

Lindfield buildings overview

Introduction.

Section 5 of the Lindfield Village Design Statement provides an informative introduction to the buildings of Lindfield.

“All of the buildings in Lindfield contribute, each in their own way, to the character of the village. But it is the historic and architecturally important buildings that stand either side of High Street, which extends from Black Hill at the southern end for 1km in a generally north easterly direction to the top of Buxshalls Hill at the northern end, and in Compton Road and Lewes Road, that are the village’s architectural and historic treasures and from which the essential character and sense of place flow. The Lindfield Conservation Area was designated in 1969, in recognition of the importance of these buildings and the area around the Common. The area was extended in 1989 to include properties in Black Hill and again in 1998 to include Compton Road. Two western approaches to the High Street via Hickmans Lane and Denmans Lane have their own characters, acknowledged by their formal designations as Areas of Townscape Character, a designation also applying to the approaches from Haywards Heath along West Common and Sunte Avenue.”

It is now considered that in addition to the existing two Areas of Townscape Character, two additional areas of Lindfield should also be accorded that status and protection:

The Welkin.



Photo: A line of terraced houses in the centre of The Welkin.

The original Welkin was built as a Vicarage about 1839 for Reverend Francis Sewell and became a private school for boys in 1948 on being derequisitioned by the Army after the Second World War. It was demolished in 1961 and the whole site released for redevelopment as housing. An initial suggestion that 200 flats in five eight-storey blocks caused local uproar and led to the formation of the Lindfield Preservation Society. The Society employed an architect to suggest alternative means for accommodating a comparable number of people on the site and The Welkin, as we know it today, was conceived.

After a proposal to develop Green Meadows in 1961 was refused by the then Cuckfield and District Council, K.G. Holman & Sons on behalf of The Welkin Property Ltd proposed a

design by Gordon Jeeves Chartered Architects of 61 Catherine Place London SW1 for 30 bungalows and garages on part of the site. This was to be just the first phase of a number of phases of development at The Welkin that eventually resulted in 120 homes being built during the 1960s.

They provide a wide mix of attractive dwellings from low-rise apartments through terraced houses to bungalows and sheltered housing with harmonious architectural themes. They are all built of the local Freshfield Lane bricks and share many common features such as; bow front windows, pointed front door porches, white front doors, windows, drainpipes etc.



Photo: Entrance to The Welkin from Hickmans Lane.

The open landscaped developments of The Welkin, where good use has been made of the natural lie of the land and existing and new trees had been incorporated, have been particularly successful. Landscape features include the use of dwarf stone rendered retaining walls with shrub planting that is fronted by risings grass banks at each side of the entrance, large grass verges and squares throughout the estate with an abundance of shrubs and mature trees throughout the managed open areas.

By comparison with some other 1960s developments, the Welkin development has demonstrated the value of combining good layout, landscaping and detailed design. Recent infill developments within the Welkin of a small number of additional bungalows and of a second block of flats have respected the design, style and materials used in the 1960s buildings. However to ensure that this delightful part of Lindfield retains its character for future generations, it deserves to be accorded the additional protection of an Area of Townscape Character.



Photo: A view across a grassed square towards a terrace of houses at rear the rear of The Wilken.

The Wilderness.



Photo: Entrance to the Wilderness.

The Wilderness was designed by the architect Ralph Knight of Haywards Heath and developed by Holman & Sons in the late 1950s. The houses in Calbourne off Muster Green conservation area were also designed by Ralph Knight and built by Holman & Sons, to a similar style. This was a time when other developments such as Dukes Road, Finches Park Road and Savill Road were also being built.

There are six large detached houses each in a plot of about half an acre located on each side of the meandering Wilderness roadway. The properties are set in generous largely open plots with clear separations between. There is mature planting including trees, some with Tree Preservation Orders. The large plots with generous off road parking and extensive vegetation give a sylvan and spacious character to this cul-de-sac.

Although each house is slightly different there is a very distinctive set of characteristics running through all of them. The houses are built of locally sourced bricks and some of the common design features include timber surround metal casement windows of slender proportions and with leaded lights, clay tiled or Horsham stone roofs, multiple roof shapes with subservient ridge lines, gables and modest dormers, an elevation with use of timber and white render, plain clay tile hanging and timbered front door porches. Any alterations to the houses have been made in keeping with the style. All the houses are well set back from the road, which is edged with large grass verges and the houses are also shielded now by high well trimmed hedges and other shrubbery.

This group of houses has matured into the best example of late 20th Century small developments in Lindfield and deserve to be accorded the additional protection afforded by becoming an Area of Townscape Character.



Photo: Inside the Wilderness.

Portsmouth Wood and Portsmouth Wood Close

One of the most rural approaches into Lindfield village is from the north along High Beech Lane almost adjacent to the entrance to Haywards Heath Golf Club. High Beech Lane has extensive hedgerows with many mature trees, it backs onto Portsmouth Wood Close and adjoins Portsmouth Lane which is already designated as an Area of Townscape Character.

Portsmouth Wood Close and Portsmouth Wood are set in what was originally an ancient woodland – which gave the roads their name. This small development of detached properties is built at different levels, making good use of the natural lie of the land, and was designed to harmonise with its rural setting. There is an abundance of mature trees of all varieties including oaks, cherry, ash, hazel and beech with well over 100 Tree Preservation Orders in place affording protection to a variety of local wildlife.



Portsmouth Wood leading to Portsmouth Wood Close – photo taken 02/02/14

All the houses in the development were constructed at the same time by McLean, in the early 1980s – except for No. 7, Portsmouth Wood Close, which was added later to replace the developers' site office. Considerable resources were required for the construction of the properties at the top of Portsmouth Wood Close, as the nature of the soil there necessitated the use of double-height foundations. The plots are spacious and largely open plan but with clear separations between; there is plenty of vegetation, with established mature planting and generous off road parking so that the overall impression is of a quiet, neighbourly cul-de-sac within a forest-like setting. There is space for children to play outside and the unusually shaped turning space known locally as 'the hammerhead' has often been used by residents for informal leisure activities. There is a very distinctive set of characteristics running through all of the executive style properties with some common design features, including bay and/or round windows. Any alterations to the houses have been made in keeping with the original style – where extended porches have been built the original front door and glass has invariably been retained in the new entryway, and materials of extensions match those of the original construction. The houses generally feature ample front and rear gardens, with a pleasing mix of sunny and shady spots afforded by the tree cover. Particularly at the top of Portsmouth Wood Close, the houses themselves are often set substantially below the height of the road, lessening their impact on the surrounding environment. All the houses are well set back from the road, which is edged with grass verges and the houses are also shielded now by well trimmed hedges and other shrubbery.



Even in winter, PWC remains well-screened from the rural approach into Lindfield due to the lowered construction of the houses, which drop below the treeline. The road has a quiet rural feel despite the open-plan layout – photo taken 02/02/14



Very attractive houses can be found at both ends of PWC – photo taken 02/02/14

Although within a fairly easy walk of the High Street, this small development is on the rural edge of the village and the border of Haywards Heath and Lindfield. It deserves to be accorded the additional protection of an Area of Townscape Character so that visitors and residents approaching Lindfield from the North can continue to appreciate the rural village setting.

Extension to Brook Lane ATC.

The existing Area of Townscape Character was created before the houses at the end of Brook Lane were constructed and are therefore outside of that zone of protection. Their residents have requested that the relevant mapping amendment to the ATC should be processed by Mid Sussex District Council to correct this undesirable situation.

Written to support a policy within The Lindfield & Lindfield Rural Neighbourhood Plan 2014.

Cllr Alan Gomme & Cllr Simon Hodgson, Lindfield Parish Council.

Amendment record: Original paper September 2013, Wilderness amended January 2014, Portsmouth Wood Close and Brook Lane extension added May 2014.

Sources: Lindfield Village Design Statement, Lindfield Within Living Memory by Gwyn Mansfield & Claudia Gaukroger (1995), Lindfield Remembered by Peter Duncan, Gwyn Mansfield & Brian Tester (2002) and Mid Sussex District Council's microfiche records. Residents in The Wilderness and Adrian Holman the builder.