

## **HERITAGE SECTION OF THE BATTLE/NETHERFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

1. The starting point for a policy on the heritage of the Battle and Netherfield area should comprise the following principles, which may also serve as a definition of “heritage”:

1.1 Maintain the historic small town character and core of Battle.

1.2 Given this is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, protect Battle’s historic setting; and the scenic setting of the listed buildings of Netherfield.

1.3 Make every effort to maintain and promote, for the benefit of residents and visitors, the heritage of Battle and Netherfield.

These principles for preserving the historic building environment and its landscape context, should be applied to a series of issues in the Neighbourhood Plan, such as housing developments with accompanying strain on infrastructure, encouragement of business/employment, traffic congestion, parking, turnover of shops and businesses, adverse social behaviours and so on.

### Historic small town character of Battle

2. Two documents may be regarded as a heritage baseline for Battle:

2.1 The historic character of Battle has been described in 2009 by Roland Harris’s Historic Character Assessment Report, which provided an overview as part of the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS).

2.2 In 2016 by David Martin (Senior Historic Buildings Officer of Archaeology South East) documented the town in his book “Building Battle Town: An Architectural History 1066-1750”, which describes the detailed characteristics of individual historic buildings in the centre of Battle.

3. The Rother Local Area Adopted Core Strategy of 2014 provides a policy context and emphasises (11.21) the importance of maintaining the essential physical form, local distinctiveness and setting of the town, in and adjacent to, the Conservation Area.

4. A very high percentage of buildings in the Conservation Area in the centre of the town are listed Grade II or above. Reflecting Battle’s use as a settlement since the eleventh century, its notable buildings date from St Mary’s Church – the earliest above ground stonework is 12<sup>th</sup> century – to the modern Methodist Church off Marley Lane. Numerous timber framed buildings of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries survive, often with eighteenth or nineteenth century cladding. Vertically hung clay tiles in the Sussex vernacular style are frequent. An important and unusual feature of Battle is that the structure of the medieval burgages with accompanying strip plots, is largely intact, and the shop fronts can still be paced in perches. Shop fronts inevitably and frequently change but it is important that the buildings in the centre of the town are otherwise preserved as they are now, and that the medieval plots

remain traceable for the future. This is not only important for heritage reasons but is the basis for encouraging tourists to the town, to the benefit of local businesses.

#### Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: historic settings

5. The whole town is in the High Weald Area of Natural Beauty (AONB). The AONB Management Plan defines natural beauty as follows: “Over the years, qualification and amendment to the legislation has made it clear that natural beauty includes considerations such as wildlife, geological features and cultural heritage but is not restricted by them”.

6. The Rother Local Area Adopted Core Strategy 2014 sets (17.27 Policy EN2) the following as an objective: “Preserve and ensure clear legibility of locally distinctive vernacular building forms and their settings, features, fabric and materials, including forms specific to historic building typologies.” An example of what should be the local application of this policy in Battle is the former workhouse in Victorian gothic style, now Frederick Thatcher Place, on North Trade Road. Frederick Thatcher’s only building in England, it is unique and great care is needed about any development in the vicinity. It is important to improve qualitatively the natural and semi - natural spaces immediately around Battle ie behind the centre, to provide visual enjoyment for residents and tourists.

In Netherfield, the scenery, notably portrayed by Turner looking towards Eastbourne, needs to be preserved as the setting for the area’s listed buildings. A Site of Nature Conservation Importance is located to the north east of Netherfield, and nearby woodlands to both the north and the south are designated as Ancient Woodland. Recently authorised housing development in Netherfield avoids compromising that setting at least

#### Maintaining and promoting our heritage

7. Battle Town Council and other bodies which co-operate with it, have pursued opportunities to enhance the visibility of the heritage in the area:

7.1 The memorial statue at the North Trade Road has been created with private donations and will be promoted with an explanatory booklet.

7.2 With HLF funding, a Battle Heritage Trail is to be set up in the areas around the centre of Battle, by 2018, using sculpture to encourage awareness of the town’s heritage.

7.3 Waysigns in the town centre now indicate areas of historical interest.

7.4 ‘Beautiful Battle’ maintain the attractiveness of the Almonry Gardens and twittens and the Council has acted to discourage nuisance behaviour in the Almonry Gardens.

7.5 Battle Town Council assist the Battle Museum of Local History financially and with premises to facilitate its work encouraging appreciation of heritage for the community and through tourism.

7.6 The Battle Community Tapestry, with which the Council assisted, has been created through private initiative and is to be displayed in Battle, the location not yet finalised; and on tour to promote the town.

**8. Other opportunities to encourage preservation and appreciation of local heritage will be addressed by Battle Town Council:**

**8.1 Battle Town Council is pursuing renovation of the Almonry and its transformation into an educational community centre. It is a long term project involving significant planning and financial issues.**

**8.2 A “pop up” tourist office which also promotes the heritage of the town as an attraction, is needed and some budgetary provision has been made.**

**8.3 Battle Town Council will consider any specific threats to the heritage of the town, for example the dilapidated state of No 8 High Street (formerly Gift World) on the Abbey Green.**

**8.4 The possibility of important unexcavated archaeology will be considered with all building developments, big and small, and advice taken from appropriate groups/agencies.**

**8.5 There is no written history of Battle or Netherfield as there is, for example, of Sedlescombe, and copies of “Battle in Pictures” are running out. The Council will consider commissioning such a work.**

**8.6 Heritage walks and tours of the town and surrounding area will be further encouraged for the long term future.**

**8.7 The Battle and District Historical Society will be asked to advise as appropriate, about matters concerning the heritage of the area eg the new Mayoral chain.**

**8.8 Opportunities will be taken to improve the presentation of the heritage of Battle in public places eg Mount Street Car Park.**

**A/S**

**5/2/17**

**Mus stick/Neighbourhood Plan/Heritage Section v3**