

Peacehaven

Historic Character Assessment Report

November 2004



Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)

Roland B Harris

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in association with Lewes District Council



Sussex EUS – Peacehaven

The Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (Sussex EUS) is a study of 41 towns undertaken between 2004 and 2008 by an independent consultant (Dr Roland B Harris, BA DPhil MIFA) for East Sussex County Council (ESCC), West Sussex County Council (WSCC), and Brighton and Hove City Council; and was funded by English Heritage.

Guidance and web-sites derived from the historic town studies will be, or have been, developed by the local authorities.

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Cover photo: The Meridian monument and cliff-top at Peacehaven.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

This report is an archaeological, historical, and historic urban character assessment of Peacehaven. It is part of the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (henceforth Sussex EUS) that examines 41 towns across the ancient county.¹

The Sussex EUS forms part of a national programme of such surveys initiated by English Heritage in 1992. The national programme is already well underway, with roughly half the English counties having been completed or currently undergoing study.

As the surveys have progressed, the approach has developed. In line with recent surveys, the Sussex EUS includes more modern towns, the main significance of which stems from the 19th and 20th centuries. Another recent innovation is the introduction of the characterization concept, comparable with the map-based techniques adopted by historic landscape characterization. This approach was developed in Lancashire (2000-4), and is further refined in Sussex.

The Sussex EUS has been funded by English Heritage, and supported in kind by the commissioning authorities: East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council. A wide range of stakeholders (including district and borough councils, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) has supported the project.

In West Sussex the Sussex EUS forms part of the *Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme*,² aiming to provide guidance and advice on the protection and enhancement of all aspects of character in the county. Other historic environment projects come under this umbrella:

- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of Sussex
- Intensive Urban Survey of Chichester and Fishbourne
- Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 Aims

The aim of the Sussex EUS is to deliver a unique and flexible tool to aid the understanding, exploration and management of the historic qualities of 41 of the most significant towns in Sussex with a view to:

- archaeological and historic environment research and management.
- informing strategic and local policy.
- underpinning urban historic land and buildings management and interpretation.
- encouraging the integration of urban historic characterization into the wider process of protecting and enhancing urban character.

1.2.2 Objectives

Key objectives of the project include the:

- synthesis of previous archaeological and historical work.
- creation of a Geographic Information System (GIS) that maps and allows the analysis of archaeological events, monuments and urban plan components using information obtained from a variety of sources.
- analysis of the origins and development of each town by establishing and examining its principal plan components and existing standing structures.
- identification of county-wide Historic Character Types and attribution of the types to different areas within each town.
- preparation of a Statement of Historic Urban Character for each town, to include assessment of archaeological potential and Historic Environment Value.
- identification of gaps in the understanding of the past occupation and historical development of character of each town through the development of a Research Framework.
- advice to local authorities on the development of guidance derived from the town studies.

1.3 Outputs

The principal outputs of the project comprise:

- Historic character assessment reports. Documents (of which this is one) that, separately for each town, summarize the setting and pre-urban activity; synthesize current archaeological and historical research; describe the development from origins to the present day; assess the surviving historic character and historic environment value; and set out a framework for future research on the historic environment of the towns.
- Geographical Information System (GIS) for the historic environment of each town. The GIS underpins the analysis and mapping of the town

reports, and is available to local authorities as a unique tool to support their decision making. The EUS-generated GIS data includes historic buildings and archaeological data, and mapping of areas for which Historic Character Type, historic land use, and Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined. The GIS data will be maintained and updated by the West Sussex County Council *Sites & Monuments Record* (HER) and the East Sussex County Council *Historic Environment Record* (HER).

- Informing historic environment management guidance specific to each local planning authority, for the 41 EUS towns and Winchelsea, produced under the new Local Development Frameworks, and subject to formal consultation procedures.
- Background papers for the Sussex EUS project. Documents that include the project design, a summary of the methodology and an overall bibliography.

1.4 The structure of this report

1.4.1 The Setting

This introductory section describes the topography, geology, communications, and pre-urban archaeology of the town.

1.4.2 History, buildings and topography

The history of Peacehaven in this report can be a brief summary only. It aims to synthesize the very limited published research, and to provide a chronological overview of the development of the town as seen from documentary sources. The focus is placed on those matters – such as origins and physical development – that are most closely related to the urban historic environment today.

1.4.3 Statement of Historic Urban Character

Whereas the section on history, buildings and topography (above) explores the development of Peacehaven over time, this part of the report considers and defines the physical evidence of the past in today's townscape. It does this by means of a character-based approach, operating at three different scales: areas of common Historic Character Type; larger and topographically familiar Historic Urban Character Areas; and the whole town. Assessment is made of the Historic Environment Value of each of the Historic Urban Character Areas, taking account of the archaeological potential.

1.5 Principal sources

1.5.1 History

Peacehaven has attracted considerable attention, but this has focused on its role as the *bête noir* of uncontrolled coastal development before the Second World War. The principal sources drawn on during the writing of this report are listed below. Many other sources have been used too, and full references have been given by use of endnotes.

Whilst lacking an authoritative study such as those undertaken for much of the county in the more recent volumes of the *Victoria County History*, Peacehaven has stimulated sporadic research. Much of this has been the work of resident enthusiasts, as a counterblast against opprobrium and to tell story of the plotlanders themselves. Given that the interest of Peacehaven lies in its particular variant of pre-1939 plotlands, marked by its very public and controversial nature, the most valuable study has been that of **Dennis Hardy** and **Colin Ward** in which the town is considered in a comprehensive series of studies of makeshift settlements at this time.

1.5.2 Archaeology

There have been no archaeological excavations in Peacehaven, but the **East Sussex Historic Environment Record** (HER) database has been invaluable for providing the pre-urban archaeological context as evidenced by numerous archaeological finds.

1.5.3 Historic buildings

Peacehaven has only one building that pre-dates the foundation of the town, for which English Heritage's statutory list of historic buildings has been utilized. Very limited fieldwork only was possible during this assessment and focused on identifying surviving examples of pre-1939 buildings and monuments.

1.5.4 Geology and topography

The contextual discussion of the solid and drift geology has principally derived from 1:50,000 British Geological Survey digital data. Ordnance Survey Historic 25" maps for Epochs 1-4 have proved invaluable, especially as these have been used in digital form, allowing overlaying with each other and with other data. Vertical air photography from 2000 provides a useful recent snapshot in time. All analysis and maps utilize the most recent large-scale Ordnance Survey mapping (digital MasterMap data).

1.6 Area covered by the report

The Sussex EUS assessment of Peacehaven covers the full extent of the town as set out and as far north as Telscombe Road. It excludes adjacent settlements at Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven Heights.

Peacehaven is one of five towns in Lewes District that have assessments such as this. The others are Ditchling, Lewes, Newhaven and Seaford.

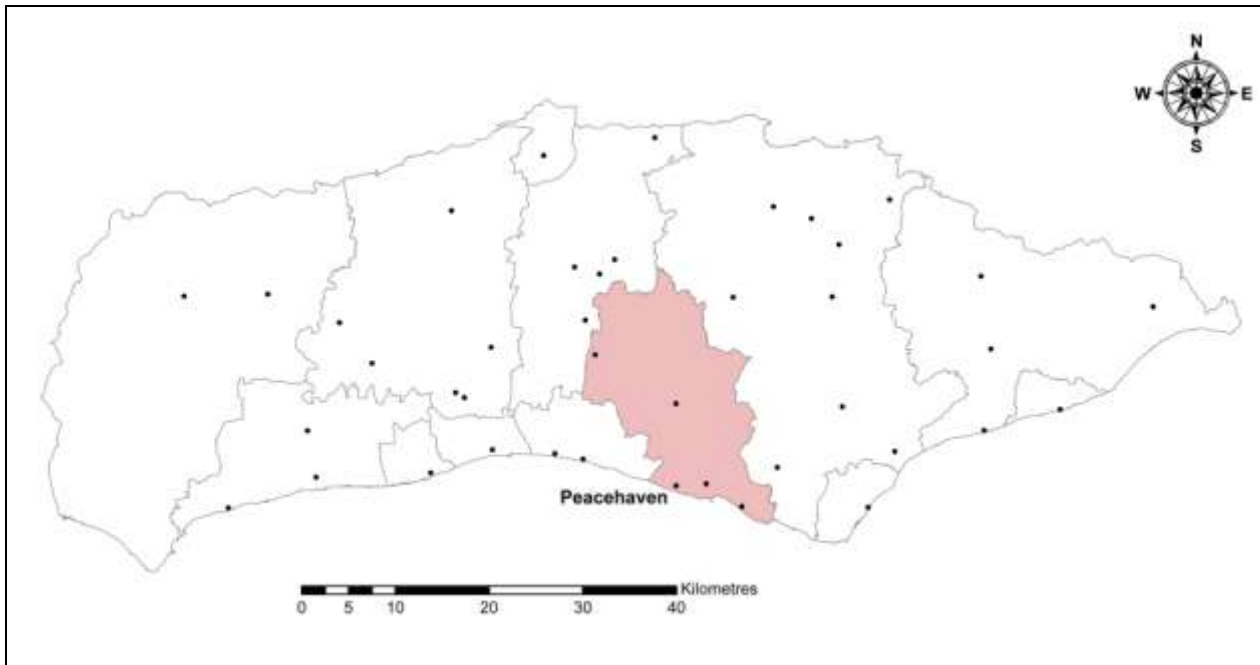


Fig. 1. Location of Peacehaven within Sussex. Lewes District is highlighted and points locate the 41 Sussex EUS towns.

2 THE SETTING



Fig. 2. Peacehaven from Telscombe Tye.

2.1 Topography (Map 2)

Peacehaven is located on the cliff top, where the southern (dip) slope of the South Downs is eroded by the English Channel. There is a gentle seaward slope across the town from c.60.0m OSBM at the east end of Telscombe Road, to 25.9m OSBM at the southern end of Steyning Avenue.

Off-shore contours measured by bathymetric survey are steeply sloped in the Peacehaven area and not likely to be a product of erosion. This suggests that, despite the rapidity of recent cliff erosion (section 2.2.1), the prehistoric coast was within 1km of that today.³

The settlement has been established north and south of the pre-existing and slightly sinuous South Coast Road from Newhaven to Brighton (A259). Until the development of the Meridian Centre to the north in 1979, nearly all commercial activity was concentrated on this road. To the west of the regular grid of the planned town (and outside the EUS study area), Telscombe Cliffs is an early 20th-century planned development that was initially less successful than Peacehaven and which ultimately became part of Peacehaven's expansion. Similar expansion beyond the early planned town is found to the north of Peacehaven

The town occupies the greater part of Peacehaven Civil Parish, created out of the southern part of Piddinghoe parish in 1929.⁴

2.2 Geology (Map 2)

2.2.1 Solid geology

Along with the whole of Sussex, the rocks of the Peacehaven area are sedimentary. The town lies at the southern (cliff) edge of the South Downs, so that the entire area is underlain by the relatively pure limestones of, from youngest to oldest, the Tarrant and Newhaven Chalk Formations (Upper Cretaceous). The uplifting and gentle folding of the chalk began 70-75 million years ago and continued beyond the end of the Cretaceous period (65 million years ago) until as recently as 1.8 million years ago. The uppermost solid geology of much of the northern part of the town, however, is the sandstone and mudstone (commonly clay) of the Lambeth Group, being Tertiary (Palaeocene) irregular beds laid down on the eroded chalk.



Fig. 3. The cliffs and sea defences at Peacehaven, with the chalk shoreface ramp in the foreground.

The chalk cliffs at Peacehaven are near vertical and recently were retreating at 0.46m per year, although concrete sea defences and the

trimming back of the cliff face have reduced this.⁵ Below the cliffs a visible shore platform (or shoreface ramp) of gently sloping chalk extends 100-150m into the sea.

2.2.2 Drift Geology

The drift geology of the Peacehaven area is confined to dry valley deposits of sand and gravels, and clay-with-flints. The distinctive dry valleys of the downs are largely a product of periglacial erosion, while the clay-with-flints is a capping of reworked Palaeogene deposits.⁶ It is only the latter that occurs within the EUS study area, with a small area of clay-with-flints at the southern end of Hoddern Avenue and Rowe Avenue.

2.3 Communications

2.3.1 Water

Although directly on the coast, the cliff-top location of Peacehaven and its creation in a period dominated by rail and road transport has meant that water communications have played no significant part in its history.

2.3.2 Road

Peacehaven lies on the A259 (the main Newhaven-Brighton road). The road was turnpiked in 1824 (with a toll gate between later Cornwall Avenue and Seaview Road),⁷ but remained unfenced across open downland in 1875. The road was disturnpiked in 1881.⁸

2.3.3 Railway

Peacehaven never gained a railway, with the nearest connection at Newhaven (2.7km), where the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR) had built a line in 1847 to Lewes, thence to London.⁹

2.4 Evidence for pre-urban activity

2.4.1 Prehistoric

There have been no archaeological excavations or evaluations, but there have been numerous prehistoric finds within the EUS study area.

- Lower Hoddern – two Lower Palaeolithic (500000 BC to 150001 BC) axes found during the Second World War [HER reference: TQ 40 SW48 – ES1827]
- Steyning Avenue – Lower Palaeolithic flint axe found at an unspecified location on the east side

of the road in 1959 [HER reference: TQ 40 SW49 – ES1828].

- Peacehaven (precise location unrecorded) – flint flake tool of possibly Palaeolithic date, found in 1949 [HER reference: TQ 40 SW46 – ES1826].
- Heathy Brow/Chatsworth Park/Courtlands – Mesolithic (10000 BC to 4001 BC) flint-working site represented by five areas on the higher northern ground of Peacehaven investigated in 1923. Finds include cores, scrapers, hollow scrapers, blades, points, wedges, hammer stones, fabricators, cooking stones and polished axes, with one site alone producing 8-10,000 flakes and cores [HER reference: TQ 40 SW22 – ES1830].
- The Oval – Neolithic (4000 BC to 2351 BC) flint hoe found on the field surface in the 19th century [SME reference: TQ 40 SW17 – ES1847].
- The Oval – three probable Bronze Age (2350 BC to 701 BC) barrows, marked on OS 1st Edition 1813, falling on the perimeter of The Oval, but no visible remains [HER reference: TQ 40 SW27 – ES1853].
- 26 Friars Avenue – probable Bronze Age bowl barrow, 27.0m in diameter and 1.3m in height, severely mutilated during the construction of Friars Avenue and no remains now visible [HER reference: TQ 40 SW19 – ES1849].
- Mount Caburn Crescent – probable Bronze Age barrow, marked on OS 1st Edition 1813, falling on the boundary of Mount Caburn Crescent and Epinay Park, but no visible remains [HER reference: TQ 40 SW21 – ES1851].
- Telscombe Road – Early Bronze Age perforated and double-ended quartzite pebble macehead found during excavation of footings for bungalow in 1924 [HER reference: TQ 40 SW35 – ES1832].
- Phyllis Avenue – Early Bronze Age barbed and tanged flint arrowhead probably found at 16 Phyllis Avenue [HER reference: TQ 40 SW50 – ES1829].

2.4.2 Romano-British

- Glynn Road – Romano-British cremation urn (containing charred bones) and cooking pot found during digging of a trench in 1923. Dated to the 2nd century AD. A Roman tile over the broken neck of a jar was found 90m to the south in the same year [HER reference: TQ 40 SW26 – ES1852].

Just to the east of the EUS study area, at Peacehaven Heights, repairs to the A259 revealed evidence of a Romano-British occupation site [HER reference: TQ 40 SW69 – ES1833].

2.4.3 Anglo-Saxon and medieval

No excavations or finds have produced evidence of Anglo-Saxon or medieval activity in or near the EUS study area.

2.4.4 Post-medieval

Although the area was open chalk downland at the time that it was acquired for the building of Peacehaven, there is evidence of pre-urban post-medieval activity:

- Sheep pens – between Capel Avenue and Keymer Avenue (1875); and on Heathy Brow (1875 until c.1920), from which the associated shepherd's hut survives in the garden of 7 The Compts, off Stanley Road.
- Lower Hoddern – first shown as a rectangular enclosure on the Ordnance Survey surveyors' draft of 1789 and 1805-6, and as a small farmstead from 1875 onwards until demolished in the mid 20th-century (now under the playing fields of Peacehaven Community School).
- Upper Hoddern – first shown as a small farmstead, or small holding, on the 1st series 25" Ordnance Survey map (c.1875), surviving the building of Peacehaven until demolished post-1945 and now under the playing fields of the youth centre.
- Hoddern toll gate – built to serve the turnpike road of 1824, located between Cornwall Avenue and Seaview Road, ceased functioning as toll gate in 1881 and was demolished in 1936.
- Chalk and gravel pits – numerous small chalk and gravel pits are shown in the area between the Newhaven-Brighton road and the cliffs from the Ordnance Survey surveyors' draft of 1789 and 1805-6 onwards. Several survived the building of Peacehaven (including that next to Peacehaven Hotel), but only that at the Dell recreation ground remains today.

A stade at Mooredale was recorded in the pre-Armada survey of the coast of Sussex in 1587, but this appears to be coincident with later Bearhide Gap, and thus lies west of the EUS study area.¹⁰



Fig. 4. Remains of gravel pit near the cliff at The Dell.

2.4.5 Implications of pre-urban archaeology

Although the greatest number of pre-urban finds from Peacehaven were recovered during the early years of the town, when buildings and roads were created on agricultural land, the implications are clear: considerable evidence for Romano-British, and, especially, earlier occupation of the EUS study area has been found and features and finds of these periods should be anticipated in any archaeological excavation in the area.

3 HISTORY, BUILDINGS & TOPOGRAPHY

3.1 20th-century planned town

3.1.1 Place-name



Fig. 5. Pylon on the north side of South Coast Road marking the eastern extent of Peacehaven (1916).

The name *Peacehaven* was given to the proposed town in 1917, and has no local derivation or topographical logic. This represented a change from the earlier name of *New-Anzac-on-Sea* (1916) that had been chosen by a national competition: with the heavy losses of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps at Gallipoli this first name was considered inappropriate. *Peacehaven* had been the suggestion of many entrants in the original competition.¹¹

3.1.2 Origins

The development of *Peacehaven* on agricultural land followed precedents for speculative seaside resorts all along the south coast and, more specifically, immediately west of the site at *Telscombe Cliffs*. Here, the *Cavendish Land Company* had begun to develop a seaside resort from 1901. This had not advanced beyond a handful of houses in 1914-15, however, when *Charles Neville* began to purchase land for what

was to become *Peacehaven*, and in due course he acquired *Telscombe Cliffs* too. Today the junction of the two cliff-top developments is marked only by the sudden end of *Peacehaven*'s gridded street plan, and a pylon. Immediately to the east of future *Peacehaven*, the *Friars Bay* estate was sold to a property speculator in 1910, *Harper Bond*, with plots being sold from 1911.

Planning for what was to become *Peacehaven* began with the competition for the place-name (section 3.1.1) and the distribution of plots. Although the 1916 competition prize was £100, with 50 consolation prizes of building plots, 12,500 entrants were offered prize plots. A charge of three guineas for 'conveyancing' reduced take-up of the prize plots to 2,443, each giving *Neville* a 200% profit on his land purchase costs. The *Daily Express* sued *Neville* on behalf of 125 plot-holders, and he was found guilty of fraud, with the plots being deemed worthless.

The advent of the First World War prevented any significant work at *Peacehaven*, and even the initial setting out of streets and plots was undone as the area was commandeered in 1916 by the government for agricultural use and a small airfield (the latter in the western part of the planned town). The pylons of 1916 that mark the eastern and western limits of the *Peacehaven* estate are the only survivors of this period: two survive at the east end of *South Coast Road*, just east of *Cornwall Avenue*, and one survives at the west end, just west of *Lincoln Avenue South* (Fig. 5).



Fig. 6. Pre-war bungalow at 16 Southdown Avenue.

By 1920 the site for *Peacehaven* had been released by the *East Sussex War Agricultural Committee*, permission had been given for the construction of the first buildings, and a significant number of the numerous owners of the 'worthless' plots were keen to see *Neville*'s plans come to fruition.¹²

3.1.3 Colonization c.1920-1945

Despite the difficult birth of Peacehaven, it is evident that Neville was not a mere fraudster and wished to develop a seaside resort, albeit one owing more to his experience of gridded and low-level new towns in Australia and Canada than, say, Bournemouth or Bexhill. This was not to be, however, for the enterprise was undercapitalized – by both Neville and the plot owners – and the problems arising from this were exaggerated by the post-war economy and the difficulty of acquiring building materials.



Fig. 7. Kenya House, 232 South Coast Road (early 1920s: by 1923, named and occupied by returning colonials¹³)

Six houses of wood and asbestos in Seaview Avenue (immediately north of the South Coast Road) were the first to be built, in 1920. These materials typified the early years of Peacehaven with Neville purchasing, and selling on, army surpluses.¹⁴ Thereafter, expansion was rapid, with a population of around 3,000 by 1926, and the building workforce as large as 1,000.¹⁵

However, many plot owners never took possession, and those that did spread themselves thinly across the whole site. Planning was evidently little more than the provision of a grid-plan. Providing services to these scattered houses was hardly an attractive option for the local authority, so unmade roads, no pavements, and a lack of mains sewerage were a feature of what became a plotland, with considerable similarity to other examples at Shoreham Beach and Rye Beach.¹⁶ By Neville's own admission, provision of plots for commercial premises along both sides of the entire 2.1 km length of the South Coast Road was overly optimistic and led to vacant plots and failed businesses at the centre of the development.¹⁷ Even today, shops and other businesses are intermittently strung out along the main road.

Amongst the scattered houses of pre-war Peacehaven, there were attempts to create public and commercial features more consistent with the burgeoning seaside resort of Neville's imagination. In 1922 the Bastion swimming pool opened, using sea water and accessed via steps down through the cliffs at the bottom of Steyning Avenue (on the site of the present steps). In October of the same year the grandly fitted-out Hotel Peacehaven opened (demolished 1987). The 300-seat Pavilion Theatre was built at what is now The Dell recreation ground in 1923, using an ex-army entertainment building imported from France (becoming a cinema in 1929, then burnt down in 1940 and not replaced). In 1936 the King George V, or Meridian, Monument was unveiled, marking the coincidence of Peacehaven with the Greenwich meridian. More modest accommodation, tea rooms and shops also catered for visitors. The Dewdrop Inn, Steyning Avenue, opened in c.1928, having been built in 1924 as a shop selling cigarettes, sweets, minerals and teas. Less frivolously, an Anglican church and hall opened in Bramber Avenue in the early 1920s, in the site now occupied by the church hall; a United Free (Interdenominational) Church was built on the corner of Bramber Avenue and Arundel Road in 1922; and a Roman Catholic church was built between Horsham Avenue and Edith Avenue by 1925. A small school was built by the council at Cliff Park in 1924.¹⁸



Fig. 8. Former Roman Catholic church of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, now the church hall, Edith Avenue (c.1924-5).

There was little substantial about many of these more public buildings, however, with most, like the corrugated-iron school and swimming pool, long gone and many, such as the surviving Roman Catholic church, of extremely modest and impermanent construction.



Fig. 9. The Dewdrop Inn (1924, converted to pub c.1928).

3.1.4 Early controversy

The scattered plan of the pre-Second World War Peacehaven, with its uncontrolled development, vacant plots, unmade roads, lack of services and impoverished architecture, combined with its location – on the all too obvious tract of hitherto open downland and cliff-top – to attract vitriol equal to the enthusiasm of Neville and the dogged spirit of the early settlers. A positive outcome of this public outcry was the foundation of the Society of Sussex Downsmen in 1923, which, in 1926, prevented similar speculative development at Crowlink on the Seven Sisters.¹⁹ Likewise, the well-known spectre of Peacehaven was used to illustrate the threat to downland during the proceedings of the 1934 South Downs Preservation Bill.²⁰

3.1.5 Consolidation c.1946-2004

During the controversial inter-war decades of the initial colonization of Peacehaven the local authority (Newhaven District Council then, from 1934, Chailey Rural District Council) had been reluctant to do its duty with regard to public health (mains drainage for such a new widespread and low-density settlement was evidently going to be a huge draw on public funding) and was frustrated by its lack of powers (and resources) to control future development. War intervened, followed shortly by the 1947

Town and Country Planning Act. Action thereafter was more rapid, with compulsory purchase of vacant plots that had been used for agriculture during the Second World War, and implementation of a strategy for consolidation of the scattered township through phased release of blocks of land for development. The evolving plans for the development of Peacehaven have been marked by the drafting of the *Town Map for Seaford, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Telscombe Cliffs* in 1965; and the *Peacehaven and Telscombe Cliffs Town Centre Map and Action Plan* and *Peacehaven (North) Action Plan* (both 1971). The 1965 plan projected considerable growth for Newhaven, while the 1971 town centre map (approved 1974), proposed a typical 1970s centre comprising shops, library and other public facilities (built as the Meridian Centre in 1979). The action plan for north Peacehaven (also approved in 1974) proposed a radical alteration of the area north of Firle Road, where plot sizes had been larger than elsewhere (to encourage smallholders) and where the density of occupation was low. The new scheme has been fully realized and comprises the more sinuous road patterns beloved of the 1980s and 1990s, together with a more conventional mix of semi-detached houses, 'linked' housing, and flats. Some elements of the grid plan survive in Roderick Avenue, Phyllis Avenue, Cripps Avenue, Glynn Road and Telscombe Road.²¹



Fig. 10. Malines Avenue. Post-war made up roads and pavements, and redeveloped housing.



Fig. 11. Pre-war Meridian Lodge, on the corner of South Coast Road and Seaview Avenue.

Arguably, it is the main South Coast Road, with (in 2004) its burnt-out hotel, a thin straggle of shops, the 1916 pylons, and occasional boarded-up windows, that retains something of the frontier-town feel of the pre-war settlement, and it is only this that most non-residents see as they speed through.

In the course of this regulated consolidation, the mass of vacant plots of that existed throughout Peacehaven at the outbreak of the Second World War has now gone. Almost equally significant has been the frequent subdivision of plots, so that no longer is Peacehaven the 'little man's suburb' almost entirely of detached bungalows, as bemoaned by Pevsner.²² The unmade streets of the early town have been mostly made up and equipped with pavements. This work coincided with completion of mains drainage in 1958-62.²³ Only the cliff top promenade, the southern part of Rowe Avenue, and Cairo Avenue South remain unmade. Substantial investment in schools has been made in recent years (Peacehaven County Infants School, Edith Avenue; Hoddern County Junior School, Hoddern Avenue; Meridian County Primary School, Roderick Avenue; and Peacehaven Community School). Undoubtedly the largest public expenditure on Neville's speculative development has been the building of sea defences c.1977-83.

Peacehaven has retained its notoriety for bad planning, bad design and damage to the natural environment, despite the proliferation of post-war suburbs throughout the county (and country) and the fact that most of the town has become indistinguishable from suburbia elsewhere.

4 STATEMENT OF HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER

4.1 Town summary

4.1.1 Historic environment overview

Although Peacehaven is of interest as an example of an inter-war speculative coastal development, and for the notoriety it has achieved on account of its downland location and its architecture, little of note survives from the 1920s and 1930s. This is partly because the town never gained the equivalents of the De La Warr pavilion at Bexhill or the Lido at Saltdean and partly because the few noteworthy buildings (the Bastion pool, the Hotel Peacehaven, and the Pavilion Theatre) have been lost. Pre-war pebbledashed bungalows do survive, as do shops, and businesses, and churches. Though modest, frequently altered, sometimes in poor repair, and almost always of functional and temporary design, they represent the remnant character of the early settlement fast vanishing under more substantial but universal suburban designs. Indeed, recent redevelopments have begun to remove even that most resilient of Peacehaven's features – its rigid grid-pattern of streets.

4.1.2 Historic environment designations

Peacehaven has one listed building (Grade II) in the form of a small 19th-century flint-built shepherd's hut, caught up in the new town, and located within a private garden at 7 The Compts, off Stanley Road. No other buildings of historic importance have been identified during the EUS.

Peacehaven has no Conservation Area, and no Scheduled Monuments.

4.2 Historic Character Types

4.2.1 Historic Character Types and chronology (Map 5)

Historic Character Types (HCTs) for Sussex EUS
Lane/road [includes all historic routes]
Major road scheme [modern ring roads, motorways etc.]
Bridge/causeway
Regular burgage plots
Irregular historic plots [i.e. pre-1800]
Proto-urban
Vacant [reverted from built-up to fields etc.]
Market place

Church/churchyard [i.e. parish]
Cemetery
Religious house [abbey, priory, convent etc.]
Great house
Castle
Town defences
Other fortification
Barracks
School/college
Public
Farmstead/barn
Mill
Suburb [estates and individual houses]
Retail and commercial [i.e. post 1800]
Extractive industry [e.g. sand pit, brickfield]
Heavy industry [e.g. steel or automotive industry]
Light industry [e.g. industrial estates]
Utility
Quay/wharf [inc. boatyards]
Harbour/marina/dock
Station, sidings and track
Inland water
Orchard
Market garden [inc. nursery]
Allotments
Race course
Sports field [inc. stadia, courts, centres etc.]
Park
Informal parkland [e.g. small civic areas, large grounds]
Seafront [piers, promenades etc.]
Beach/cliffs

Table 1. Sussex EUS Historic Character Types.

Historic Character Types have been developed in the Sussex EUS to describe areas of common character by reference to generic types found across all 41 towns. Historic function is often the key determinant of character type, hence the term 'Historic Character Types' and the time-depth implicit in many of the types in Table 1 (e.g. *regular burgage plots*). The types also reflect the character of these towns, and, thus, they are different from those that would be applied nationally or to another county.

The Historic Character Types have been mapped to areas within the towns (polygons in the Geographical Information System that underpins the Sussex EUS). Whilst character type can prove consistent throughout a large area (for example, across a late 20th-century housing estate), different historic use of part of that area has been used as a basis for subdivision. This is to allow the application of the types in Table 1 to the mapped polygons throughout the 15 periods of the **EUS chronology** (Table 2). This means that for any

area within the town, or mapped polygon on the Geographical Information System, both the present Historic Character Type and the past land use(s) are defined.

This approach gives time-depth to the map-based character component of the Sussex EUS, and is structured to take account of both upstanding and buried physical evidence of the past. It enables the generation of maps (e.g. Map 5) showing the changing land use of the urban area throughout the history of each town, and, through use of the Geographical Information System developed as part of this assessment, for simple interrogation of any area in the town to show all its known past land uses.

Period	Date
Period 1	500,000BC-AD42
Period 2	43-409
Period 3	410-949
Period 4	950-1065
Period 5	1066-1149
Period 6	1150-1349
Period 7	1350-1499
Period 8	1500-1599
Period 9	1600-1699
Period 10	1700-1799
Period 11	1800-1840
Period 12	1841-1880
Period 13	1881-1913
Period 14	1914-1945
Period 15	1946-present

Table 2. Sussex EUS chronology.

4.2.2 Historic Character Types in Peacehaven (Map 4)

Although Historic Character Types represent county-wide types, modern Peacehaven is characterized by its particular concentration of some types and the comparative rarity, or absence, of others. For example, its modernity precludes the identification of *irregular historic plots* or *regular burgage plots*, with the town mostly defined as *suburb*. Inevitably there are fewer Historic Character Types here than in most towns considered in the Sussex EUS.

4.3 Historic Urban Character Areas (Maps 6 and 7)

4.3.1 Defining Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)

Whereas Historic Character Types have been applied to areas of the Sussex towns with

consistent visible character and historical development – and are mapped across the whole history for each town – **Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)** represent meaningful areas of the modern town. Although similar areas are found in many towns, HUCAs are unique, can include components of different history and antiquity, and usually represent amalgamation of several Historic Character Types.

The lack of time-depth and the uniformity of much of Peacehaven means that it has an unusually low number of HUCAs, and those that have been determined combine few Historic Character Types. The consistent character of HUCAs renders them suitable spatial units for describing the historic environment of the EUS towns, for assessing their **archaeological potential**, **Historic Environment Value** and for linking to **research questions**.

One component of the town is not included within a HUCA: the South Coast Road antedates the town.

4.3.2 Archaeological potential

Whilst the nature and extent of areas to which Historic Character Types have been applied is closely related to the survival of buried archaeology, this assessment considers the archaeological potential at the larger scale of the HUCAs. The reasons are twofold: first, the typically smaller scale of areas of common Historic Character Type could misleadingly imply that high, or even low, archaeological potential is precisely confined, or that archaeological value is exactly coterminous with the edge of specific features (standing or buried); and, second, most Sussex towns have had insufficient archaeological investigation to support this precision. For this reason, too, there is no grading or ranking of archaeological potential. Rather, the summary of archaeological potential is used to inform the overall (graded) assessment of **Historic Environment Value** of each HUCA (see below).

When considering the archaeological potential of the towns, it is important to recognize that archaeology often survives even 20th-century development and that it is misleading to assume complete destruction. Also, whilst pre-urban archaeology (such as the prehistoric and features and finds located in Peacehaven) tells us little about the towns themselves, it contributes to wider archaeological research.

4.3.3 Historic Environment Value (Map 7)

The **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of each HUCA is assessed here, and expressed as a value from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Such values are iniquitous to some and always subjective, but here provide a necessary means of consistently and intelligently differentiating (for the purposes of conservation) the upstanding fabric, boundaries and archaeology that form the historic urban environment. The Historic Environment Value (HEV) of each HUCA is based on assessment of:

- Townscape rarity
- Time-depth or antiquity
- Completeness.

Lesser additional considerations in the assessment comprise:

- Visibility
- Historic association.

The full methodology for assessing Historic Environment Value forms part of the annexe to the historic environment management guidance for Lewes District.

4.3.4 Vulnerability

The vulnerability of each HUCA is also considered, although many future threats cannot be anticipated. These brief analyses mean that this Statement of Historic Urban Character can be used to focus conservation guidance.

4.3.5 Research questions

Where relevant, reference is made to questions in the **Research Framework** for Peacehaven (below, section 5). This referencing links these key questions to specific HUCAs, helping ensure that any investigation of the historic environment (such as that as a condition of development, under PPG15 or PPG16) is properly focused.

4.3.6 Peacehaven's Historic Urban Character Areas (Maps 6 and 7)

HUCA 1 Cliff (HEV 1)

HUCA 1 encompasses cliffs at Peacehaven, together with the beach, the sea defences, the lower promenade, the upper promenade, and the open land immediately adjacent to the upper promenade.

There are no buildings or monuments, other than shelters and the Meridian Monument (the latter

marking the Greenwich meridian and built in 1936).

The open areas of the cliff top have some, albeit limited, **archaeological potential**, suggested by the prehistoric finds that have been made in the Peacehaven area.

The absence of many features earlier than the 1970s and the limited archaeological potential give this HUCA a **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 1.

Although the cliff and beach are natural products of erosion, the historic environment has a low **vulnerability**. The only threat would be loss of the Meridian Monument, but this has already been moved a short distance inland when the sea defences were built and the cliff dressed back, and further removal is possible.

General Peacehaven-wide **research questions** only apply.

HUCA 2 South Coast Road (HEV 1)

HUCA 1 encompasses the full east-west width of the gridded plan of Peacehaven proper, extending from the coast as far north as Arundel Road. The South Coast Road (until 1979 the main retail and commercial area, and still with many shops and businesses) crosses the HUCA, its sinuous route in contrast to the otherwise rigid grid.

There are no listed buildings, or buildings of local historic importance. Buildings do survive from as early as the 1920s (such as the Roman Catholic church), but none of the 1920-1 houses of the first pioneers has been kept (doubtless due to their temporary nature and use of materials such as asbestos). Some pre-Second World War bungalows do survive, however. The road adjacent to the cliffs, the southern part of Rowe Avenue and Cairo Avenue South remain unmade, preserving something of the feel of the pre-war town. There are three monuments of local importance, however, in the form of the three of the four pylons set up in pairs in 1916 to mark the east and west entrances to the prospective town of Peacehaven: two survive at the east end of South Coast Road, just east of Cornwall Avenue, and one survives at the west end, just west of Lincoln Avenue South. The gridded street pattern is also of some historic interest.

A Bronze Age barrow at 26 Friars Avenue no longer remains visible, and post-war consolidation of the town means that there is only limited **archaeological potential** for such prehistoric archaeology.

The architectural quality of the pre-Second World War buildings and monuments, the absence of features any earlier than 1916, and the limited archaeological potential give this HUCA a **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 1.

The Historic Environment Value means that though the area is susceptible to piecemeal redevelopment of houses and commercial premises, **vulnerability** is low. The greatest threat would be loss of the 1916 pylons and loss of the gridded street pattern.

General Peacehaven-wide **research questions** only apply.

HUCA 3 Meridian (HEV 1)

HUCA 3 comprises the Meridian Centre (retail and community facilities), along with adjacent industrial estate, leisure centre, housing and schools, all built from 1979 onwards.

There are no listed buildings, or buildings of local historic importance. No buildings survive from before 1979, as prior to the new works the area was previously almost completely devoid of developed plots. The original gridded street plan was also consciously removed.

There is no known pre-urban archaeology, although prehistoric finds have been found in the vicinity. The HUCA overlies the small farmsteads of Lower Hoddern and Upper Hoddern (recorded from the 18th and 19th centuries respectively). The density and scale of redevelopment from 1979, however, suggest that **archaeological potential** is extremely limited.

The architectural quality of the (1979 and later) buildings, and the limited archaeological potential give this HUCA a **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 1.

The Historic Environment Value means that though the area is susceptible to piecemeal redevelopment of houses and commercial premises, **vulnerability** is low.

General Peacehaven-wide **research questions** only apply.

HUCA 4 Balcombe Road (HEV 1)

HUCA 4 comprises the streets west of the Meridian Centre, lying between Arundel Road West and Firle Road. The area is a suburb.

There are no listed buildings, or buildings of local historic importance. Some pre-Second World War bungalows do survive, as does the gridded street plan.

There is no known pre-urban archaeology, although prehistoric finds have been found in the vicinity. The post-war consolidation of the development, however, suggests that **archaeological potential** is limited.

The quality of the 20th-century development and the limited archaeological potential give this HUCA a **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 1.

The Historic Environment Value means that though the area is susceptible to piecemeal redevelopment of houses, **vulnerability** is low.

General Peacehaven-wide **research questions** only apply.

HUCA 5 North Peacehaven (HEV 1)

HUCA 5 comprises the early northern extension of Peacehaven, north of Firle Road. The area is a suburb.

The HUCA has the only listed building in Peacehaven, a small rectangular shepherd's hut in the garden of 7 The Compts, off Stanley Road (Grade II). It is built of flint rubble, with brick quoins, and dates from the 19th century.

The area was less densely developed than most of Peacehaven by the Second World War, and since the late 1970s has seen infill development mostly to a new non-gridded street plan: only the outline of the gridded plan survives in Roderick Avenue, Phyllis Avenue, Cripps Avenue, Glynn Road and Telscombe Road.

Numerous prehistoric finds (especially Mesolithic flints from the Heathy Brow/Chatsworth Park/Courtlands area) have been made in the HUCA and Bronze Age barrows formerly existed in the Oval area. The post-war consolidation of the development, however, suggests that **archaeological potential** is limited.

The quality of the 20th-century development and the limited archaeological potential give this HUCA a **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 1.

The Historic Environment Value means that though the area is susceptible to piecemeal redevelopment of houses, **vulnerability** is low.

General Peacehaven-wide **research questions** only apply.

4.3.7 Summary table of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Peacehaven

Table 3 summarizes the assessments made in the individual Historic Urban Character Area

descriptions (above). It provides a simplified comparison of the assessments across different parts of the town, and helps to draw out key points. As such it supports the preparation of guidance for the town (see section 1.3).

The table shows how Historic Character Types combine into more recognizable Historic Urban

Character Areas (HUCAs). It summarizes the archaeological potential that, along with historic buildings and boundaries, contributes towards the assessment of the Historic Environment Value of each HUCA. The assessment of vulnerability of each HUCA is important for developing guidance.

Summary of assessment of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Peacehaven				
<i>Historic Character Types (HCTs)</i>	<i>Historic Urban Character Area (HUCA)</i>	<i>Archaeological potential</i>	<i>Historic Environment Value (HEV)</i>	<i>Vulnerability</i>
Informal parkland Seafront Beach/cliffs	1. Cliff	Limited	1	Low
Suburb Public Utility School/college	2. South Coast Road	Limited	1	Low
Retail and commercial Light industry Public School/college Sports field Suburb	3. Meridian	Limited	1	Low
Suburb	4. Balcombe Road	Limited	1	Low
School/college Light industry Park Suburb	5. North Peacehaven	Limited	1	Low

Table 3. Summary of assessment of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Peacehaven.

5 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

5.1 Pre-urban activity

Development pressure and opportunities for developer funding could mean that archaeological excavations in the town, or prior to expansion of the town, are more likely to occur than in the surrounding area. Thus, archaeological excavations in Peacehaven should address:

RQ1: What was the nature of the palaeo-environment (ancient environment), and the prehistoric, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and post-medieval human activity in the area?

5.2 Peacehaven: 1916-2004

There has little analysis of the historic environment of the new town. Key questions include:

RQ2: What was socio-economic make-up of the arriving plotlanders, and how did this change over time?

RQ3: What was the economic basis for the settlers after arrival, did this involve development of new skills/trades, and how has this changed over time?

RQ4: What determined the location of the plots that were occupied by 1939, to what degree was there any zoning (e.g. social differentiation, or types of activity)?

RQ5: What was the nature of the provision for the pre-1939 seaside resort, to what degree did this have an impact on the economy and society of the town?

RQ6: How does the architecture of the early period of colonization (1920s) compare to that of other coastal plotlands? Was there a distinctive style at Peacehaven, and what survivals are there of this early building?

6 Notes

¹ The 41 towns of the Sussex EUS are: Alfriston, Arundel, Battle, Bexhill, Bognor Regis, Bramber, Brighton, Burgess Hill, Crawley, Crowborough, Cuckfield, Ditchling, Eastbourne, East Grinstead, Hailsham, Hastings, Haywards Heath, Heathfield, Henfield, Horsham, Hove, Lewes, Lindfield, Littlehampton, Mayfield, Midhurst, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Petworth, Pevensey, Pulborough, Robertsbridge, Rotherfield, Rye, Seaford, Shoreham, Steyning, Storrington, Uckfield, Wadhurst and Worthing. Chichester and Winchelsea are omitted as they are the subjects of more intensive studies.

² The *Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme* is led by West Sussex County Council in conjunction with the borough and district councils, AONB agencies and stakeholders. The main aims of the partnership are to produce a range of interlocking characterization studies; to produce planning and land management guidance; and to raise public and community awareness of character as a vital and attractive ingredient of the environment of the county. The full range of characterization studies comprise:

Landscape Character Assessments and Landscape Strategy for West Sussex (2005).

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of Sussex (2003-8).

Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) (2004-8).

Intensive Urban Survey of Chichester/Fishbourne (2005-6) (Chichester District Council).

Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex (2004-6).

³ Woodcock, A., 'The archaeological implications of coastal change in Sussex', in Rudling, D., (ed.), *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD2000* (2003), 1-16, at 2-4.

⁴ Salzman, L. F., *Victoria County History 7* (1940), 66.

⁵ Robinson, D. A., & Williams, R. B. G., 'The Sussex coast past and present', in Geographical Editorial Committee of the University of Sussex (eds.), *Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society* (1983), 50-66, at 62.

⁶ Robinson, D. A., & Williams, R. B. G., 'The landforms of Sussex', in Geographical Editorial Committee of the University of Sussex (eds.), *Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society* (1983), 33-49, at 43-5.

⁷ Johnston, G. D., *Abstract of Turnpike Acts relating to Sussex* (transcript at SAS, c.1948), 19.

⁸ Payne, T., & Bernard, S., *Peacehaven: a chronology* (2000), 4-5.

⁹ Farrant, J., 'Growth of Communications 1840-1914', in Leslie, K. and Short, B. (eds.) *An Historical Atlas of Sussex* (1999), 80-1.

¹⁰ Lower, M. A., *A Survey of the Coast of Sussex made in 1587* (1870): no pagination.

¹¹ Payne, T., & Bernard, S., *Peacehaven: a chronology* (2000), 8-9; Poplett, B., *Peacehaven: A Pictorial History* (1993) [no pagination].

¹² Hardy, D., & Ward, C., *Arcadia for all. The legacy of a makeshift landscape* (1984), 71-6; Payne, T., & Bernard, S., *Peacehaven: a chronology* (2000), 4-9; Lowerson, J., 'Resorts, ports and "sleepy hollows": Sussex towns 1840-1940', in Geographical Editorial Committee of the University of Sussex (eds.), *Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society* (1983), 221-34, at 229; Poplett, B., *Peacehaven: A Pictorial History* (1993).

¹³ Poplett, B., *Peacehaven: A Pictorial History* (1993), fig. 51.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, fig. 23; Payne, T., & Bernard, S., *Peacehaven: a chronology* (2000), 8-9.

¹⁵ Hardy, D., & Ward, C., *Arcadia for all. The legacy of a makeshift landscape* (1984), 77-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 76-7

¹⁷ Poplett, B., *Peacehaven: A Pictorial History* (1993), introduction [no pagination].

¹⁸ Payne, T., & Bernard, S., *Peacehaven: a chronology* (2000), 8-13; Poplett, B., *Peacehaven: A Pictorial History* (1993) [no pagination].

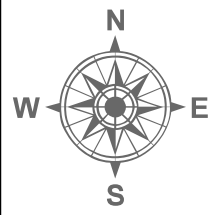
¹⁹ Harris, P. R. (ed.), 'Crowlink', *The Downsman* (newsletter of the Society of Sussex Downsmen, Summer 1998), 2.

²⁰ Hardy, D., & Ward, C., *Arcadia for all. The legacy of a makeshift landscape* (1984), 84.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 85-90.

²² Pevsner, N., in Nairn, I., & Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England: Sussex* (1965), 578.

²³ Payne, T., & Bernard, S., *Peacehaven: a chronology* (2000), 14.



Sussex EUS




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PEACEHAVEN MAP 1

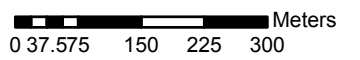
Extent of Peacehaven
EUS study area

KEY

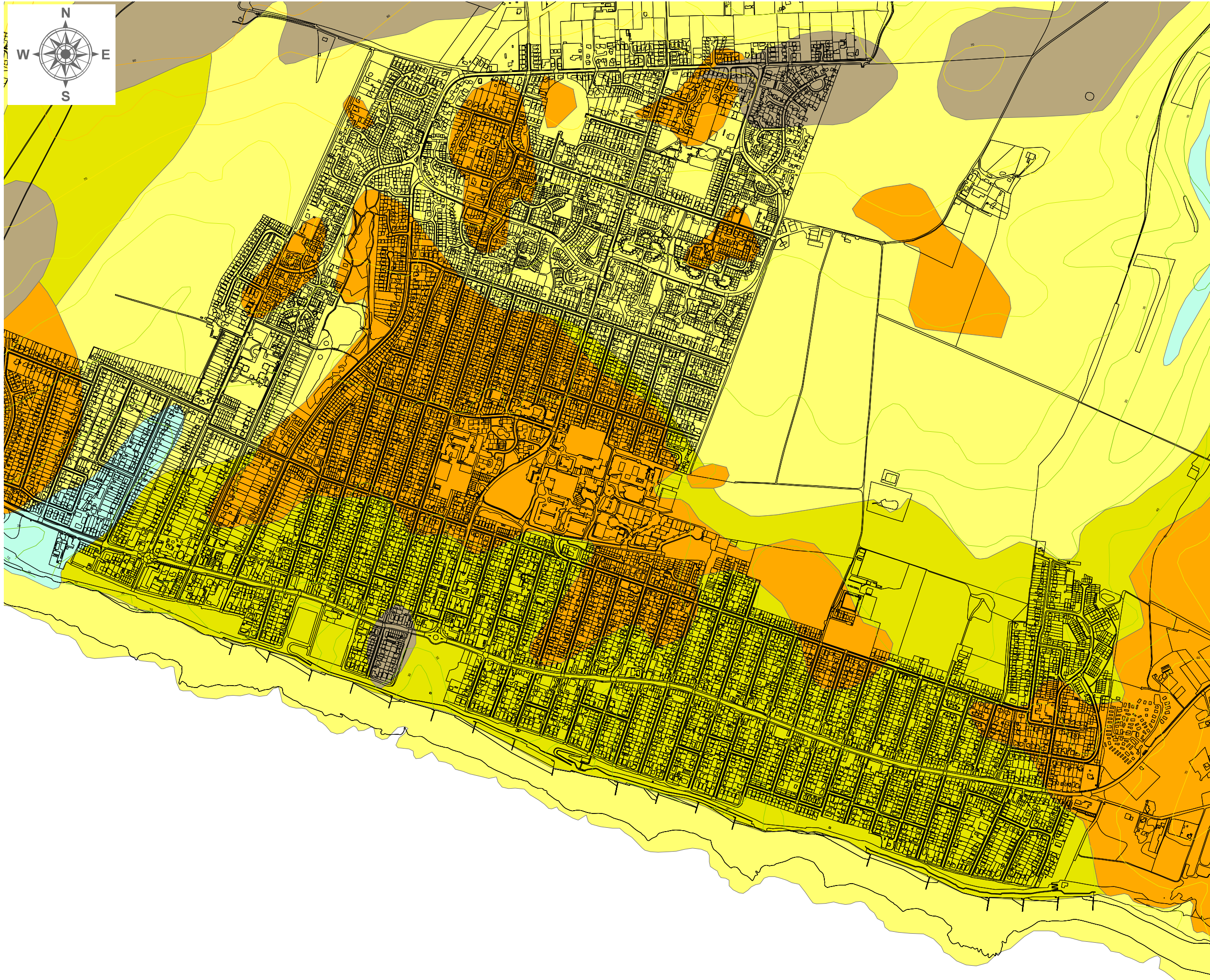
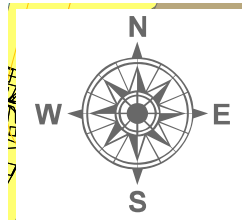
 EUS_boundary

EUS research and mapping:
Dr Roland B Harris BA DPhil MIFA
November 2004

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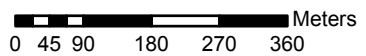
PEACEHAVEN MAP 2 Solid and drift geology, with 10m contours

KEY

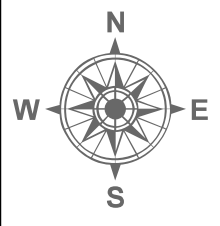
- Solid geology**
- LAMBETH GROUP
 - NEWHAVEN CHALK FORMATION
 - TARRANT CHALK MEMBER
- Drift geology**
- CLAY-WITH-FLINTS
 - HEAD (UNDIFFERENTIATED)

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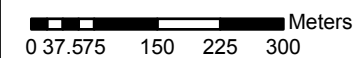
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PEACEHAVEN MAP 3

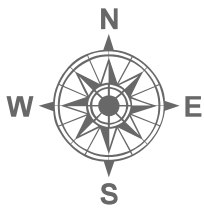
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PEACEHAVEN MAP 4

Historic Character Types (2004)

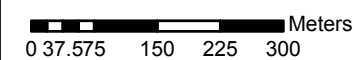
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HCT

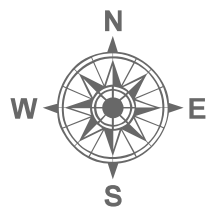
-  Beach/cliffs
-  Informal parkland
-  Lane/road
-  Light industry
-  Park
-  Public
-  Retail and commercial
-  School/college
-  Seafront
-  Sports field
-  Suburb
-  Utility

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PEACEHAVEN MAP 5

Historic Character
Type areas showing
principal period from
which present character
is derived

KEY PERIOD

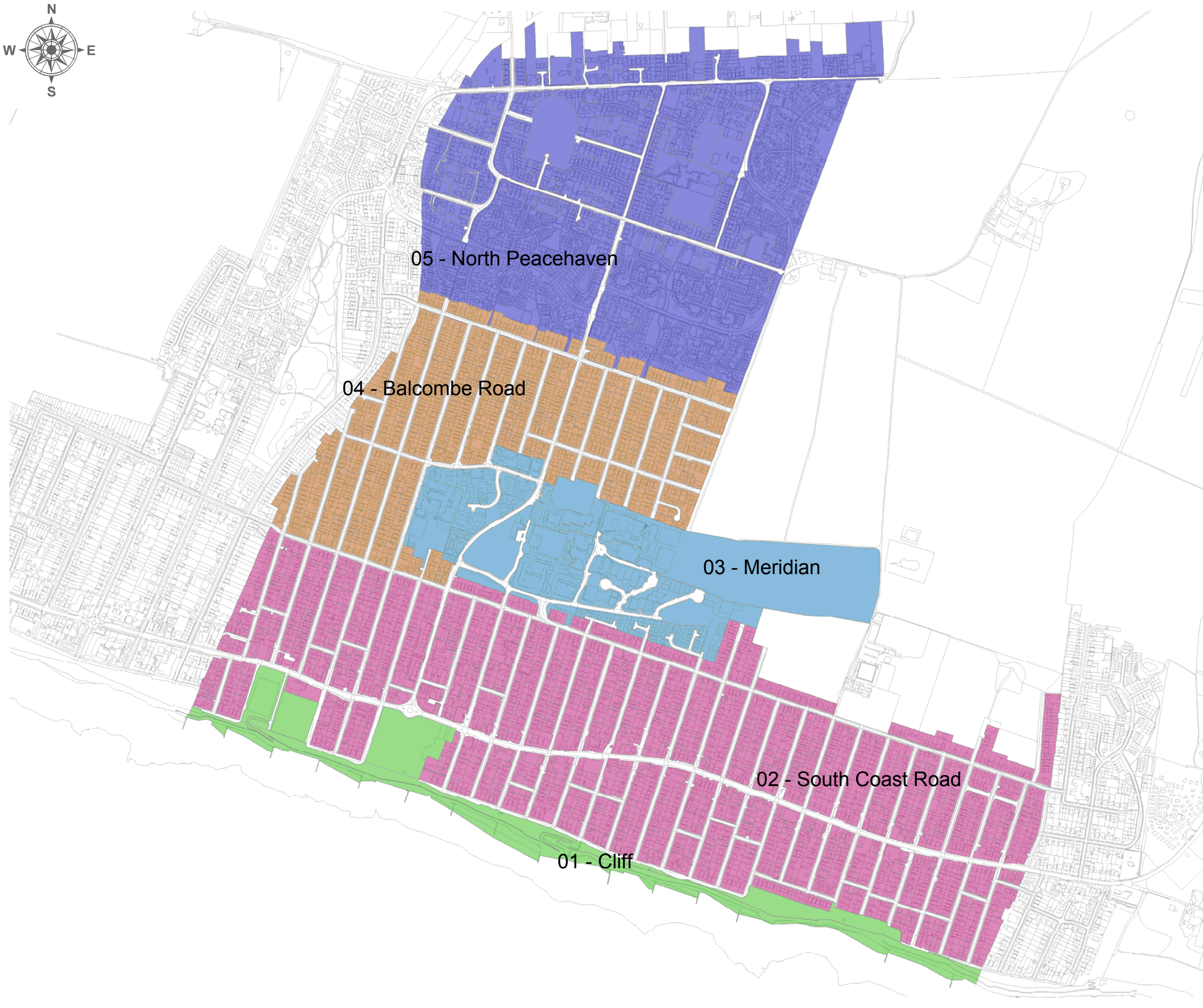
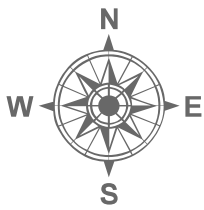
- 5
- 14
- 15

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PEACEHAVEN MAP 6

Historic Urban
Character Areas
(HUCAs)

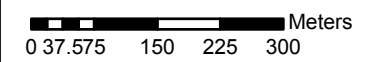
KEY

HUCA

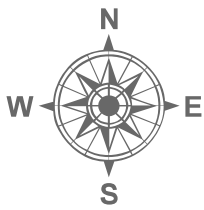
- 01 - Cliff
- 02 - South Coast Road
- 03 - Meridian
- 04 - Balcombe Road
- 05 - North Peacehaven

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Sussex EUS



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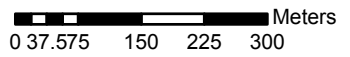
PEACEHAVEN MAP 7

Historic Environment
Value (HEV) - assessed
for Historic Urban
Character Areas
(HUCAs)

KEY
HUCA_HEV
 1

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