

WINCHELSEA TOWN PLAN

Response to the draft Winchelsea Conservation Area Appraisal

The Winchelsea Town Plan Steering Committee, which is the body producing a Local Action Plan for the town, welcomes the draft Conservation Area Appraisal and commends it as a very professional piece of work by Rother District Council.

The Committee has consulted widely within Winchelsea, holding “walkabout” consultations on 12 and 19 January 2008 and a public meeting on 22 January 2008, and has drawn on one-on-one discussions conducted by Winchelsea’s ward councillors. A very considerable number of specific points were raised, which accounts for the length of this document, but these were mainly matters of detail and emphasis. The overwhelming response among residents was supportive of the Appraisal. However, there was concern among some residents of Tanyard Lane at the potential costs to them of the Article 4 Direction.

The Committee broadly endorses the Appraisal. It supports the proposed expansion of the Conservation Area to the north and west of the current area, given the important archaeology of these areas, and the fact that they are an integral part of the historical context and landscape setting of the town. The need to consider the wider landscape qualities of the town is implicit in the idea of a Conservation Area. It is also a specific duty imposed by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and PPG7 by virtue of Winchelsea’s AONB status, and is Objective S2 of the AONB Management Plan 2004 (to protect the historic pattern of settlement) to which the District Council and others must have regard. English Heritage has observed that “many early conservation areas were drawn too tightly”. We believe this was the case with Winchelsea in 1969 (one of the earliest Conservation Areas). At the time, there were representations (eg by the Winchelsea Corporation) to include the western slopes.

The Committee also supports the revised Article 4 Direction and its application to the whole of the expanded Conservation Area. It would be confusing and arbitrary to vary conditions across such a relatively small area. We do not believe that the Article 4 Direction will impose extra costs, not least because there will be no charge for planning applications required as a result of the removal of permitted development rights. Experience of being subject to an Article 4 Direction in the existing Conservation Area has not given rise to complaints about extra cost.

The Committee suggests that it would be more logical and, given the history of Winchelsea, appropriate to expand the Conservation Area a little further and go as far north as the Ferry Bridge to include the Ferry Farmhouse and garden, and the small apex of land on the other side of the road. There is also a case to include the whole of St Leonards Fleet in order to bring the remains of the medieval sea wall within the Conservation Area. This would be consistent with the Target for 2009 for Objective FH4 in the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004 to see “additional scheduling achieved for major medieval sea walls”.

The only gaps in the draft Appraisal from our point of view are its reluctance to identify the damage that has been caused to the architecture and history of Winchelsea (in the Appraisal, criticism is directed only at the Spring Steps development), and the failure to propose policies to tackle some of the problems that threaten the character and appearance of the town. English Heritage's *Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals* (2005) argues that "Conservation area appraisals could also...include some analysis of how...[the] significance [of features of special interest] is vulnerable as the basis for defining policies for preserving or enhancing their character" and that appraisals should be regarded as the first step in a dynamic process, the aim of which...is "to provide a basis for making sustainable decisions about its future through the development of management proposals". English Heritage also recommends that Appraisals "should identify elements which detract from the special character of the area, and which offer potential for beneficial change" as well as "problems, pressures and capacity for change". We note that an Appraisal "can include management proposals to ensure preservation or enhancement of an area by means of policies [and] action points..." However, no such policies appear to have been recommended and there appears to be a general lack of intent in the Appraisal to enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In particular, the Committee believes that policies to preserve and enhance should be laid down in respect of trees, street furniture, grass verges, pavements, parking, the roofscape and the lighting of buildings.

Conservation Management Policies

Trees

In the character appraisal of the setting of the town (section 3.1), attention is drawn to the densely-wooded slopes around Winchelsea. The belt of trees around the slopes of the hill are characterised as a 'natural town wall'. Unfortunately, these woods suffer from an almost complete lack of tree management. The result is that the slopes around the town look derelict. This is not a problem on the eastern side of the hill, where the natural cycle of growth and decay is in keeping with the entirely rural character of these slopes. On the northern side of the hill, however, the lack of management has resulted in trees falling across the A259 and Spring Steps, and has made the woodland look derelict, which detracts from the appearance of the northern cliff and Tanyard Lane. This has not always been the case. Until the 1970's, the woodland on the slope was coppiced.

The problem along the slopes above Tanyard Lane has been made worse by the implementation by the Highways Agency of a poorly designed and managed replanting scheme for Ferry Hill following the rebuilding of the slope, and the subsequent lack of maintenance. The loss of mature trees and the failure to replant properly has spoilt the view up Ferry Hill towards the historic Pipewell Gate and has degraded the view from the Pipewell Gate and North Street over the Brede Valley by exposing the caravan park to full view.

Within the town, trees are seeding in places that threaten historic buildings (eg by the side of the Strand and Pipewell Gates) and block significant views (eg from the Lookout and from Back Lane towards the sea). Once grown to any size, the removal

of a tree can be difficult, eg removing a tree from a slope can increase the run-off of surface water, which can destabilise the slope.

On the other hand, trees that have fallen over or have been cut down because they have become dangerous are not being replaced, despite the general duty imposed by the Town and Country Planning Act on the owner of land in a Conservation Area to plant another tree of an appropriate size and species at the same place as soon as the owner reasonably can. The loss of some very large mature trees within the town in recent years has dramatically impacted the character and appearance of a number of streets (eg Castle Street and St Thomas's Street). Only one has been replaced (Trojans Plat). Similarly, the loss of and the failure to replant cherry trees in the churchyard has deprived Winchelsea of one of its most spectacular seasonal sights.

The Committee asks that the Appraisal should highlight the problem of tree management and make proposals to ensure better and timely tree replacement, and more regular tree maintenance, within the Conservation Area.

The Committee welcomes the reference in section 3.7 to the importance of trees as landscape features, but believes that greater emphasis is needed in general descriptions of the town, and in the specific descriptions on page 12 of architectural themes. In particular, we would like to see the comments in the 1969 Designation Report on how trees (and other planting) help define the 'quarters' of the town (para.3.4) carried over into the Appraisal. This should include the stand of trees at the western side of the Cricket Field which follow the town ditch of 1415.

The Appraisal should also specifically note the role of avenues of trees in defining the character of certain streets (eg Monks Walk, German Street, the far end of Friars Road, Back Lane, St Thomas's Street, Hogtrough Lane, Rectory Lane and Wickham Rock Lane). There is a passing reference on page 5 to "lines of mature trees" in Monks Walk, but this needs repeating for other roads. The row of mature trees in front of Trojans Plat is deserving of particular mention as it screens a modern development from a road traditionally dominated by the classical style of Mariteau House and continues the avenue of mature trees that run down Monks Walk along the boundaries of the Greyfriars parkland and the Walled Field opposite, and is an important characteristic of the southern approach to the town. A plan is needed for the maintenance of the treescape in the parkland of Greyfriars given the maturity of the trees and the increasing need for replanting in an area of particular archaeological sensitivity.

The Committee ask that the Appraisal assess the use of Tree Preservation Orders within the Conservation Area and consider whether new orders are needed.

Street furniture

One distinctive characteristic of Winchelsea (certainly in the opinion of visitors), which is not mentioned in the Appraisal, is the lack of street names. While inconvenient for deliverymen, it does reinforce the rural character of the place. In consultations, some residents argued that road signs are needed to help emergency services, while others noted that emergency services and many deliverymen used SatNav. However, all agreed that, if there was proposal to introduce road signs in

Winchelsea, the design, quality and siting of signs would have to be very carefully selected.

Another distinctive feature of the town, which most residents would value and which many visitors photograph, is the clipped yew tree which has grown around the footlight at the corner of German Street and Back Lane. A similar feature exists at the corner of Mill Road and Castle Street.

A campaign by residents starting in 1999 succeeded in persuading the Highways Authority of East Sussex County Council and the Highways Agency to review the number, location and usefulness of traffic signs and other street furniture in and around Winchelsea. When the campaign started, there were over 230 traffic direction panels in the town. A significant number were removed.

However, a number of redundant, unhelpful or badly-sited traffic signs remain in place (generally along the A259). The worst example is the clutter of haphazardly-located signs that surround and intrude upon the view of the medieval Pipewell Gate. The Committee asks that the Appraisal highlight this clutter and make site-specific management proposals for their removal, replacement or re-siting.

The gateway signs at the approaches to Winchelsea along the A259 are another eyesore. They are examples of urban design and totally at odds with the historic and rural character of Winchelsea. The Committee asks that the Appraisal highlight these signs as they will fall within the expanded Conservation Area and make site-specific management proposals for their replacement.

The initial success of the residents' campaign to reduce the number of traffic signs in Winchelsea has been partially reversed over time by the appearance of new signs. Many of these are of debatable value (eg the high-frequency Sustrans cyclepath signs that have sprung up along Tanyard Lane despite the absence of a proper cyclepath, the overzealous safety sign behind the recycling bins in Monks Walk, speed limit repeater signs). The Committee asks that the Appraisal highlight the problem caused by these signs.

The bend at the southern end of Monks Walk is another example of the confused clutter caused by traffic signs and other street furniture. There are reflective bollards, a traditional fingerpost, a chevron partly obscuring the fingerpost and a size restriction sign for Wickham Rock Lane. The arrangement of the signs is haphazard and there is duplication. The Committee asks that the Appraisal highlight this cluster of signs and make site-specific management proposals to rationalise the signs. We suggest replacing the obtrusive chevron with a higher frequency of reflective bollards, which are equally as visible to drivers but less intrusive upon the area.

In view of the visual intrusion of street furniture such as traffic signs, and the impact on the character and appearance of the town, it is important that the problem be highlighted by the Appraisal. It is hoped that the guidance manuals being adopted by the District Council and being prepared by the County Council will result in better management of the problem. However, there is no mention of action by the Highways Agency. Given the impact of the A259 on Winchelsea, their

responsibility needs to be highlighted and a commitment secured to more sympathetic treatment of the A259 through Winchelsea.

Finally, numerous complaints have been made about the incongruous blue and white sign attached by the entrance to the Spring Steps development by Rother Homes. It contradicts the characterisation in section 3.6 of the Appraisal by being corporate, indiscreet and not domestic in character.

Grass verges

The Appraisal acknowledges that grass verges are a key feature of the character and appearance of Winchelsea. However, it takes a rather rose-tinted view of their condition by stating that they have carefully tended by residents and implying that they are all in good condition.

Unfortunately, the verges are being eroded in several streets, notably Back Lane, Rookery Lane, Mill Road, North Street and Friars Road. Some verges have been damaged by building work. In North Street and Mill Road, the problem is caused by residents parking on the verge, or so close to the edge that their tyres cut into the verge, or parking in sections of road that are so narrow that other vehicles are forced to drive over the verges on the opposite side of the road. Large commercial vehicles do most of the damage. In Back Lane and Rookery Lane, the erosion of the verges is the result of parking by the staff and parents from the School. At the end of Friars Road, the verge outside the school has been completely destroyed and partly asphalted (without planning permission). Where verges have retreated, the edge of the roadway has been exposed and has started to erode, further degrading the quality of the public realm.

There is currently little protection for verges in the planning or building control process, and there is no programme to restore damaged verges, which may therefore be lost over time. Given the prominence of verges in the Appraisal, it is clear that their loss will significantly affect the character and appearance of the town. The Committee would like to see some specific management proposals to tackle this problem:

- planning permission should require the protection and restoration of grass verges by developers;
- restrictions on public or commercial development where the volume of traffic and the size of delivery vehicles is out of scale with the access roads;
- a bye law prohibiting parking on verges in Friars Road, North Street, Back Lane and Rookery Lane, which are the most seriously affected streets;
- a programme for restoring badly-damaged verges;
- the installation of granite sett kerbs in the western section of Back Lane, North Street, Hiham Green and School Hill, which are under particular pressure from parking.

Pavements

The red brick pavements in the High Street and Hiham Gardens are also a key feature of the town and, as made clear in *Streets for All --- South East*, a characteristic of the district for over 200 years.

Unfortunately, the red brick pavements are being broken up by vehicles visiting the Court Hall, village shop, former tea shop and New Inn. The main problem is delivery vehicles visiting the three commercial premises and visitors to meetings and exhibitions in the first.

Repairs to the brick pavements have often been less than satisfactory. A consistent supply of replacement bricks has proved difficult to find and the precise type of brick used in repairs has varied, which has tended to make repairs stand out. The utilities are also less than diligent in their repairs and tend to avoid having to cut bricks to shape by using excessive amounts of cement, which is not only unsightly and will gradually shrink the area of the red brick, but restricts thermal movement and creates a maintenance liability for the highways authority.

We would welcome more emphasis on the red brick pavements in High Street and Hiham Gardens, given the urgent need of protection.

We would ask for the damage to pavements to be highlighted in the Appraisal and for the inclusion of some management proposals to remedy the problem. The County Council has recently agreed to repave Hiham Gardens, which is very welcome. However, we believe that virtually all the brick paving in the High Street also needs relaying. This would be an opportunity to sort and reorganise individual bricks into consistent groups. Further damage to the bricks should be averted by relaying the bricks on a concrete base (as recommended by English Heritage) rather than sand (as at present).

The Committee has been told that there was a red brick pavement outside the Salutation Cottages in Mill Road, but that this was removed some years ago. This should be reinstalled.

The other types of pavement in Winchelsea present a different problem. The state of many is a matter of concern. The County Council is to be applauded for experimenting with surfaces that echo the historic pavements of the town. In particular, it has tried tarmac dusted with grit in St Thomas's Street, German Street, Hiham Green and the northern end of Castle Street, and broken stone paving in the main section of Castle Street, outside Strand Plat in Rookery Lane and in Friars Road. Unfortunately, the sanded tarmac has not proved resilient to wear and the broken stone paving is such a hazard to pedestrians that they tend to walk in the roadway. In addition, broken stone paving has proved to be too "high-maintenance" for the highways budget of the County Council. The general state of the pavement has therefore deteriorated and repairs have been poor (often just the replacement of loose stones by large dollops of cement).

The Committee would like to see management proposals in the Appraisal, in the form of policy, action points or design guidance, to encourage the use of regular stone slabs to replace the sanded tarmac and broken stone pavements in Castle Street, German Street and Rookery Lane. Consideration should also be given to the use of stone slabs laid end up. From archaeological evidence, this is the most original form of paving in Winchelsea. *Streets for All* notes that "Where traditional paving exists it thus requires identifying and conserving as a key indicator of local distinctiveness, and to influence the choice of alternative materials."

The Public Realm

The Committee strongly welcomes the greater focus of the District and County Councils on maintenance of the Public Realm. In Winchelsea, there are a number of areas of the Public Realm that detract from the character and appearance of the town.

The location of a mobile phone mast and, more especially, associated equipment cabinets by the junction of Monks Walk and the A259 was a disappointing failure to protect the Winchelsea Conservation Area at a key point along the approaches to the town. The apparent justification of the Planning Committee at the time was that the site was already cluttered with traffic signs and so the extra clutter would not matter. Given that the damage has been done, the Committee asks that the Appraisal include an action point to mitigate the visual intrusion in the form of screening by planting.

Another hot spot in Winchelsea's Public Realm is the public toilets on Monks Walk. Like the mobile phone mast, the existing clutter at this site has encouraged further clutter, this time, in the form of recycling bins and an obtrusive warning sign of little practical value. The Committee asks that the Appraisal makes the point that development in the Public Realm should not be used as an excuse for further development, particularly where further development would, on its own, probably not be acceptable.

In addition, there is an intrusive and untended screen of *leylandii* around the public toilets which were planted without planning permission and which has significantly changed the appearance of this area. This is an example of suburbanisation that is specifically identified in the AONB Management Plan (p26) as one of the five top issues affecting routeways. The Committee ask that the Appraisal note this problem and seek its removal as an action point.

The state of many roads in Winchelsea is deteriorating and the continuous temporary patching with plugs of tarmac is degrading the appearance of those streets. Some of this is caused by building work on houses. The rest tends to be a more gradual consequence of the breach in the integrity of road surfaces due to work by utilities. Particular problems exist in St Thomas's Street, Hiham Green, Castle Street, Back Lane and Friars Road. The Committee asks that the Appraisal highlight this problem and include management proposals seeking a programme of proper repairs and the inclusion in planning permissions of a requirement for developers to repair roads damaged by waste skips or other work.

The Committee asks that the Appraisal record the remnants of traditional stone-lined guttering that can still be seen in gaps in the tarmac in Castle Street and in historical pictures of Winchelsea. Consideration should be given by the Highways Authority to the restoration of these gutters when the road surface is next relaid.

It is argued below that the most important part of the Public Realm in Winchelsea is the wide section of Castle Street near the junction with the High Street, which provides what is, in effect, the modern "town square". Given the importance of this site, it is disappointing that the area around the Parish noticeboard has been allowed to deteriorate. The area needs paving in a traditional material. The

Committee asks that the Appraisal highlight this problem and includes an action point and design guidance.

The 1969 Designation Report (para.2.5) identified “the unfortunate effect of overhead wires” and suggested that “it may be possible to persuade the statutory undertakers to place the cables and lines underground.” The Committee shares this view and asks that the issue be highlighted in the Appraisal. Although many people have become inured through familiarity to overhead wires and telegraph poles, that is no reason to accept what are visual intrusions into a historic setting. The Committee asks that the eventual removal of overheads wires and telegraph poles be included as a management policy in the Appraisal, but that care be taken with the laying of cables into houses.

Parking

It was noted in the 1969 Designation Report (para.2.6) that “The parked car often interferes with the full appreciation of a village street or green and the provision and use of off-street car parks suitably located would do much to improve the appearance of these areas.” Parking congestion has become a much more serious issue in Winchelsea since 1969. Hiham Green, School Hill, North Street, Barrack Square, Back Lane and Friars Road suffer from parking problems which materially affect the character of the streets. Parking problems have been made worse by the loss of garages, principally through conversion to domestic use. There is great concern that the block of garages in Mill Road might eventually be redeveloped for housing. The loss of so many garages would seriously aggravate the parking problem in Winchelsea. The Committee also asks that the Appraisal include a management proposal in the form of a policy constraining the further conversion or redevelopment of garages given the wider consequences on the Conservation Area

Another issue is the impact of parking by the school and by businesses. Back Lane, Rookery Lane, Friars Road and St Thomas’s Street are badly affected by parking in the morning and afternoon by parents. North Street is badly affected by commercial vehicles associated with a local business. The additional pressure on parking that would be created by the expansion of the school or local businesses needs to be highlighted as an issue for the Conservation Area. The Committee also asks that the Appraisal include proposals to manage the current problems.

The roofscape

The Appraisal makes numerous references to the roofscape of the town. It is rightly identified as a key feature of the character and appearance of Winchelsea. However, the Appraisal fails to identify the gradual threat to the roofscape posed by the loss of or damage to chimney stacks, particularly the removal or inappropriate replacement of chimney pots, and the loss of the visual integrity of large plain traditional clay-tiled roofs by the insertion of modern rooflights and dormer windows.

The Committee asks that the Appraisal identifies the importance of the integrity of large plain traditional clay-tiled roofs and the value of chimneys as an architectural theme. Furthermore, the Committee would welcome some of the better chimney stacks (eg in Castle Street) being specifically identified as interesting architectural

features, and the role that they play in the character and appearance of the town being highlighted in the Appraisal.

The lighting of buildings

This issue is not addressed in the Appraisal at all. As the Appraisal observes, Winchelsea retains a largely rural feel. One of the most valued characteristics of rural areas is the ability to see the stars in a clear night sky. Freedom from light pollution is increasingly threatened by inconsiderate and inappropriate lighting of domestic and commercial premises. A number of houses have installed "security" lighting with little consideration for the sideways glare or light spillage. A recent refurbishment of the exterior of the New Inn saw very bright lighting installed to illuminate new signage. In addition, the use of inappropriate light fittings in the footlights in Winchelsea has exacerbated the problem of glare. Appropriate lighting needs to be highlighted as a conservation issue. The Committee asks that conditions on lighting should be included in planning permissions as a matter of course and that this policy be included in the Appraisal.

Another lighting issue is the illumination of the church. The current illuminations use harsh sodium light. The quality and direction of the lighting of a Scheduled Ancient Monument needs to be carefully thought out and executed so as to avoid light pollution and be in sympathy with the building itself. The character and appearance of a Conservation Area must not be judged solely between sunrise and sunset.

2.1 Description

The draft comments, on page 5, state that the A259(T) "acts as a 'by-pass' to the inner town, protecting it from through-traffic". Regrettably, this is not true and is at odds with the statement at the bottom of page 6 that the A259 brings "a high traffic flow through" the town. The Winchelsea Speed Watch action group has estimated, on the basis of an extensive traffic survey conducted in February-March 2006, that some 16,000 cars a week, equal to as much as 40% of the traffic transiting Winchelsea along the A259(T) and C298, cuts through the town (along the C298 --- which used to be the A259) in order to avoid the bottlenecks on the A259(T) at Ferry Hill. This "rat-running" is a major problem that is degrading the character of the town and poses a real physical threat to some historic sites including the Strand Gate (which has suffered repeated collision damage), Pipewell Gate and Court Hall (which was hit twice by speeding cars in 2005 alone). The Committee asks that this problem be highlighted in the Appraisal.

3.2 Approaches to the Village

The Committee welcomes the acknowledgement in the Appraisal that Ferry Hill does not provide safe access into and out of the town for cyclists or pedestrians.

Spring Steps is mentioned as "an additional pedestrian route into the town". This footpath is in fact very dangerous, because of its exit onto a blind bend of A259(T) and the usually poor state of the footpath (it is wet, slippery and frequently blocked by fallen trees). Spring Steps is therefore not a suitable pedestrian route into the

town. In consequence, more needs to be made in the Appraisal of the lack of safe pedestrian or cycling access to the town from the north, west and east.

Townscape & Architectural Character

Although the church square is a central reference point of the town, the most important part of the Public Realm in Winchelsea is the wide section of Castle Street near the junction with the High Street. This space provides what is, in effect, the modern "town square", formed spatially by the junction with the wide section of Castle Street and functionally by the location of the village shop and post office in a corner building on one side of the road --- the hubs of day-to-day life in Winchelsea --- and, on the other side, the combination of the main gate into the churchyard and the seating area by the parish noticeboard. This junction is where most of the pedestrian traffic in the town converges and is a key feature of the town.

The tiled pavement outside Manna Plat shown in a photograph on page 12 is relatively new (laid after 2000) and attracted some criticism as being out of keeping with the house (the pavement being seen as Victorian) and with the other pavements in the town. The Committee suggest the photograph is removed.

3.1 Streetscape Character Analysis

The vista from the top of Hiham Green is an impressive view of the Brede Valley across to the Udimore Ridge. The view of Rye is only available from the bottom of School Hill.

There is no more streetlighting (actually footlighting) in the High Street than elsewhere in the town.

What is most significant about the view down the High Street to the east is that the eye is drawn to the Mary Stanford lifeboat house on Winchelsea Beach. This is a traditional and historically poignant vista that needs conserving and is well worth highlighting in the Appraisal.

In St Thomas's Street, the modernity, blandness and modern materials of the Rectory is a shock, as is the break that it represents in the street frontage. The same criticism needs to be made of New Cottage in Mill Road in order to prevent such mistakes being copied in the future in any infill development.

We think it worth mentioning the calming influence on St Thomas's Street of the churchyard, the grass verge and the mature oak. This is evident in the use of this street by visitors as a tranquil place to sit down and picnic.

Most of the dormer windows in Castle Street are in traditional style, but there is one modern "shocker". Reference to the fact that most dormer windows are in sympathetic styles would help prevent another modern intrusion and it would be helpful if a design statement could be issued for the modern exception so that, when major work is undertaken on the property, the mistake can be rectified.

The trees in the garden of The Armoury and neighbouring properties play a key role in filling out the space created by the gardens within this quarter and providing a

calming backdrop to the buildings. The role of trees, vegetation and garden spaces is acknowledged in section 3.7 but is worth repeating here.

The material and style of the modern wall outside The Armoury is harshly inconsistent with the building itself. Greater sympathy should be required in new walls, especially where the main building gives such a strong clue as to the best style. This mistake needs to be avoided by being highlighted in the Appraisal.

The quality of North Street suffers from the location and modern style of a block of garages near the Pipewell Gate, the clutter of poorly sited and maintained traffic signs abutting the gate itself and the derelict land to one side. These problems need highlighting and management proposals put forward to remedy them.

The reference to the unsatisfactory vista down Mill Road towards the house called Alards on the corner with Barrack Square is even more true of the vista down Barrack Square towards Alards. The problem is the single storey garage and extension projecting out from Alards.

The Committee strongly endorse the observation on page 17 about the incongruity of the development at Spring Steps, especially as many of the houses have lost their original features through poor window and door replacement. The same comment can be made about the Kent Close development. These mistakes need to be avoided by being highlighted in the Appraisal.

The Committee is keen that the red K2 phone box in the High Street be given specific recognition in the streetscape analysis, particularly as it is in need of maintenance, which should be an action point in the Appraisal.

The Committee is surprised that no reference has been made to the Town Sign in German Street. This is now an important feature of the town and a good example of sympathetic development.

In a similar vein, it is surprising that no reference has been made to the bus shelter in German Street. This is a high-quality, well-designed and well-constructed building in traditional materials that fits in exceptionally well with its surroundings. It cost £250 to build in 1958, a considerable sum at the time.

Finally, some reference should be made to the Lookout at the end of the High Street. It is a highly significant and idiosyncratic feature of the town and dates from the 19th century.

3.4 Architectural and Archaeological Value

The Committee asks for mention to be made of the Queen Elizabeth Spring at the top of Spring Steps. This is the last accessible spring in the town, which was distinguished from Rye in having its own water supply, and has been used in living memory. Unfortunately, it has fallen into disrepair. The Appraisal should include management proposals to encourage its repair.

3.5 Materials and Architectural Details

The Committee recognises that the Appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive, particularly in this section, but suggests the inclusion of the view from Castle Street over the gate and wall of The Armoury to the unusual peaked garage roof and the backdrop formed by mature trees and the back roofs of Barrack Square.

The photograph at the top of page 12 of the front of Winchelsea Cottage in the High Street is out of date. There is now an excellent porch above the door, which is a good example of sympathetic change.

3.6 Shopfronts & Advertisements

The recent refurbishment of the exterior of the New Inn installed inappropriate new signage and excessive lighting. It would be helpful to have these issues highlighted to avoid further problems of this sort.

3.7 Landscape Features

The Committee strongly supports the landscape features identified in the draft Appraisal, subject to its comment about the importance of trees in the landscape.

4.6 Highways and the Public Realm

The Committee asks that a management proposal be included in the Appraisal to improve the appearance of street furniture by making it more in keeping with the town, for example, by replacing the grey posts used for traffic signs with black posts or, even better, oak posts.

The Appraisal fails to mention Hogtrough Lane (Deadman's Lane). This is the remnant of the western section of Fifth Street, one of the key routes into the medieval town and an important part of its history (the scene of the massacre of 1359). Hogtrough Lane is now a classic example of a traditional sunken lane that is an identified characteristic of the High Weald AONB. It deserves some reference in the Appraisal, particularly given the threats to its conservation, which include attempts to redevelop the gasometer site at the bottom of the lane with and without planning permission. The importance of sunken lanes such as Hogtrough Lane is reflected in Objective R1 of the High Weald AONB Management Plan (to maintain the historic pattern and features of routeways). The Rationale for this Objective is "to maintain this key survival of an essentially medieval landscape...[and] to protect the individual archaeological features of the historic routeways. The Indicators of Success for the Objective include "increased protection for and awareness of the best-preserved examples of networks of ancient routeways" and "the undeveloped nature of rural lanes maintained". One of the top five issues for such routeways is the "increasing numbers of houses along rural lanes".

Annex 3: Character Analysis Map

The Committee believes that the following unlisted buildings are of architectural interest and should be added to the map:

- The butchers shop in Castle Street. It is a small and unusual shop, and a valued feature of that road.

- The double garage in the enclosed courtyard at the corner of Mill Road and Hiham Green. It is a well-designed and constructed building that fits in well with the town.
- The double garage in Back Lane. This is a traditional brick building in an intriguing setting.
- The garage of Magazine House in Castle Street. This is a solid, pleasingly simple structure in traditional materials.
- The Old Rectory in St Giles Close off Rectory Lane. An imposing historic building.
- The former Telephone Exchange on Mill Lane. A charming, well-designed and constructed building that is a good example of high-quality small-scale functional public buildings.
- The stable in Rookery Field. A lovely old rural building. Unusual in being thatched.
- The garage next to Strand Plat in Rookery Lane. A quaint and unusual out-building with a history.
- The public toilets on Monks Walk. In itself, a well-designed building.
- The bus shelter in Monks Walk.

The Committee believes that the end of the “built enclosure” in Monks Walk should be marked at the public toilets as both Truncheons and the public toilet block continue the sense of built space. Similarly, the “built enclosure” in Rectory Lane should include the New Hall.

The Committee believes that a number of important trees have been left out of the map and need to be included:

- The avenue in front of Trojans Plat.
- The trees in the parkland of Greyfriars and opposite in the Walled Field, which form an avenue down Monks Walk.
- The large horsechestnut in the front garden of Mariteau Cottage is essentially part of the avenue down Monks Walk.
- The large tree behind Barling House in Hiham Green is a key feature of that quarter.
- The stand of trees at the western edge of the Cricket Field is a significant element of the treescape and boundary feature of the town.
- The trees lining Hogtrough Lane which contribute to its tunnel-like character.

In addition, the Committee suggests that Tree Preservation Orders be marked on the map.

Annex 4: Article 4 Direction

As noted at the start, the Committee supports the new Article 4 Direction and the proposal that it cover the whole of the extended Conservation Area.

*Winchelsea Town Plan Steering Committee
22nd January 2008*