

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan was commissioned by Hastings Borough Council from Drury McPherson Partnership in May 2017. The brief was to update and expand two previous draft appraisals prepared for the Council, in 2002 and 2007 respectively and to take forward the recommendation made in 2007 that the ten existing, contiguous conservation areas in St Leonard-on-Sea should be amalgamated into one. The study area includes all of the currently designated areas in St Leonards except CA14, Springfield Road.

The appraisal follows the guidance of Historic England Advice Note 1: *Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management* (2011, revised 2016). It consists of an historical ‘understanding’ of the town and an analysis of the special architectural, historic and spatial character that the conservation area designation is intended to conserve. It identifies the buildings and other heritage assets that make a positive contribution to the special character and appearance of the area, including its numerous listed buildings. It divides the area into four broad character areas: Burtons’ St Leonards, West St Leonards, East St Leonards and North St Leonards, of which Burtons’ and East St Leonards are divided into sub-zones to reflect their particular history, character and appearance.

St Leonards originated in the exclusive new resort town developed by the Burton family from 1828. Its early form was characterised by grand terraces and public buildings on the seafront with a hotel at their centre, and individual villas in picturesque landscaped settings inland. A service area to the east eventually became the commercial centre of the town. From the mid-1830s other developers began to build outside the Burton estate. Following the arrival of the railway in 1851 extensive new residential areas of substantial villas, pairs and terraces housing were created, and the seafront was built up continuously to the Hastings boundary. Expansion of the town continued throughout the 19th century, largely maintaining the town’s exclusive social and economic character. The external boundary of the conservation area coincides roughly with the extent of continuous development achieved by 1914.

The architecture of the area is dominated by stuccoed villas and terraces but from the outset a range of styles was employed. The later 19th century developments continued the original mix of urban terraces and villas in a variety of picturesque styles, of which the Scottish Baronial examples designed by George Smith Sen. and the vernacular revival houses by Phillip Tree are notable. Also significant is the former Convent of Holy Child Jesus complex (c1848-68), the work of EW Pugin and William Wardell. Open spaces including St Leonards Gardens, Markwick Gardens, Gensing Gardens and Warrior Square are important to the historic character of the area. The modernist design of the seafront promenade is the work of the Borough Engineer Sydney Smith, in the 1930s.

A review of the boundary recommends that three small areas, in Boscobel Road, Chapel Park Road/Church Road and Western Road should be considered for

designation. The management plan draws on the appraisal to set out guidelines for maintenance, alteration and development. Potential development sites and buildings which are in poor condition are noted where possible. The key issues affecting the area are the loss of architectural detail (especially timber sash windows, slate roofs and decorative features) unsympathetic alterations and management of the public realm. The management plan is intended primarily to support development management, but it also includes priorities for direct action by the Council and its partners, such as public realm and streetscape enhancement. It identifies buildings and sites that may be eligible for inclusion on the local list.