They display an Arts and Crafts influence, with their wide casement windows and facing of roughcast render. Roughcast is also a feature of ancillary buildings of the Deanery, notably the stables opposite which date from the same period.

4.18 The later Twentieth Century buildings within the Conservation Area tend not to be especially distinguished in design, though most adopt a palette of broadly local materials in an effort to fit in. Perhaps the best design is *The New Coach House*, though the use of weatherboarding for this building is not particularly characteristic of the locality and should not be emulated widely.

4.19 Flint is a locally characteristic material and plays a significant role within the Conservation Area, most notably on the church, but also on boundary walls and outbuildings. Historically, it was easily available and widely used for simple, utilitarian structures of all kinds, though usually combined with brick for edges and corners.

## Landscape and Setting

4.20 Church Lane is a quiet road and a cul-de-sac, little troubled by traffic. Surfaced in tarmac along its east-west stretch, this diminishes to loose gravel along the north-south dogleg. As most of the road is privately owned, street signage is minimal and the lane has no significant road markings. There is no pavement and pedestrians share the carriageway with the light traffic. Occasionally vehicles are found parked along Church Lane Bridge or beside the church, but most residents have off-road provision.

4.21 This informal highway treatment greatly adds to the rural, village-like character of the Conservation Area. The introduction of street markings, additional signage and kerbs would suburbanise the settlement, to the considerable detriment of its character.

4.22 There are no public open spaces within the conservation area. The key open space is the churchyard, which is leafy and peaceful. It has a relatively open frontage to Church Lane, with the exception of a number of mature trees and a low, foot-high retaining wall. To the east side of the churchyard lies a small

enclosure with a rustic timber gate facing Church Lane, for interments of the Sanderson family, owners of the Deanery in the middle years of the last century.

4.23 Views of the paddock to the north side of Church Lane offer the observer a moment of relief from the overall sense of enclosure created by the trees and woodland which generally dominate the setting of the conservation area. These views allow a glimpse of spaciousness that connects the settlement to the open country beyond. A similar sense of connection to the wider landscape can be found within the churchyard, with open views to the north and east.

4.24 Pleasant, enclosed vistas are gradually revealed along the descending footpath to the east of *Glebe Cottage*.

4.25 There are intriguing linear vistas along the tree-lined disused railway track, either from Church Lane Bridge, or from the footpath once occupied by the former track bed. Towards the south east entrance to the disused railway line, this vista opens out to an attractive, elevated view of the wider Malling Recreation Ground and the River Ouse.

4.26 Individual houses are usually visible from the public realm, often with some limited planting or trees within the front gardens or along the roadside boundaries, which affords some screening. This is evident at *1-2 Deanery Cottages*, *River House*, *The New Coach House*, *1-4 Riverdale* and *The Vicarage*. Notably, all of the residential properties have their own private driveways and off-road parking. However, in a few cases this has resulted in a visual imbalance, whereby parked vehicles and hard-standing has become too dominant a feature in the frontages of properties, at the expense of appropriate garden planting or landscaping.

4.27 The *Riverdale* houses were constructed in the late 1970s as a speculative development on land which had formed part of the Malling Deanery estate gardens. Some earlier features and an inlet from the river survive within private gardens, now restored by the householders.

4.28 Elsewhere, flint and brick boundary walls appear, as at *River House* and *Glebe Cottage*. These are locally derived and distinctive features which should be retained.





*Former coach house faced in coursed river cobbles beside Glebe Cottage*

# Issues & Opportunities

5.1 The Mallory Deanery Conservation Area is a desirable place in which to live and the area is generally well-maintained and attractive. No buildings appear to be at risk of loss from neglect or decay.

5.2 Fortunately the Conservation Area has been spared substantial infill development and post-war additions have generally had a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the settlement.

5.3 The primary threats to the Conservation Area are the potential creep of suburbanisation caused by new housing developments which might be visible from its boundaries, and gradual, incremental change to unlisted residential properties and their boundary treatments. Minor changes to such houses may be undertaken without any requirement for planning permission under householder's 'permitted development rights'. A number of buildings have been subject to such changes, which can harm the character and appearance of the wider Conservation Area. The most notable are the treatment of plot frontages, which at several properties have become too open, with wide brick paved driveways, excessive parking spaces and a lack of soft landscaping.

5.4 Although the Churchyard is generally well-maintained, the metal-clad shed located beside the north side of the tower is a feature which detracts from the character of the building as well as the wider space. Although its adverse impact is easily reversible, it is unsightly and a more carefully designed replacement located in a less prominent position would be welcomed.

5.5 The informal public realm of Church Lane makes an important contribution to the rural ambience of the Conservation Area. The introduction of street furniture, road signs, road markings, pavements or kerbs would threaten this.

5.6 Significant losses of trees or woodland within the Conservation Area or its immediate setting would threaten its enclosed character.

5.7 Extensions to housing estates to the north or east of the Conservation Area would impact upon its setting and carry the potential to undermine its secluded village character. Should the wider plan making process result in development in these areas, consideration should be given to the provision of buffer zones of woodland within the developed sites to minimise impact on setting or, indeed, any additional adverse effects.

5.8 A review of the historic and architectural interest of the existing Conservation Area and the area immediately beyond its boundaries was carried out to establish whether the existing boundary defines the special interest. The existing conservation area boundary has the strength of clear historic legibility and a strong consistency of character. There is a danger that significant additions would have the effect of diluting these easily understood qualities.

5.9 The one important heritage asset which lies very close to the current conservation area boundary is *Malling House*, a fine building now used as the Headquarters of the Sussex Police. However, as the house is Grade I listed, it is not clear what additional benefits conservation area designation would bring for its protection. For this reason, no boundary alterations are recommended.



*Malling House, the Sussex Police HQ*

**In producing this document, the Historic Buildings Officers of the South Downs National Park Authority drew heavily upon material contained in an initial draft prepared by staff of Lewes District Council**

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# Photographic Survey



*The settlement retains a rural, village-like atmosphere despite close proximity to Lewes*





*Malling Deanery is the largest building within the settlement*







*The Churchyard is the most notable open space within the Conservation Area*

*Views west and north from the Churchyard are critical to its setting*







*Sanderson family plots at the eastern end of the Churchyard*



*Date stone on the Church Porch*





*1 and 2 Deanery Cottages – Arts and Crafts houses of the Edwardian years*

*The New Coach House alludes to this precedent in a modern idiom*





*River House displays considerable alteration to window openings over time*

*This surviving anchor point is one of two which once restrained the cables of a pre-war suspension bridge across the River Ouse. The white-painted bridge only carried private foot traffic and was dismantled in the 1970s.*







*The north gateway to Mallory Deanery is an elaborate Baroque statement built as an adornment to the house in the Edwardian period*



# Management Plan

OBJECTIVES	ISSUES	ACTIONS	PRIORITY
To ensure proper & effective designation of the Heritage Asset	Boundaries of the Conservation Area	Periodically review the boundaries to properly reflect the extent of the Heritage Asset	Every 10 years
	Unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution	Identify those buildings within the Appraisal	
		Add those buildings to a 'Local List'	High
To monitor the condition of the Heritage asset	Deterioration of the Heritage Asset , including buildings & other structures, open spaces and trees	Prepare a condition survey, including photographic record, of the buildings & other structures, spaces and trees within the Conservation Area	Concurrent with Character Appraisal or asap thereafter
		Undertake a quinquennial review of the condition survey	Every 5 years
		Undertake a decennial review of the Conservation Area appraisal & condition survey.	Every 10 years
		Grant and/or loan scheme for the renovation of historic buildings within Conservation Areas (targeted at Buildings at Risk)	As funding permits
To conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area	Development management	Provide pre-application advice to householder, architects & developers to achieve a high quality of design	On-going
		Determine planning and LBC applications in accordance with the National Park's Purposes & Duty, other adopted policies, & conservation best practice (including this appraisal)	On-going
		Exploit any opportunities to enhance the Conservation Area that arise in the development management process.	On-going
	Degradation of character through loss of architectural features, traditional materials and boundary treatments	Create an Article 4(2) direction to bring these works within control of the planning system	Medium
		Offer grants for the reinstatement of architectural features, traditional materials and boundary treatments	As funding permits
Improvement of the public realm & other spaces	Overhead cables throughout the settlement	Prepare & implement a public realm enhancement scheme	As funding permits
	Poor appearance of storage shed beside tower of St Michael's Church	Encourage replacement of the metal-clad building with a better designed building elsewhere in the Churchyard	Medium
	Review boundary treatments throughout the Conservation Area	Encourage more appropriate fencing or native hedges	Medium

## Annex: Listed Buildings

### **Church of St Michael**

**II\***

**25.02.1952**

Church, C13, C14, rebuilt 1626-28, the foundation stone being laid by John Evelyn, the future diarist and arboriculturalist. Restored 1874. Flint with stone quoins and dressings, plain tiled roofs. Low, two-stage west tower with west window, probably early C14 curvilinear. Pyramidal roof with weathervane. Nave of four bays with single bay chancel, all windows cusped lancets of 1874. South porch, gabled, with moulded round arch with key and impost blocks and hood mould over. Date stone over, marked 1628. North vestry.

Interior: tower arch with responds of late C13 or C14. Low octagonal vault.

### **Malling Deanery**

**II\***

**25.02.1952**

House, now divided. Circa 1660, possibly encasing earlier building. Red with some blue brick and red brick dressings. Red brick pilasters, set back at angles to allow rusticated red brick quoins. Modillion wooden eaves cornice to steeply-pitched hipped, plain tile roof. Four hipped dormers and tall brick ridge stacks with arched sides and over-sailing cornices, to left of centre and at right end. Two stacks on each side to rear also. U-plan, with deep recess to rear. Two storeys and attics. Seven bay north front, glazing bar sashes with painted lintels, these later C18 replacements for cross-windows. Tri-partite sash in third bay from right on ground floor. Projecting porch in third bay from left with flat head and parapet. Triangular pediment over round-arched door surround. Panelled door. Later C18 rounded bow on left hand return front.

Interior: One room with later C17 foliate plaster ceiling of ramified oval form. Three-flight staircase with early C17 openwork splat balusters and closed string.

### **Gateway to Malling Deanery**

**II\***

**29.10.1985**

Gateway. Early C20. Red brick with stone dressings. Central arch with gauged head and stone imposts. Outer piers with entablatures carrying pieces of broken segmental pediment. Urn on bracket over arch in centre. Included for group value.

### **Malling Rectory (Now the Old Vicarage)**

**II**

**25.02.1952**

House. Mid C18 and early and mid-C19. Cobble to south with red brick dressings, with painted brick and stone to rear. Moulded cornice to slate roof with end stacks and 2 skylights. Plain tiled roofs to rear. Two storeys, two window front, the left hand pair of windows replaced by a single, two-storey canted bay. Glazing bar sashes, the glazing bars removed from the bottom blade of the ground floor sash to the right. Entrance in right return front in columnar door case with open triangular pediment over. Half-glazed door with fanlight over.



### ***Analysis Map of the Conservation Area***

*Red.....Listed Buildings*

*Blue.....Buildings of Townscape Merit*

*Hatched Blue.....Buildings of sufficient quality to justify future Local listing*

*Green....Wooded former railway cutting*