

# Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

## Clayton

September 2018



# Summary of Significance

Clayton derives its significance from the survival of a range of traditional buildings, which are typical of an old agricultural village, sitting in an attractive landscape.

The quality of the buildings is demonstrated by the fact that five are listed buildings, quite a large number for such a small place. The single most important building is the Church, with its pre-conquest origins and fine set of mid 12th century wall painting.

The rural setting, sitting just at the bottom of the Downs, and the lush greenery within it also make a positive contribution to the quality of the environment in the village.

The evolution of the village into a residential, commuter settlement has changed the character of the village in some way but it remains one of special quality.

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

1.3 Clayton was first designated as a Conservation Area by Mid Sussex District Council in October 1984, when it fell into two sections. An extension in September 1999 joined the two parts to give the current boundaries (Figure 1). With the creation of the South Downs National Park in April 2011, the National Park Authority became the Local Planning Authority for the village.

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

1.5 It sits within a wider policy context, including:

- The purposes and duty of the South Downs National Park Authority
- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The National Planning Policy Framework
- The Mid Sussex District Council Local Plan, until such time as it is superseded by the South Downs National Park Local Plan

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

1.7 The draft document was the subject of a six week consultation period from 6 February 2017 to 20 March 2017. The draft document was available on the National Park Authority’s website and all the households within the village were notified of it as part of the consultation exercise. Consultations were also sent to West Sussex County Council, Mid-Sussex District Council, Hassocks Parish Council, and Historic England.

1.8 The draft document was amended in response to comments received and adopted by the South Downs National Park Authority on 13 September 2018.

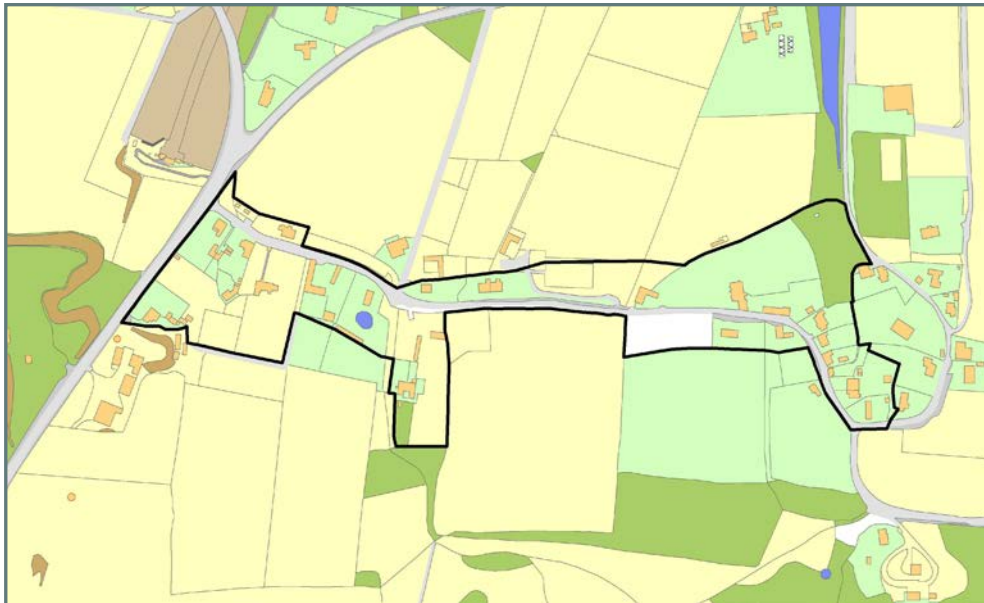


Figure 1 – Boundary of Clayton Conservation Area



# Location & Topography

2.1 Clayton is a small village, now in West Sussex but formerly in East Sussex, between Brighton 7 miles to the south and Hassocks a mile to the north.

2.2 It lies just off the old main road from Brighton to London, now the A273, and adjacent to the railway line from London to Brighton where it passes beneath the Downs through Clayton tunnel, built in 1840.



2.3 The village lies towards the foot of the Downs scarp slope, represented by the closely packed contour lines, and is one of a series of settlements that lie on the spring line. To the north of the village, the land is much flatter and the contour lines are correspondingly well apart.



# Historical Development

3.1 There is evidence for Roman occupation within the Conservation Area, in the form of a villa and bath-house. However, the settlement is a pre-conquest establishment; Clayton, meaning *the farm on the clay* is derived from the Old English words *clæg*, meaning clay, mud or slime, and *tun*, meaning an enclosure or farmstead. Part of the parish lies on the gault, a clay formation.

3.2 The Parish is one of a group which stretch from the crest of the South Downs northwards into the Weald and which were presumably arranged to give each Parish access to a range of natural resources.

3.3 It was apparently quite a large village, with 31 households and a church, when recorded in the Domesday Book. This significance is also reflected in the 11th century construction of the nave of the church, in which can be seen some of the best surviving medieval wall paintings.

3.4 Like most villages, Clayton remained a small agricultural community until well into the 20th century. Research by Joanne Way in 1994 produced a fascinating map which shows the land use throughout the Parish in about 1838. This shows the arable land largely clustered around the village, with pasture land further out on the floor of the valley.

3.5 The Tithe Map of 1843 (Figure 2) shows six dwellings in the village - including Clayton Castle, Birds Hole, Clayton Farm, the Parsonage (now Clayton Manor), and Homestead. All survive except the Homestead.

3.6 The Ordnance Survey mapping of 1875 and 1898 (Figures 3 and 4) show a fairly similar picture.

3.7 The only other occasion when the village appeared in the historical record was the occasion in 1861 of a serious rail crash inside Clayton tunnel, when two trains collided killing 23 passengers.

3.8 As well as the Church, Clayton is also well known for its two windmills, known colloquially since the 1920s as 'Jack and Jill', which stand on the lip of the Downs overlooking the village (and, therefore, outside the Conservation Area)

3.9 The first windmill, Duncton Mill, on the site was built in 1765. In the 1850s, 'Jill' was re-erected near to Duncton, having been dismantled and brought from Brighton, and the two mills were worked together until 1864, after which Duncton Mill was reduced down to its round base and replaced by 'Jack', a brick

tower mill.

3.10 The proximity of the station in Hassocks, and the access to London and Brighton which it provides, has seen the village become a largely residential area, with a number of the old agricultural buildings being converted into residential use.

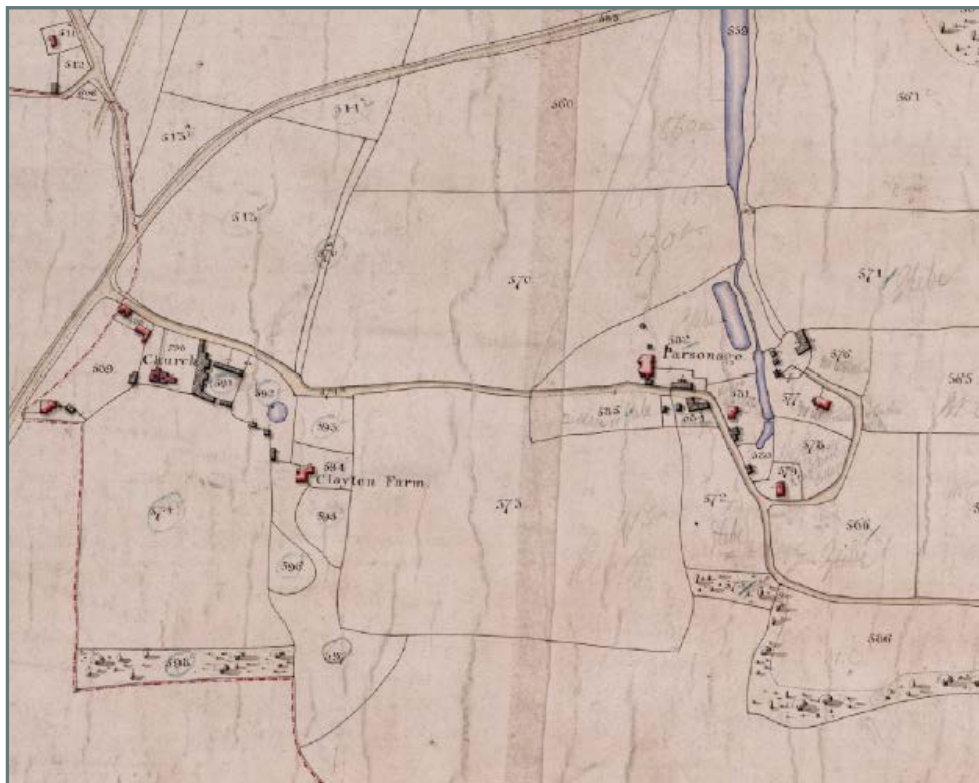


Figure 2: The Tithe Map of 1843 (above) clearly shows the two parts of the village.



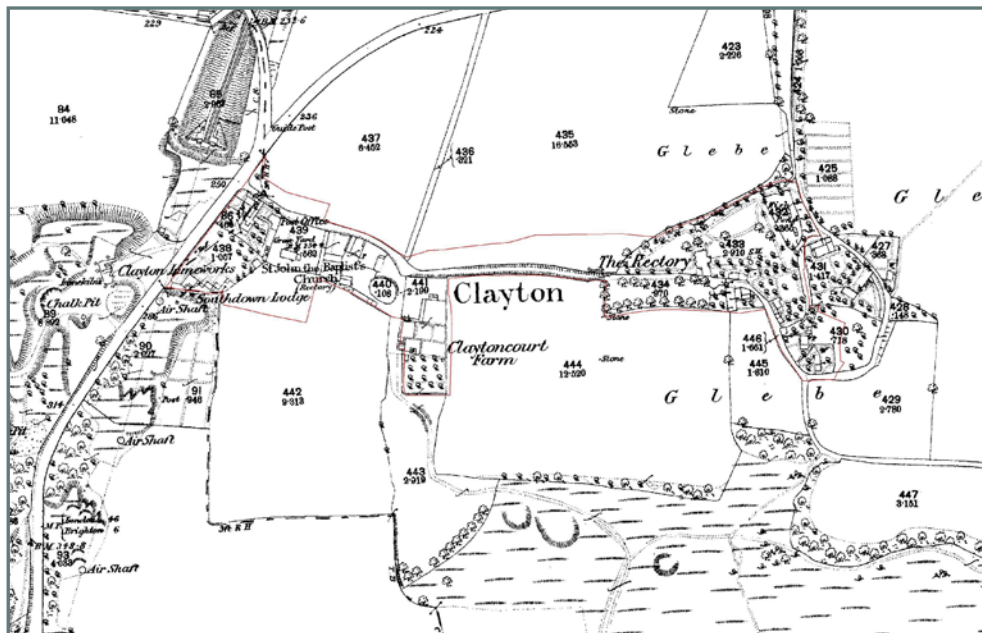
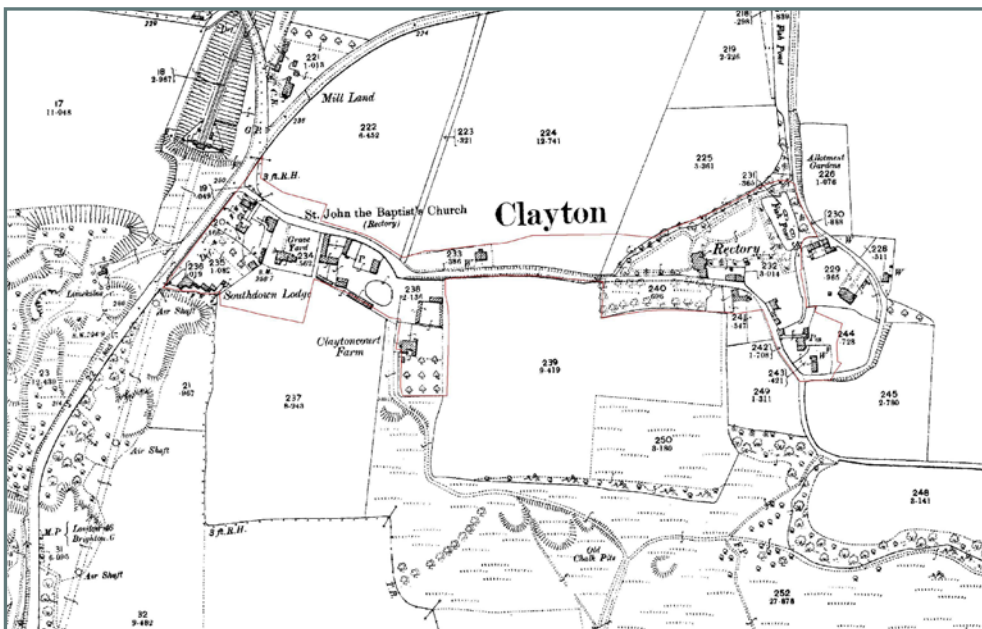


Figure 3: Ordnance Survey map of 1875

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Figure 4: Ordnance Survey map of 1898





# Character Analysis

4.1 The individual elements which make a positive contribution to the special character of the Conservation Area are shown on a map at the back of this document (Figure 15).

## Entrance & Boundaries

4.2 Most travellers' approach the village from the west, where Underhill Lane leaves the main road. A significant amount of traffic uses the main road and its proximity gives this end of the village a busier feel.

4.3 From the east, the lane is much quieter, being a rural lane running from Westmeston.

4.4 The boundary of the Conservation Area was drawn to capture the extent of the village and the space between the two parts as it appears on the Tithe Map. The only exclusion is the area at the east end of the village, which was part of the old village but which has now seen a number of new buildings.

4.5 The village sits at the bottom of the South Downs scarp slope, with green hills rising steeply to its south and longer views over flatter land to the north, towards Hassocks.

## Settlement Form

4.6 The village is simple and linear in form, with all the buildings arranged along the aptly-named Underhill Lane, which runs along the bottom of the Downs. As shown on the Tithe Map of 1843 (Figure 2), the village essentially fell into two parts, to west and to east.

4.7 The western part of the village comprised the church, the farm house and associated farm buildings of Clayton Farm, and two other fairly substantial dwellings. The buildings in this part of the village are quite substantial and often set back from the lane.

4.8 To the east was a collection of four dwellings, including the Parsonage (now called Clayton Manor) and Clayton Castle plus a series of modest outbuildings which line the lane. This part of the village has a more enclosed and intimate feel than the west.

4.9 The 20th century has seen some encroachment into the area between the two parts. However, this development is not intensive and often set back further from the lane than the earlier buildings, and the original split remains apparent when walking through the village (Figure 5).

4.10 Underhill Lane is a narrow road, lacking more suburban elements such as pavements and street lighting, and still has the feeling of a rural lane. In parts it is sunken and bounded by banks, hedges and other vegetation and here there is a strong sense of enclosure. Elsewhere there are views out from the village into the surrounding countryside. This is particularly so to the south where the Downs seem to loom over the village.

4.11 The lane runs straight along a contour line for much of its length but turns south, up the slope, and east as it heads towards Westmeston. A subsidiary lane, Spring Lane, splits from Underhill Lane and curves back on itself before heading north.

### **Buildings & Structures**

4.12 The buildings within the village are, for the most part, modest and insufficient in number to define any themes. The best that one can do is to describe them and draw out their main architectural features and use of materials.

4.13 When first seen, the Church of St John the Baptist is apparently a modest building, with nave, chancel, and bell turret. However, it is by far the earliest building in the village and the most important, which is reflected in its Grade I listing (Figure 6).

4.14 The origins of the surviving building are in the 11th century, with the nave built of coursed flints with sandstone quoins at the corners. Following recent renovation of exterior plaster, it was clarified that the north and south walls of the chancel belong to the same period. Originally there were chapels on either side of the nave at its east end. Nikolaus Pevsner speculated that these were both *porticus*, a type of side chapel entered from the nave and of Anglo Saxon origin.

4.15 Despite its modest size the church demonstrates an interesting selection of building materials. Flint and stone for the walls, albeit now largely covered in accretions of lime wash and render, Horsham stone and clay tiles for the roofs, and timber shingles for the bell tower.

4.16 It is, though, the wall paintings inside the church that are particularly exciting (Figure 7). Only rediscovered during a restoration in 1893, the date of

the paintings is uncertain. However, they were painted directly onto wet plaster and no evidence of earlier plaster was found during restoration, which would suggest that they are contemporary with the building of the church in the 11th century. The influence of the medieval artists lives on, for the artist Graham Sutherland took inspiration from the figure of Christ above the chancel arch in producing his Christ in Glory tapestry for Coventry Cathedral.

4.17 At the entrance to the churchyard is the lychgate, built in 1921 as an impressive War Memorial to the men of Clayton who died in the First World and subsequent wars (Figure 8). The path from gate to church is paved with stone from the Horsham area which preserves the rippling of the sea on sand created when it was a beach (Front cover, right).

4.18 Close to the church are Southdown Lodge and Hillside, both Grade II listed (Figure 9). The former is an early 19th century, stuccoed building with slate roof; the latter built of brick, which has subsequently been painted on the front elevation, with a tiled roof and tiled end gable. Millbrook is the other substantial house in this group. It combines a blue brick front elevation with rendered side walls and a slate roof. The prominent double height bow windows appear to be an addition. Neither it nor the village hall opposite the church are listed buildings but both can be said to make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

4.19 To the east of the Church are the farm buildings associated with Clayton Farm. All are now converted to other uses but, again, they do make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. Clayton Court Barn is a particularly fine brick, flint and tile building (Figure 11).

4.20 Throughout this end of the village, flint walls are an important element in the special character recognised by Conservation Area designation.

4.21 There are two main historic buildings in the eastern part of the village. The Manor House, which was formerly the Parsonage, sits perpendicular to the lane and behind a good flint wall and substantial greenery (Figure 12). As a result, it is only seen in partial and glimpsed views from the lane. Nevertheless, it is a Grade II listed building first built in the late 18th century and extended from its south east corner in the 19th century; this later extension is rather more visible than the original 18th century part.

4.22 Clayton Castle is the final listed building (Grade II) and is a fine mix of timber-framed construction with some brick rebuilding and tile hanging. The roof is also tiled and there is a splendid chimney stack. (Figure 13)

4.22 Between Clayton Manor and Clayton Castle, Underhill Lane curves and rises. Together with the cluster of more modest structures sitting at the back of

or close to the lane, this produces a more intimate and enclosed feeling to this part of the village. As elsewhere in the village there are no pavements or street lights and the lane retains a very rural feel. These modest structures do make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area, by virtue of their familiar palette of building materials - flint, brick, hanging tiles and roof tiles - and scale if no other (Figure 14). Boundary walls are important, particularly the substantial brick wall to Clayton Castle.

## **Landscape and Setting**

4.23 The village sits at a junction of Downs, which form the southern backdrop to the settlement, and flat land to the north.

4.24 From the western end of the village there are significant views out of the Conservation Area to the open downland, including the iconic windmills, “Jack and Jill”. The central and eastern end of the village are more enclosed by buildings, structures and greenery and views of the Downs are more sporadic and glimpsed.

4.25 The land north of the village is, in marked contrast, very flat and, whilst not being unattractive, does not provide views of the quality of those to the south.





# Issues & Opportunities

5.1 Having looked at those elements which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, it remains to consider what opportunities exist to improve it.

5.2 In terms of the buildings, Clayton survives in largely good order, as one may expect in this prosperous part of Sussex. There are no buildings which are in any sort of significant disrepair and no sites within the village which detract from its quality in any manner.

5.3 There are only two issues which detract from the visual quality of the village-scape; these being the telephone poles and wires, and the use of close boarded fencing for the boundaries of some of the more recent developments along the central section of Underhill Lane. The placing underground of the wires and the replacement of the fencing with something more appropriate would both improve the Conservation Area.

5.4 The public consultation has revealed that the Parish Council and community see a problem with inappropriate use of Underhill Lane, which detracts from the Conservation Area. The Highway Authority accepts some of the observations made in regard to the condition of the road but not those regarding the traffic using the lane. It is difficult to resolve this conundrum in the absence of hard evidence and Action 6 of the Management Plan endeavours to seek a way forward.

# Photographic Survey



**FIGURE 5:** Only in the 20th century did the central section of Underhill Lane see any development. However, it remains sporadic and subordinate to greenery, and the sense of two parts to the village remains intact.







**Figure 6:** The Parish Church of St John the Baptist, a Grade I listed building of 11th century origin. North elevation (above) and south elevation (below). Note the mixed palette of building materials, including flint, Horsham stone slates, clay tiles, and wooden shingles.





**Figure 7:** The Church contains a fine set of mediaeval wall paintings, belonging to a group with those in the churches at Hardham and Coombes. Christ in an almond-shaped glory (above), which inspired Graham Sutherland for his tapestry at Coventry Cathedral, and Heavenly Jerusalem, with three figures with haloes inside (below).







**Figure 8:** The churchyard to the south of the Church provides a good view of the Downs (above). The Lychgate, built in 1921 as a War Memorial (below).







**Figure 9:** Grade II listed buildings at the west end of the village. Southdown Lodge (above) and Hillside (below) are both early 19th century in date.







**Figure 10:** Unlisted buildings at the west end of the village which make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The Village Hall (above) and Millbrook (below).





**Figure 11:** The former farm buildings to Clayton Farm have now been converted to residential use (above). In the western part of the village, Underhill Lane provides good views of the Downs (below), including “ Jack and Jill” windmills on the skyline (right).





**Figure 12:** The Manor House, formerly known as the Parsonage, is late 18th century in origin, with 19th century extensions. The flint boundary wall is a particularly important element in the character of the Conservation Area and would be protected by the listing of the house as a curtilage structure.







**Figure 13:** Clayton Castle is a timber-framed building of 17th century or earlier origins. The timber frames remains visible on the east elevation (above) but has been covered by tile hanging and brickwork on the west elevation. It was formerly a pub.







**Figure 14:** Modest buildings and boundary walls at the east end of the village still make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. Their position at the back of, or close to, the lane gives this part of the village a more enclosed, intimate feel.



# Management Plan

6.1 At the beginning of this document the legal definition of a Conservation Area as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance” was acknowledged.

6.2 Taking this definition as a starting point, it follows that the proper management of a Conservation Area will have as its objective both the protection of its existing qualities and its enhancement in ways that build upon its special interest. Four broad aims can be defined:

- To ensure that the Heritage Assets (the Conservation Area and its constituent buildings and other historic features) are properly and effectively designated;
- To ensure that the Heritage Assets are in good condition;
- To secure the conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Heritage assets; and
- To secure the enhancement of the spaces within and around the Heritage assets

## Proper Designation of the Conservation Asset

6.3 In addressing this objective, it is necessary to consider whether:

- There are any areas outside the Conservation Area boundary which should be brought into it;
- There are any areas within the current Conservation Area boundary that have seen inappropriate changes erode their quality to the extent that they should be removed from the Conservation Area;
- There are any buildings which should be added to the Statutory List of Buildings of special architectural or historic interest; and
- There are any buildings which should be added to a Local List of Historic Buildings.

6.4 In undertaking this review of the Conservation Area, it was concluded that the existing boundary was sound and, therefore, no amendments are proposed.



6.5 In reviewing the existing unlisted buildings, none were identified as potential candidates for statutory listing, at least from a superficial external inspection.

### Condition of the Heritage Asset

6.6 To meet this objective it is necessary to identify those buildings or other features of the Conservation Area that are currently in poor condition and to identify a strategy to secure their renovation.

6.7 A 'Buildings at Risk' survey is, as its name suggests, a systematic inspection of buildings, looking at their overall condition and specific areas of decay as well as their status in terms of use or vacancy. It would normally include a photographic record of each building, although this would not usually comprise more than one photograph per building.

6.8 Buildings at Risk surveys are frequently restricted to listed buildings but that commissioned by the National Park Authority in 2012-13 also looked at unlisted buildings within the rural Conservation Areas, allowing some overview for each one.

6.9 Condition monitoring is an on-going process. This is best achieved at a local level, perhaps led by the Parish Council, which is likely to have better means of informal access to buildings within the village.

6.10 As reported in paragraph 5.2, the historic building stock in Clayton is generally in good condition, with no buildings appearing to be 'at risk' in the 2012-13 survey.

**ACTION 1 – that the existing Buildings at Risk survey for the village commissioned by the National Park Authority be enhanced with more photographs to form as comprehensive as possible an overview of the condition of the historic environment within Clayton.**

### Conservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Heritage Asset

6.11 Protection of existing quality will be achieved through careful application of the planning system in general and the Development Management process in particular. One way in which this can be facilitated is by the provision of pre-application advice to householders, architects and developers to achieve a high quality of design. The National Park Authority has a system for the provision of

such advice, which is explained on its website.

6.12 The National Park Authority's archaeological advisor for Clayton is Hampshire County Council, which can be contacted at:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/environment/historicenvironment/historicenvironmentrecord>

6.13 Once an application has been received, it will be assessed against a range of national and local planning policies. At present these include the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework, the Purposes and Duty of the National Park, the relevant Local Plan, and conservation best practice (including this document).

**ADVICE – that anyone considering development of any form which affects Clayton Conservation Area or its setting should seek pre-application advice from the National Park Authority before submitting an application and, ideally, before starting any design work.**

**ADVICE – that anyone considering development of any form which affects Clayton Conservation Area should seek pre-application advice from the National Park Authority's archaeological advisor, Hampshire Council, before submitting an application and, ideally, before starting any design work.**

6.14 Whilst discussing proposals with applicants, both at pre-application stage and in the course of determination, opportunities may arise to achieve improvements both to the proposal itself and its contribution to the wider character of the Conservation Area. These may not originally form part of the proposal. The Local Planning Authority will seek to maximise these opportunities as far as possible.

**ACTION 2 – that Planning and Listed Building Consent applications be determined in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance, with any opportunities to secure improvements during that process being secured as far as possible.**

6.15 One particular issue identified in the appraisal is the use of inappropriate boundary fences, particularly close-boarded fences, and this can to some extent be addressed through the development management system.

**ACTION 3 - that boundary treatments of an appropriate form be secured through the development management system whenever those boundary features require planning permission.**

6.16 The special character of any Conservation Area can be degraded through the loss of architectural features and traditional materials, particularly roofing materials. Individually, these changes may be relatively minor but taken collectively

they can represent a real threat to the special character.

6.17 This problem can be addressed in two ways. One would be to bring those minor works within the ambit of the planning system using a measure called an Article 4 Direction, which removes ‘permitted development rights’ from specific domestic properties. The other, complementary, way would be to encourage the reinstatement of architectural features and traditional materials with a grant scheme targeted at such works.

6.18 At present there does not appear to be a significant problem of this nature in Clayton. It must also be acknowledged that the provision of a grant budget is unlikely in the current circumstances and for the foreseeable future. Both factors inform the Action below. Nevertheless, it is important that the historic building stock should be monitored so that an appearance of an emerging problem is identified at an early stage. In reality, this means everyone, National Park and District Authority officers and members, Parish Councillors and the community, keeping an eye on what is happening.

**ACTION 4 – that the loss of architectural features and traditional materials be monitored by all parties and for the National Park Authority to consider making an Article 4 Direction, in consultation with the community, should it emerge as a problem adversely affecting the special character of Clayton Conservation Area.**

### Enhancement of the spaces within the Heritage Asset

6.19 Conservation Area designation is a response to the qualities of the settlement as a whole and it is important to recognise that the spaces between the buildings are a significant component in this.

6.20 Nevertheless, significant improvements to that quality can be achieved by pro-active work in the public realm. Although it remains difficult to secure finance for such projects, it is by no means impossible to put together a funding package from a number of sources.

6.21 As already mentioned, the placing underground of the wires would improve the Conservation Area.

6.22 The issues associated with the use of Underhill Lane have been discussed in paragraphs 5.4.

**ACTION 5 – that the National Park Authority supports, in principle and in association with other partners, the undergrounding of overhead wires.**

**ACTION 6 – that the National Park Authority seeks to work in partnership with West Sussex County Highway Authority, Hassocks Parish Council, and the**

community to (1) establish the nature and extent of problems caused by traffic using Underhill Lane, and (2) if appropriate, to create and implement a traffic management plan for the road in accordance with the report “Roads in the South Downs. Enhancing the safety and quality of roads and places in the National Park”.

### Responsible Conservation is a Partnership!

6.23 This document has been prepared by the National Park Authority as the Local Planning Authority for Clayton. However, it is very important to stress, and for other parties to understand, that effective management of any Conservation Area is the responsibility of all organisations and all parties who do things which affect the character of the area.

6.24 Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 sets out a wide range of bodies to which the National Park duties apply.

6.25 At a local level, this includes the residents of the village and the Parish Council. Slightly more removed, it means Mid Sussex District Council, West Sussex County Council as the Local Highway Authority and in its other activities, and all those Statutory Undertakers which undertake works in the public realm.

# Annex: Listed Buildings

## **The Parish Church of St John the Baptist, Underhill Lane**

Grade I.

Chancel, nave with north aisle, shingled bell turret at west end and north porch. nave Largely pre-Conquest, but the chancel is late C13 and the north aisle C15. The nave has very fine wall paintings of 1150 circa.

## **Clayton Castle, Spring Lane**

Grade II.

Never a castle. C17 or earlier timber-framed building with plaster infilling, ground floor rebuilt in painted brick, first floor of south front tile-bung. Half-hipped tiled roof. Casement windows. Two storeys. Four windows.

## **Hill Side, Underhill Lane**

Grade II.

Early C19. Two storeys. Three windows. Painted brick. Modillion eaves cornice. Tiled roof. Casement windows. Trellised wooden porch with curved head

## **Clayton Manor, Underhill Lane**

Grade II.

Late C18. Two storeys. Three windows. Faced with Roman cement. Parapet. Tiled roof. Two curved windows of 3 lights each on both floors. Glazing bars intact. Porch (now glazed) with Doric columns and pediment. L-wing added at south east corner in C19.

## **Southdown Lodge Clayton Hill**

Grade II.

Early C19. Two storeys. Three windows. Stuccoed. Stringcourse. Long and short quoins. Wide eaves cornice.



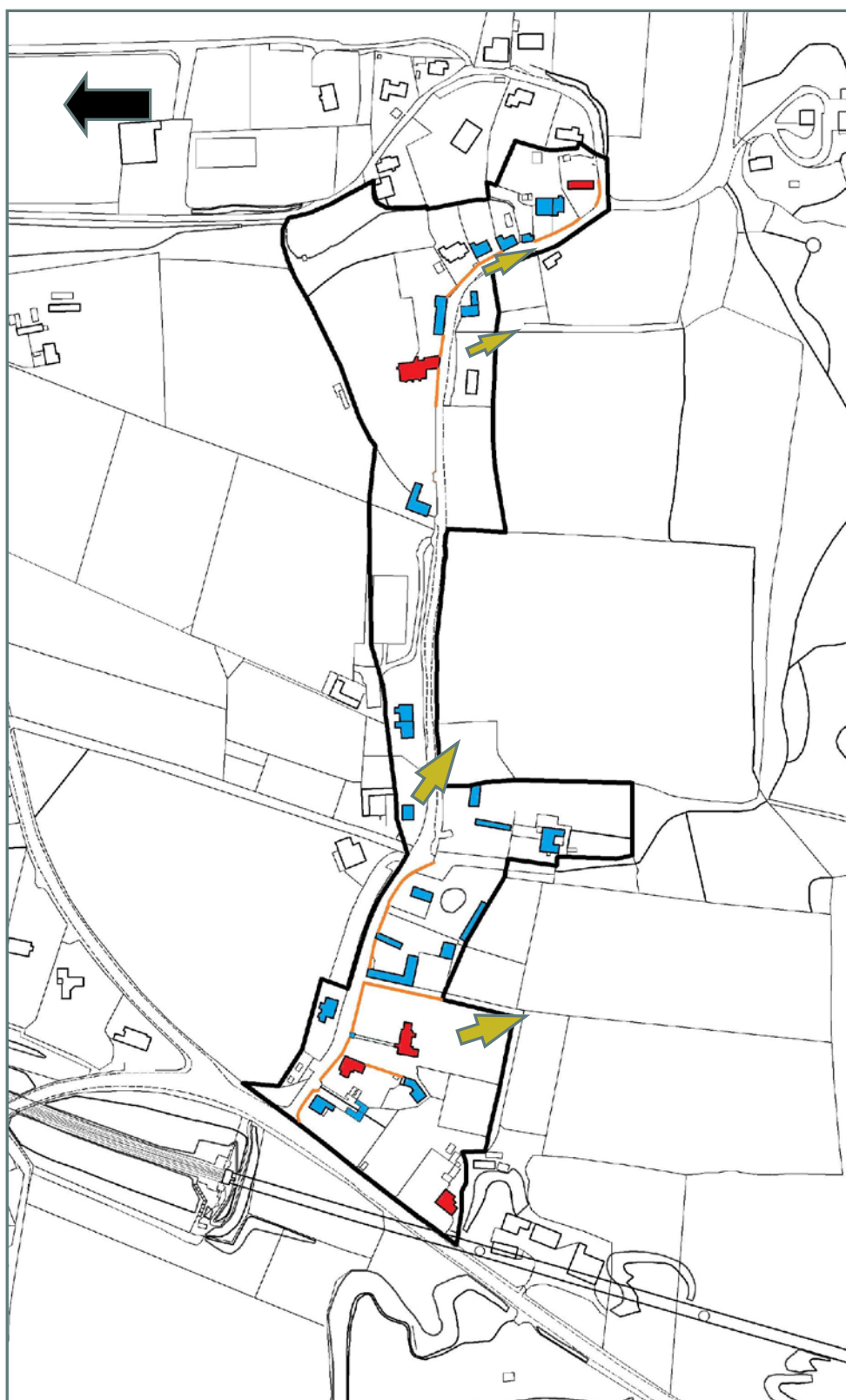


Figure 15 : Elements Making a Positive Contribution to the Special Character of Clayton Conservation Area, including listed buildings (red), unlisted buildings making a positive contribution (blue), important boundaries (orange), and significant views (green arrows).