Design Guide for Ninfield

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Contents

The Aim of this Guide 4
The Role of Neighbourhood Planning in Achieving Good Design 5
The Development Challenge - Why a Design Guide for Ninfield? 6
What makes the High Weald Special? 8
Landscape Character of Southern part of the High Weald 9
What gives Ninfield its Sense of Place? 10
Topography and Character Areas: 10
Geology: 11
Trees and Woodland: 11
Landscape History: 11
Landscape Setting of the Village 12
Built environment of Village 14
Ninfield Green/Cross Heritage Area 14
High Street/Manchester Road Heritage Area 15
Church Lane Heritage Area 16
Examples of Buildings in the local Vernacular in Ninfield Parish 18
Brick buildings 18
Tile-hung buildings 20
Weatherboarded buildings 22
Rendered buildings 23
The Design Guide 24
DG1- Responding to Site & Landscape Context 24
UNDERSTANDING THE SETTING OF THE DEVELOPMENT SITE 24
LANDSCAPE 24
TOPOGRAPHY 25
WATERCOURSES 26
RETAINING AND/OR REINSTATING SITE FEATURES 26
DG2 – Connecting beyond the site 27
CONNECTED STREETS, LANES AND ROUTEWAYS 27
PERMEABILITY 27
FORMING SITE EDGES AND TRANSITIONS 27
DG3- Layout & Structuring the Site 28
PRINCIPLES OF SITE STRUCTURE 28
STREET LAYOUT 28
STREET HIERARCHIES 29

STREET CHARACTER 30
ACCESS TO REAR GARDENS 31
STREET JUNCTIONS AND GEOMETRY 31
LOCATION OF GREEN SPACES AND OTHER PUBLIC REALM 31
DG4- Using Buildings to Define Streets & Spaces 32
RELATING BUILDINGS TO THE STREET 32
BOUNDARIES AND FRONT GARDENS 33
ADDRESSING PUBLIC SPACE 34
DG5- The Right Built Form 34
DENSITY AND GRAIN OF DEVELOPMENT 34
SCALE, FORM AND MASSING OF BUILDINGS 34
DG6- Parking Strategies 36
INTEGRATING PARKING INTO THE DESIGN 36
DG7 DG7- Appearance and Local Details 37
COLOUR 40
MATERIALS 40
SUSTAINABLE BUILDING DESIGN 41
DG8- Ancillary & Storage 41
DG9 - Detailing the Street 42
SURFACES AND MATERIALS 42
SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING 42
DG10 - Reinforcing Local Planting Character & Habitats 42
PLANTING 42
WILDLIFE 43

The Aim of this Guide

The Parish of Ninfield lies within the High Weald National Character Area (NCA) apart from a narrow western strip within the Pevensey Levels NCA. The northern part of the parish is within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The ridge-top location of the village is typical of the historic High Weald settlements. Ninfield's main claim to fame is that Standard Hill is so-named because it is reputed to be the place where William the Conqueror raised his standard prior to the Battle of Hastings in 1066. It is also known for its c17th iron stocks but these are relatively small and are a less significant visual feature in comparison to the pine trees surrounding them (see photograph on front cover). At first glance, passing through on the main A269, the village may appear pleasant but unremarkable in the absence of any nucleus. However, on further exploration, especially away from the main road, the combination of landscape setting, historic buildings, trees and other greenery reveals a distinctive character with a relatively strong sense of place.

This Guide provides more detailed advice in support of policy N10 'Design' of the Ninfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (NNDP). In particular, it aims to ensure that sufficient regard is, in future, paid to the features and characteristics that give Ninfield its sense of place. It seeks reinforcement, rather than dissipation, of these by promoting more careful attention to the siting, layout, design, construction materials and landscaping of new buildings. It accords with the National Planning Policy Framework's objective of creating well-designed places with an identifiable sense of place, aiming for higher quality design that reflects and reinforces the local distinctiveness of both built heritage and landscapes. It also seeks to enable innovation and creativity insofar as they are based on or inspired by concepts derived from the heritage buildings and landscape of Ninfield and the High Weald.

Policy N10 and this Design Guide are aimed primarily at the design of new houses and other residential buildings in both village and parish but are also applicable to extensions and to other new buildings of a similar scale and construction type. The much more comprehensive **Wealden Design Guide 2008** is a 'supplementary planning document' adopted by Wealden District Council (WDC) as the local planning authority. It aids the interpretation of saved policies EN1, EN27 and HG10 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 and should be taken into account depending on the type of new development involved. Its 287 pages deal with all types of development, not just new dwellings. It gives design advice on agricultural, commercial and industrial buildings, shopfronts, signage, extensions, conversions and telecommunications equipment as well as alterations to listed buildings.

More recent is the **High Weald Housing Design Guide 2019**, published by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee for new housing in the AONB in 2019. However, this has not been adopted by WDC as supplementary planning guidance and there is no associated policy in an up-to-date Local Plan. It only applies to housing development within the AONB. However, its guidance is considered highly relevant to the neighbouring areas of the High Weald NCA as they display very similar characteristics albeit in a less pronounced way. Consequently, it provides the basis for this Design Guide for the whole of Ninfield Parish. Its use has recently been put forward by WDC's consultants LUC in their landscape guidelines for this part of the High Weald, not solely for the area within the AONB.

Reference should also be made to the 'Local Design Guide for Residential Development' published in 2010 by East Sussex County Council as the local highway authority. It is based on the Government's 'Manual for Streets' 2007.

The Role of Neighbourhood Planning in Achieving Good Design

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paras 126-135) puts good design at the heart of the planning system (see quotes in box below). Recent revisions to the NPPF and the National Model Design Code respond to the recommendations of the Building Better Building Beautiful Commission convened by the Government to champion beauty in the built environment as an integral part of the drive to build more homes. One of its 3 main aims is to promote better design and style of homes, villages and towns. The NPPF also makes it clear that land needs to be used efficiently owing to the overall need to provide more new homes, achieving appropriate densities, taking account of the desirability of either maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens) or promoting regeneration and change (para 124).

……Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities (para 126).
…..Design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics. Neighbourhood Planning Groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of a design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers (para 127).

The NPPF (para 134) states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. It adds that outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, should be supported "*so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings*."

The 'National Design Guide' (amended 2021) sets out 10 essential characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design looks like in practice. These characteristics are: context; identity; built form; movement; nature; public spaces; uses; homes and buildings; resources; and lifespan. Expanding on this, the 'National Model Design Code' and 'Guidance Notes for Design Codes' set a default position and urge local authorities to prepare their own design guides and codes.

The Planning Practice Guidance (rev 2019) entitled 'Design: process and tools' (on gov.uk website) elaborates on the requirements of the NPPF. It states that well-designed places can be supported through non-strategic policies, prepared by local planning authorities or neighbourhood planning groups, in local or neighbourhood plans and in supplementary planning documents such as local design guides or design codes providing further detail on specific design matters. Such policies are more effective when based on appropriate evidence of the defining characteristics of the area, such as its historic, landscape and townscape character. They are important for providing a clear indication of the types of development that will be allowed in an area, especially where they provide a hook for more detailed local design guides, masterplans or codes. "Neighbourhood plan making is one of the key ways in which local character and design objectives can be understood and set out ,

and with the benefit of being a community-led process."(Para:004 Ref ID 26-004-20191001)."*To be given as much weight as possible in the decision-making process, local design guides need to be adopted as supplementary planning documents or appended to a neighbourhood plan". (Para 005 Ref ID 25-005-20191001).*

In the case of Wealden District, a 'Wealden Design Guide', comprehensively covering all types of development and promoting the maintenance of local distinctiveness, was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in 2008 by Wealden District Council (WDC). It provides detailed guidance on the interpretation of 'saved' policies EN1 and EN27 in the Wealden Local Plan 1998 for all areas of the District which also includes the Low Weald and South Downs. More recent is the 'High Weald Housing Design Guide', published by the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee in 2019. However, this has not been adopted by WDC as supplementary planning guidance because of the absence of any associated policy in an up-to-date Local Plan. Its guidance is considered very relevant and important so it provides the basis for this Design Guide for Ninfield Parish. Its use has recently been put forward by consultants LUC in their landscape guidelines for this part of the High Weald, not solely within the AONB. The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 and Government's 'Manual for Streets' are also relevant.

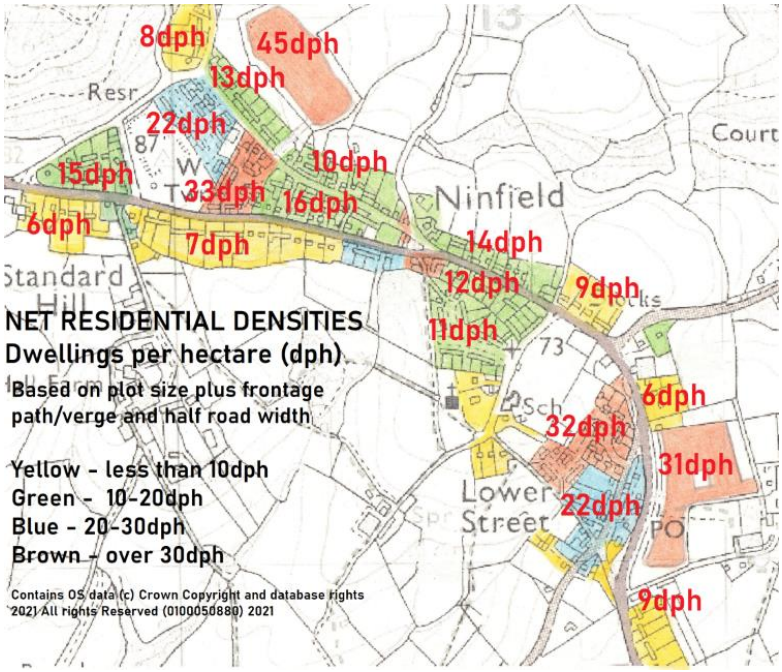
The Development Challenge - Why a Design Guide for Ninfield?

The scale of housebuilding required in Wealden District is currently at an unprecedented level, with central Government imposing ever greater requirements well beyond locally-driven needs. At the local level, Ninfield Parish is also experiencing an unprecedented number of planning applications for large speculative housing developments after many years of only small-scale growth. This arises in part from the lack of an up-to-date Local Plan and inability to meet the District's 5-year housing land supply requirement (as calculated under the Government's methodology). The adopted 1998 village development boundary for Ninfield is tightly drawn, owing to the landscape constraints, and was already breached by the allocation of 50 new houses in the 2013 Wealden Core Strategy. However, the provisions of the NPPF and the overall District housing requirement have caused WDC to permit three more large housing estates, despite much local opposition. two of these are the sites that were identified as proposed allocations in the subsequently withdrawn submission draft Wealden Local Plan 2019.

Delivering appropriate new housing development is a key part of planning policy in creating thriving and successful places. However, considerable skill is needed regarding siting and design so that development respects its setting and reinforces its sense of place rather than simply imposing 'anywhere' housing estates in whatever design style is current. It is a great responsibility to make such long-lasting interventions in such a special landscape as the High Weald, both within and outside the AONB. Further challenges in the location, siting and design of new housing are presented by climate change and biodiversity loss. Past development has shown how this opportunity has often been squandered on generic housing developments failing to capitalise on the underlying character and heritage of villages and their setting in the landscape. They have not paid sufficient care in understanding distinctive local vernacular or deeper, local characteristic design or place-making elements in layout, grain and massing.

The historic buildings in Ninfield are relatively scattered and interspersed with more recent buildings. As a mainly agricultural settlement, there is no nucleus of tightly-knit buildings but there are two small historic groups, one at the central Blacksmith Inn intersection (historically

called Ninfield Green or Ninfield Cross) and the other at Lower Street. There is a prevailing rural and informal quality owing to its agricultural past and the relatively low density of development as shown on the map below. There are many trees and hedges and the buildings are domestic in scale, with very few larger buildings to act as a focus. This enables the village to blend into the surrounding landscape despite its ridge-top location. Most of the village grew very gradually and incrementally, often on a single plot by plot basis, along the main road and back lanes, so there is individuality in the design of buildings but there is also a general harmony in their form and style. By contrast, the existing housing estates, two of which contain some flats, are based on higher density repetitive house designs typical of their period rather than any local character, but they are modest in size and generally located behind frontage development. Consequently, unlike the recent permissions, they have little effect on the main streetscenes of the village or the surrounding landscape.



Map of net residential densities in Ninfield village showing majority of existing areas adjoining the countryside to be low density (in the range of only 6dph-15dph) unlike the 2 estates currently under construction

The preliminary questionnaire for the Ninfield Neighbourhood Plan shows that the prevailing views of those residents who responded value Ninfield because of its character as a small rural village, both physically and socially. Although there are some concerns, they are generally satisfied with the village and its fairly basic level of facilities, indicative of a state of relative ‘equilibrium’, apart from a desire for a limited amount of low-cost small housing units to meet genuine local need. Local residents consider the biggest threat to the village to be urbanisation through excessive new housing development to help meet the need for more homes not locally but in the much wider sub-region because of the national housing shortage. There are serious concerns about not only the large scale and location but also the design of the housing estates that have been granted planning permission in Ninfield in recent years. Unlike the existing small estates which were mainly infilling, these large new estates are peripheral add-ons, incongruously imposed on the rural landscape They do not relate to and appear separate from the existing village. The urgent need for new housing in the District has been allowed to outweigh the need for it to fit in with the local environment. One of these, in particular, makes no concessions to either the surrounding landscape or the adjoining built environment. It comprises a dense concentration of 80 houses at a net density

of 45 dph. Its ‘minimalist’ and stark ‘contemporary’ architecture, which is the current fashion, derives more from urban office or industrial buildings than from the rural farmsteads and cottages typical of the local area. Moreover, it uses standard or similar house forms repetitively on more than a small scale. It is totally out of character and creates an inappropriate monotony of streetscene. The overall effect is alien in its rural surroundings and risks causing the village to reach a ‘tipping point’ where any further similar proposals would result in loss of Ninfield’s identity.

It is largely as a result of these recent developments that this Design Guide is necessary. It is particularly important that any further housing developments are of an appropriate siting, size and design. Above all, they need to reflect and be in keeping with the character of the High Weald and Ninfield in particular. They need to reinforce its ‘sense of place’ with an informal, unpretentiously robust, rustic quality that is appropriate to this very rural location, not the formality or slickness of an urban or suburban location. They need to preserve the landscape setting of the village and create a ‘green’ environment which is not easy with higher densities. They need to draw inspiration from traditional cottages and farm buildings as well as having sufficient individuality within them in the design of buildings or short rows of buildings. Excessive repetition of standard or very similar designs particularly needs to be avoided.

This guide is intended to provide some clarity to developers and residents as to the type of housing development likely to be supported locally. In this respect, it accords with the stated current aims of the Government regarding the achievement of good design, creating beautiful and sustainable places, whilst also giving communities greater say in the design standards set for their area.

What makes the High Weald Special?

The whole of Ninfield Parish (apart from the small westernmost strip within Pevensey Levels) lies within the High Weald National Character Area (NCA). However, only the part north of the village is within the boundary of the AONB designated in 1983. It is described as one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in Britain characterised by wooded, rolling hills studded with sandstone outcrops; small irregular-shaped fields; scattered farmsteads; ancient routeways and settlements typically located on ridge lines. Apart from sandstone outcrops, these features are typical of almost all of Ninfield Parish.

The ‘**High Weald Housing Design Guide 2019’** summarises the historical formation of the character of the High Weald settlements. It states that settlement form and structure, siting in the landscape, relationship of buildings to streets, and building form and massing are all highly important to the natural beauty of the High Weald. New development should reinforce this settlement character.

The Guide states that the settlements of the High Weald are untypical of those found across England. Clearings called assarts were created by early farmers for mixed pastoral farming. This resulted in a complex patchwork of small, irregularly-shaped fields among the abundant ancient woodlands. Such woodland and dense mature hedgerows still demarcate these fields today. In addition, the movement of livestock gave rise to an extensive network of routeways, often sunken, linking grazing areas and these are still visible today in numerous lanes, tracks and paths. This has led to the High Weald having a high concentration of dispersed settlements. Numerous small scattered farmsteads and hamlets interspersed among the small fields and woodland were followed by larger hamlets and villages. Later

medieval villages were often located at historic focal points and along ridge-top roads. The Guide illustrates types of historic settlement growth based upon intersection of routes and Ninfield's development around 2 intersections is not unusual.

The High Weald Design Guide states that design of development within or adjacent to High Weald settlements needs to be based on a thorough understanding of this landscape context and settlement pattern and "***Towns and villages outside but adjacent to the AONB often share many of the origins and landscape components described above and development adjacent to them would also benefit from the landscape-led approach."*** Ninfield, as an ancient settlement with a ridge-top location, is clearly one such village.

Landscape Character of Southern part of the High Weald

The **Wealden Landscape Character Assessment May 2022** by consultants LUC has been undertaken for WDC to inform the preparation of the new Wealden Local Plan. It defines the extensive area around the central High Weald (wooded ridges) as having the landscape character type 'Wooded Slopes (High Weald)'. It subdivides this into local character areas (LCAs) based on river catchments. Ninfield lies within 'High Weald – Cuckmere / Pevensey Catchments' (LCA6E). This area is partly in and partly outside the AONB. The key characteristics of this sub area (page 175) can be summarised as follows:-

i. Sandstones, siltstones and mudstones give rise to an undulating ridge and valley landscape associated with rivers including Waller's Haven and its tributaries. The incised and ridged landform is a defining component of character. Narrow gill stream corridors and ponds support wetland habitats.
ii. A well wooded landscape of small-scale woodlands, mostly ancient, recorded as priority habitat, while some have been partially replanted with mixed or coniferous species. Woodland, hedgerows, and sunken lanes result in an enclosed character, and many views are terminated by woodland blocks whether local or distant.
iii. A distinctive field pattern of small to medium irregular fields, predominantly medieval in origin, is a defining component of character. These are often derived from assarting (formed from cleared areas of woodland), interspersed with medium-large fields derived from historic piecemeal or planned private enclosure. Modern amalgamations do not detract from this. Pastures predominate but there are also areas of arable cropping. Fields are bound by unmanaged hedgerows, sometimes reinforced by post and wire fencing.
iv. An historic settlement pattern of small, ridge-top villages, many designated as Conservation Areas. Large farmsteads and manors are set back from the roads. The dispersed settlement pattern is a defining component of character. Church towers in ridgetop villages form landmark features which rise above the tree line.
v. The local vernacular architecture comprises red brick and tile hung upper stories. These local materials, including oak timber frames, sandstone and flint reflect locally sourced materials.
vi. Villages are connected by a historic network of ridgetop roads and winding, sometimes sunken, lanes lined with mature trees and hedgerows.
vii. There are also open views across the Pevensey Levels, including across Waller's Haven, and to the distinctive landforms of the South Downs.
viii. The contrasting landscape pattern of pastoral fields combined with dense areas of mixed woodland and scattered historic villages, results in a varied landscape colour palette.

ix. A rural and tranquil landscape with areas of relative remoteness, tranquillity and experience of dark skies away from the towns.

The above LUC report (pages 185-186) also contains a list of landscape guidelines for this sub-area one of which is:

> 'Ensure new building reinforces and responds to local character in its scale, layout and design, reflecting the local vernacular in use of materials. Developments should draw on the principles contained within the High Weald AONB design guidance, High Weald AONB 'Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development' and objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan'.

The earlier **Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment 2014** (by Chris Blandford Associates for WDC) also identified Local Landscape Character Types. Ninfield parish, except for its west edge under "Open Levels", is in the part of the High Weald it described as "*Ridges and Slopes*". This is assessed as having "*High Landscape Sensitivity and Very High Landscape Value".* The same consultants also undertook a detailed assessment of a number of sites around Ninfield village in their 'Wealden Local Plan Sites – Landscape and Ecological Assessment Study 2017'. This fed into the subsequent 'Wealden Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2019'. This made judgements about the contributions made by the various sites to the setting of the village of Ninfield. Apart from two large sites, the majority were judged unsuitable for housing or economic development because of impact on the landscape setting of the village. Where located on the edge of the ridge, the reason was that, although read against the existing village edge, the land concerned is open and exposed for some considerable distance.

What gives Ninfield its Sense of Place?

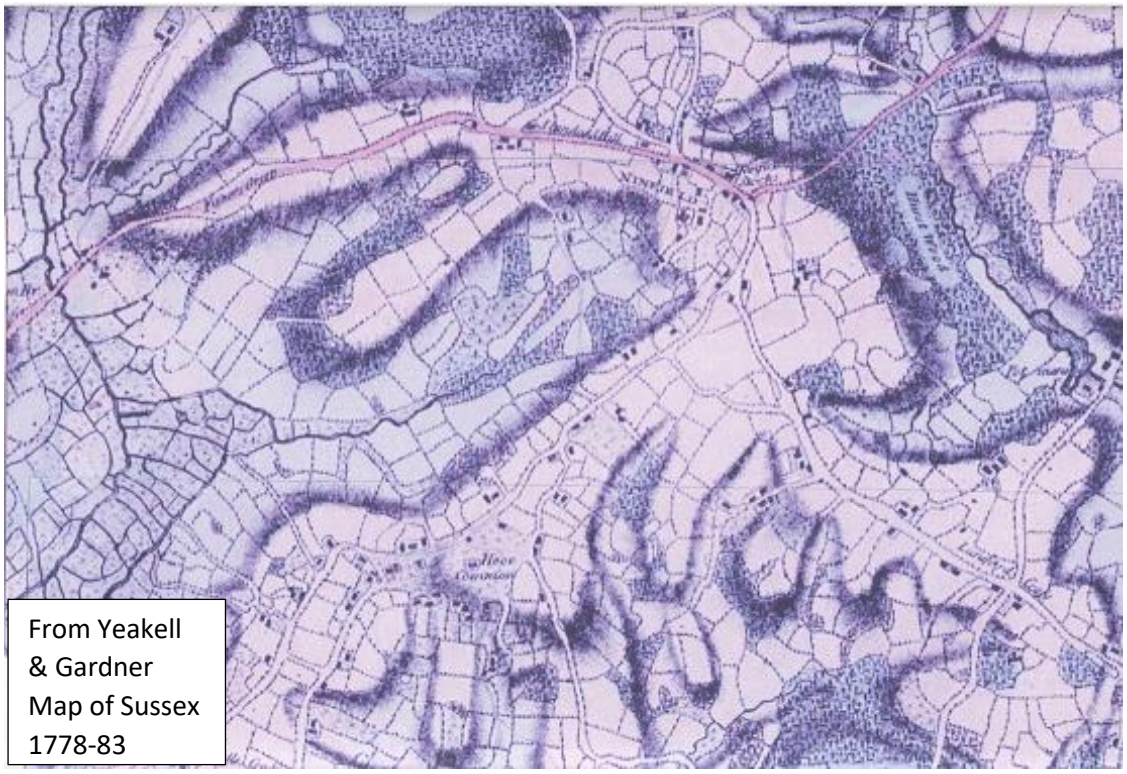
The landscape setting is highly important in giving Ninfield its 'sense of place'. The most fundamental elements of the landscape are the topography and underlying geology. Historically, these have largely determined the other interconnected elements of the landscape, namely landcover (trees, vegetation, etc) and settlement (land use, buildings, roads, etc). Landform has given various areas of the parish each their own identifiable character.

Topography and Character Areas: It is significant that the ridge on which Ninfield village stands, running eastwards from Standard Hill, slopes markedly downhill into several distinct valleys, except to the south-east and south where it turns and broadens out into a low plateau. The slopes are often steepest in the areas close to the village, notably on its northwest and southwest sides and also on part of the northeast side . The ridge forms a watershed between Wallers Haven to the west and Combe Haven to the east. Tributaries of these, although now insignificant in size, have also formed distinct valleys, each with their own character. The Moorhall Stream and the Ninfield Stream both flow to Wallers Haven whereas the Catsfield/Watermill Stream flows to Combe Haven. Thus, a number of distinct Ninfield Parish Character Areas are recognisable comprising these 3 valleys plus the low plateau, village ridge and the Levels. For summary descriptions and a map of these areas see Ninfield Neighbourhood Development Plan (for detailed descriptions see the Landscape Study of Ninfield). The valley of the Ninfield Stream is in the AONB and subject to the highest level of landscape protection. The valley of the Moorhall Stream and adjacent part of the Levels is identified as an Area of Locally Valued Landscape (ALVL) as is most of the valley of the Catsfield/ Watermill Stream. NNDP policy N6 gives special weight to landscape considerations in these areas and N5 protects Key Views.

Geology: As with neighbouring areas of the High Weald, Ninfield is composed of sedimentary layers of clay, mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. Wadhurst Clay is found in the valleys of Ninfield parish with the overlying Tunbridge Wells Sand formation on the higher parts including the village ridge and the low plateau. The Wadhurst Clay is dense with very impeded drainage. There are many ponds and springs emerge at its junction with the Tunbridge Wells Sands. The problem of saturated clay explains the location of both settlement and routeways on the higher ground, with much ancient woodland surviving on the lower areas and on steeper slopes. Ground conditions are variable, however, and even on the higher parts, drainage can be impeded.

Trees and Woodland: There is a high proportion of woodland, most of it semi-natural ancient woodland. It is most extensive along the east side (Hurst, Sprays and Court Woods) and northwest (Combe Wood) of the parish. There is also a significant amount in the southwest (Long Wood, Wet Wood, Kiln Wood on the slopes of Standard Hill, Rough Wood along the Moorhall gill, and the small fragment of Church Wood nearest the village). The National Planning Policy Framework places great importance on ancient woodland and the habitat it provides by requiring no loss or deterioration unless there are very exceptional circumstances. Several of the above woods are Local Wildlife Sites and Church Wood is a Local Nature Reserve. Large numbers of trees along field boundaries, gills and other watercourses, often as shaws, combine to give a very wooded appearance to much of the wider landscape. The Low Plateau differs in that it has a generally more open landscape of larger fields with maintained hedges and much less woodland. Although on a ridge, most of the village, unlike many of the side slopes, is disguised by the surrounding trees and woods. This includes the church as the trees are now taller than its belfry.

Landscape History: The Sussex Historic Landscape Categorisation 2010 by Dr N Bannister shows that Ninfield parish, except for the part within Pevensey Levels, has a high proportion of surviving medieval (pre-1499) landscape. The Yeakell & Gardner Map of Sussex (1778-1783) as well as the detailed Tithe Map and Schedule (1841-4) show the intricate pattern of small irregular ancient fields and the widely scattered buildings, as well as ancient woodlands and routes. Apart from the development of the village through consolidation along and between the roads, most of this historic pattern is still recognisable today.



From Yeakell & Gardner Map of Sussex 1778-83

Landscape Setting of the Village

The Topographical Dictionary of England 1848 gave the following description of Ninfield ***"the surface is varied and the scenery beautifully picturesque – the village is situated on the road from Lewes to Battle and Hastings and from its elevated site commands extensive views."*** The saved Wealden Local Plan 1998 states that "*Ninfield lies in an elevated position along the crest of a ridge. The surrounding countryside is gently undulating and of high scenic quality."* The village occupies the highest part of an E-W ridge stretching westwards through Boreham Street and Windmill Hill to Herstmonceux but it is severed from the rest of the ridge by the river valley of Wallers Haven. The A269, the historic turnpike road, runs through the village along this ridge. NNDP policy N5 identifies a number of Key Views to be afforded protection from detrimental development.

Ninfield village from Hooe – the numerous trees disguise most of the village but the open side slopes are visible including a single new house with extensive glazing and no screening.

The main characteristics of the landscape setting of the village are:

- Overall built-up area is relatively linear and confined to flat-topped ridge with main side slopes undeveloped, except where it slopes down to Lower Street where it is less defined and broadens out into a low plateau.

- Owing to small valleys impinging on either side, ridge narrows in middle of village, dividing the built-up area into two halves, with community facilities in the eastern half (except for the doctors surgery and one public house).
- Surrounding trees, including in gardens, and woods mitigate impact of existing village on wider landscape, shielding many buildings and resulting in few ‘hard edges’ visible from roads.
- Church Path, as an important and historic route, contributes to the heritage of the village core and preserves the relationship between the main historic components of the village (Lower Street, the Church and Ninfield Green) and the open countryside. It acts as line of demarcation of built-up area.
- Distinctive unspoilt rural uphill approaches with enclosed wooded banks into village from Catsfield Road (B2204) and the much more secluded Combe Hill and Moons Hill are typical High Weald features and provide an abrupt contrast between High Weald countryside and built-up village. Uphill entry into village from Standard Hill (A269) has a more gradual transition. Winding approach from Hooe Road (B2095) is flat but with view of valley on one side and very rural.
- Approach into village from Bexhill Road (A269) lacks distinctiveness owing to more uniformity with gradual slope, long straight hedge on west side and ribbon of houses on east side leading into short stretch of by-pass with wide verge on one side and planted belt of trees on other (where a new housing estate is under construction on the flat field behind).
- Panoramic public views over landscape of 1066 Country to southwest from Church Path and its associated network of public paths, plus numerous localised views of Moorhall valley, create an especially valued close relationship between village, Church Wood and distinctive countryside of ridges and slopes.

Setting of Ninfield village showing public rights of way (dark green lines) with numerous public views (red arrows); areas of open high ground and/or exposed slopes (yellow); ancient woods (solid green); and distinctive uphill road approaches to village with wooded banks (broken brown lines).

Built environment of Village

It is considered important from a Design perspective that new development in Ninfield, apart from the prevailing low density character, especially where it adjoins the countryside, should draw upon the historic buildings in the parish for inspiration. It is mostly these buildings, in combination with the landscape, which give Ninfield its sense of place. To prevent further loss of identity there is a need to reinforce the traditional rural character and avoid further dissipation with generic building designs that have no local attributes. Therefore, the following section identifies those parts of the village which have a distinctive local character. There are many historic buildings in the wider parish but they are too scattered to form recognisable concentrations and are referred to later. A number of significant listed former farm and country houses are hidden in the parish landscape, out of public view. Reference should be made to Policy N9 and Appendix C of the Ninfield Neighbourhood Development Plan for details of all the buildings within these areas and the wider parish that comprise both the statutorily listed buildings and the locally-listed 'non-designated' heritage assets.

Local Heritage Areas in the Village

These comprise the areas of the village with recognisable groups of historic buildings. NB. On the following maps, Local Heritage Areas are shown by a broken black line, statutorily-listed buildings are shown in red, and locally-listed buildings in orange.

Ninfield Green/Cross Heritage Area

Based on the various historic buildings (3 listed) of the c18th, c19th and c20th in a loose group around the Blacksmiths Inn forecourt/ road junction extending a short distance east along The Green. Arguably regarded as the 'centre' of the village at the meeting of Church Path with The Green, High Street, Moons Hill and the back lane named Manchester Road. The Blacksmiths Inn acts as a focal point but the other buildings are much more important historically.

High Street/Manchester Road Heritage Area

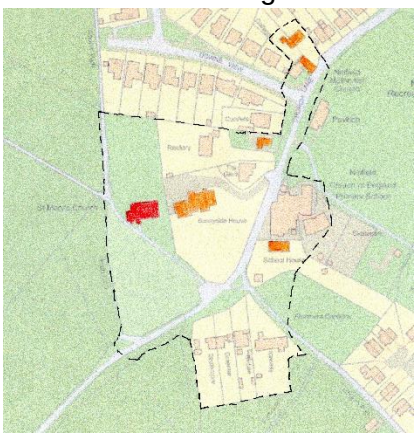
High Street is characterised by a few traditional cottages but mainly by larger dwellings including Edwardian villas representing the first phase of residential development of the village. A twitten links it to the back lane referred to as Ninfield Street in the c19th (named Manchester Road in the early 1900s) which is characterised by the 3 listed former farm buildings and some cottages in the part formerly called Mill Corner. Grass verges (without kerbs) and mature trees (including a line of pollarded limes) give rurality and cohesion.

Lower Street Heritage Area

This is a more cohesive traditional village street with the oldest buildings around the junction at the southern end (3 listed) and late Victorian dwellings extending northwards in a distinct group and dispersed down the steep twitten (Church Path). The roads have mainly granite sets or grass verges without kerbs.

The 3 above areas comprise the main parts of the village with the largest number of historic buildings (some grade II listed, others identified as non-designated heritage assets) dating from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. These are interspersed with buildings of all subsequent periods from late Victorian to the present day. Most buildings are detached and of individual design but there are some terraces of 3 cottages and some semi-detached houses. Generally, the areas have an informal layout of medium density but Lower Street has a greater density owing to a row of closely positioned Victorian cottages on its western side, north of the more historic listed cottages. In High Street, west of two early c19th cottages, one of which abuts the highway, a line of Edwardian villa-type houses are a distinct feature and opposite are some early c20th of Arts & Crafts influence. Trees, including Scots pines (mainly associated with the historic buildings at the road junction) are notable features, including a line of pollarded limes in front of Church Farmhouse in Manchester Road. Hedges are also a characteristic of the streetscene. Building materials in these areas vary but are predominantly brick, mainly slightly brownish dark red often with grey headers but some have more orange tones. A large number both old and modern have tile hanging above (traditionally clay peg tiles but also modern concrete imitations), typically more terracotta in colour and more prominent than the bricks. Roof tiles are predominantly plain clay or concrete tiles often in a darker brownish colour than the tile hanging. There are a few with slates. Roofs are a mixture of gabled and hipped but part-hipped ('barn hip') roofs are a more distinctive feature of many historic and modern buildings. There are also some white-painted weatherboarded cottages in Lower Street. The central area contains the doctors' surgery as well as the Blacksmiths Inn and Lower Street has the small Village Stores/ PO. These areas deserve conservation and enhancement with careful attention to preserving the fabric and setting of the historic buildings (both listed and unlisted).

Church Lane Heritage Area



Based on the Grade I listed church and other community-related buildings in a low-density wooded setting. The Methodist Church and adjacent cottage are separated from the main area but Scots pine trees provide a visual link and give coherence.

This area adjoins the extensive recreation ground which appears almost as a village green. It comprises the small medieval Church (listed grade I) with its graveyard on the edge of the ridge, the large original former Rectory dating from 1880, the greatly extended 1853 Primary School and the Schoolhouse, the 1910 Reading Room, and the extended 1871 Methodist Church. Other dwellings are of mixed age. It is linked to the other areas by Church Path. Characterised by wooded grounds with numerous hedges and trees including Scots pine and churchyard yew trees (one believed to be over 700 years old). The church is a mixture of brick and stone with a clay-tiled roof and white weatherboarded belfry. Other buildings are mainly red brick with plain clay roof tiles in typical mid-late Victorian style. This is another area of heritage value needing to be conserved and enhanced. It is also an area that forms a green wedge which, in the saved Wealden Local Plan 1998, is excluded from the village development area because of its loose-knit character and linkage to the countryside. New housing development, including intensification or redevelopment of houses on large plots, would be harmful to its character.

Other Areas of Distinctive Character in the Village

Standard Hill, High Street (south side) and Marlpits Lane (west side) are distinctive because of their semi-rural character and their position on the edge of the High Weald AONB and the Moorhall Valley Area of Locally Valued Landscape. They are distinctive not for the buildings but for the 'greenery' and semi-natural setting in many cases on the edge of ridge-top slopes. They comprise mainly ribbon development with detached houses and bungalows of individual design and periods but mainly 1930s-1960s. Some are architect-designed buildings but most are just typical of their period. Those in Standard Hill and High Street are predominantly set well back on large plots with numerous trees, shrubs and hedges, screening the buildings to varying degrees, in some cases almost completely. Grade II* Standard Hill House, the largest listed domestic building in the village, is an important feature standing at the western end of this area, next to a copse. It is the large rear gardens of Marlpits Lane that are distinctive because they are on the edge of a steep hillside in the AONB. Overall, these areas present a distinctively semi-rural quality and a very 'soft' village edge to areas of both national and local landscape value. Consequently, they warrant protection from unsympathetic intensification of development.

Standard Hill

High Street

Detailed Character Assessments for the built areas of the Parish are available on the Neighbourhood Plan pages of the Ninfield Parish Council website.https://www.hugofox.com/community/ninfield-parish-council-15069/neighbourhood-planning/

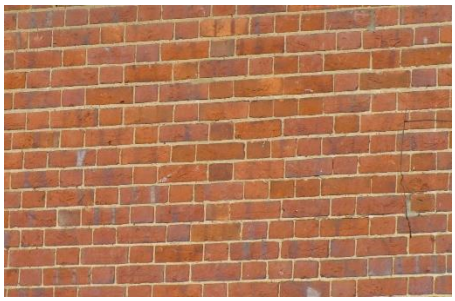
Examples of Buildings in the local Vernacular in Ninfield Parish

The buildings shown in the following photographs (and also in the preceding section) are considered to give Ninfield village and parish their sense of place. The intention is that they should be used not necessarily for replication but, above all, to provide inspiration for the design and layout of new development. This needs to be in its overall form and character, not just specific details.

Brick buildings

Early c19th brick farmhouse and converted barn with typical 'barn-hip' clay-tiled roofs behind front boundary wall and hedge on back road without kerbs

C17th and c18th brick dwellings with clay-tiled roofs (left is a single house, right 3 cottages) with mixture of gables and barn-hips, one behind garden wall and the other a hedge



Left photo - Early-mid c19th brickwork with grey brick headers (in numerous variations of Sussex Bond) is typical of many local buildings of this period. Right - late c19th brickwork

This row of detached brick-built dwellings typifies the individuality of design in the residential growth of Ninfield in the first half of the c20th. There is an overall harmony although in this case in a more rigid building line without trees and less ‘greenery’ than usual.

Tile-hung buildings

Examples of c18th cottages with clay tile-hanging on first floor behind mixture of hedges and rustic timber fencing

Early c19th house and row of three c18th cottages with tile-hung first floor, brick groundfloor and clay tiled roofs, some gabled, some barn-hipped. Mainly hedging on front boundary with kerbed pavement

Early c19th extended cottages in a mixture of tile-hanging and brickwork with front hedge. The building abutting the highway is untypical but serves to 'punctuate' the streetscene, breaking up an otherwise fairly uniform building line and creating local identity

These cottages have a distinctive series of hipped roof projections which is found on a number of old cottages in Ninfield, sometimes with gables

1990s development, left photo replicating c15th ‘Wealden Hall’ buildings. Right Photo is more typical of modern tile-hung houses in Ninfield, behind hedge with stained timber gates

This row of 1920s semi-detached houses is untypically repetitive but the clay tile-hanging compensates by reinforcing local identity

Left – c18th tile-hanging

Right – modern clay tile-hanging

Weatherboarded buildings

Converted barns with dark stained weatherboarding and clay-tiled roofs

c18th white-painted weatherboarded cottages and farmhouse with clay-tiled roofs

c18th white-painted weatherboarded cottages and farmhouse with clay-tiled roofs

Early c19th white-painted weatherboarded cottages with clay-tiled roofs

Rendered buildings

C18th cottages with clay-tiled roofs

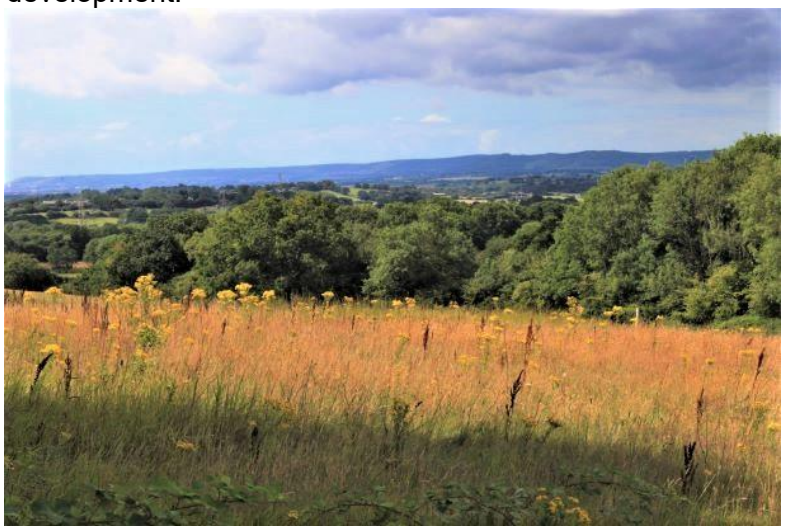
1930s public house with barn-hip roofs

The Design Guide

DG1- Responding to Site & Landscape Context

UNDERSTANDING THE SETTING OF THE DEVELOPMENT SITE

- Analyse the wider landscape and topographical setting and the relationship of the site to existing woods, fields, built settlement and routeways, to ensure robust understanding of the essential character of the area recognizing that Ninfield is a ridge-top village that preserves its significant and/or exposed side slopes free from development.



This view from Church Path and the tranquillity of this area around Church Wood, directly adjoining the village, are highly valued by the community. A proposal to build houses on this field was refused mainly due to the serious adverse impact on the landscape.

- Consider the relationship of new housing development to the existing village in terms of siting, scale, and response to setting so it is genuinely integrated into Ninfield, rather than simply a generic 'bolt-on' housing estate.
- Study historic maps and documents to understand the evolution of Ninfield so the design can reflect its sense of place.
- Consider the impact not only on designated heritage assets, such as Listed Buildings, but also on non-designated heritage assets such as other historic buildings and areas, features including historic routeways, banks, ditches, hedges, woods, trees and field patterns (which are also important for biodiversity).

LANDSCAPE

- When required (see Validation requirements for planning applications on wealden.gov.uk website), a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) should be undertaken at the very start of the design process to inform early choices not merely to justify a pre-conceived scheme.
- Ensure that the development is well-integrated into the landscape when viewed from both near and far, especially from public roads and footpaths; it should not be reliant on proposals for screen planting particularly as it often fails to become established.

The new contemporary house on the right replaced a c20th grey weathered agricultural building. Whilst innovation in design should not be stifled, in this case it is highly visible in the landscape from near and far. This arises from its position on rising ground with the only nearby trees to its rear and its shiny black material with extensive glazing gleams in the sun. In comparison, the c20th tile-hung farmhouse on the left makes a positive contribution to traditional local distinctiveness and blends into the landscape in more distant views.

- Identify existing views into and through the site to the wider landscape that need to be maintained so that they can be incorporated into the layout and design, with new buildings sited so as not to block or reduce the view significantly.
- Respond to existing built context so the scale of the new scheme does not dominate that of Ninfield village as the ‘parent’ settlement and is sensitive to the historic settlement pattern.
- Ensure existing built forms or features of significance on the edge of Ninfield village retain their historic relationship with the adjacent countryside, for example the medieval church, its churchyard and the historic route of Church Path and historic farmhouses, cottages and farmbuildings.

TOPOGRAPHY

- It is particularly important that development is sited, laid out and designed to respect the local landform of Ninfield owing to its distinctive character of ridges and slopes and the significant public views over the landscape from roads and footpaths.
- Avoid sites or parts of sites which have significant slopes as built development is likely to be unduly obtrusive or out of place, harming the appearance and character of the landscape.
- Sites which are level or only gently sloping are preferable unless they are exposed for example on the upper edge of slopes.
- New buildings and any new streets or access ways should be arranged and orientated to work with existing site levels in order to minimise ‘cut and fill’ and avoid the need for retaining structures.
- The location, scale and overall height of buildings needs to be very carefully considered in terms of their exposure and prominence in both short and longer distance views.
- The impact of levels on the accessibility of the development for future users including persons with disabilities should be a key consideration.

This housing estate of 80 houses is under construction on a more gently sloping area on the north side of the village ridge, not far from the AONB. This view from the Catsfield footpath, shows that more attention needs to be given in future to integration into the landscape. A long belt of trees required to be planted as a screen may or may not be successful in mitigating the impact in the long term.

- Layout should minimise the need for retaining structures.
- The impact of levels on the accessibility of the development for future users should be a key consideration.

WATERCOURSES

- Respond to the natural flow of water across the site, using existing and historic ditches and ponds and creating new ones to where water naturally flows, within the development site and its links with adjacent fields and woodland.
- Pay particular attention to impacts on any adjacent ancient woodland because their rare ecology is fragile and vulnerable to changes in water flow and quality.
- Storm water management should follow sustainable drainage principles using a ‘treatment train’ (directing water through a succession of techniques such as permeable paving, green roofs, swales, and ponds) and source control as a first principle.
- Where new water retention features are needed, surface level ditches and ponds should be used rather than underground storage. These will normally be located at the lowest point of the site. These should be shallow sided to appear natural, create valuable habitats and avoid the need for fencing.
- Consider re-use of rainwater in grey water systems.

RETAINING AND/OR REINSTATING SITE FEATURES

- Ninfield includes a considerable number of ancient or historic features both in the village and wider parish. These are identified in the NNDP and its Appendices, in the Landscape Study of Ninfield and in the State of the Parish Report (viewable on the Ninfield PC website). It is very important that these are conserved and enhanced and taken into sufficient account in the siting and design of new development. In those instances where they are known to have been lost, consideration should be given to their reinstatement. These features can comprise both:
- Heritage assets (designated and non-designated) such as historic buildings or other constructed features and also historic routeways, field boundaries and banks.
- Biodiversity assets, such as ancient woodland, other woodland, trees, hedgerows, grassland, watercourses and ponds.

DG2 – Connecting beyond the site

CONNECTED STREETS, LANES AND ROUTEWAYS

Connection to existing routes should aim to:

- Retain existing routeways across the site on their historic alignment and conserve their associated features such as banks and ditches.
- Conserve and enhance the ecological function of routeways, including the verges and boundary hedgerows/trees along access roads and tracks, to reflect their role in the ecological network.

PERMEABILITY

- Wherever possible create a permeable and interconnected layout.
- Integrate new development into the existing settlement so that people can walk and travel through it, rather than creating a separate self-contained 'estate', in order to encourage social and physical inclusion within the Ninfield community.

Here at Downs View the developer has left a way through to Church Path providing a view into the countryside beyond. This enables residents to access an important route to other parts of the village and to the network of footpaths in the wider landscape.

- Connect pedestrian routes where possible to the countryside beyond and consider providing public views over the countryside subject to ensuring the development does not become intrusive in the landscape as a result.

FORMING SITE EDGES AND TRANSITIONS

- Edges of any development should be defined and softened by existing, additional or new green infrastructure consistent with the local landscape character.
- Use native planting of trees and hedgerows on the boundaries to present a soft edge to the countryside, rather than presenting hard building fronts.

This view of the south side of High Street shows the very 'soft' edge created by mainly garden trees, hedges and large shrubs

DG3- Layout & Structuring the Site

PRINCIPLES OF SITE STRUCTURE

- Establish a clear relationship between streets and lanes and topography, demonstrating this through the orientation of plots in relation to the street. Incorporate sufficient space at earliest stages of site layout and plot disposition to allow for substantial soft landscaping, grass verges, hedgerows and street trees to break up the built form and maintain the important green character of Ninfield.
- Allow space for existing and new trees to grow, to avoid future conflicts between trees, residential amenity and other uses.
- Consider future sustainability at an early stage to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This should include minimizing loss of carbon storage by protecting soils and retaining grassland and trees, providing sustainable drainage that helps to restore the natural function of watercourses, mitigates against flood risk and provides habitat. Also see later section on sustainable building design.

STREET LAYOUT

- Design streets around convenient and pleasant walking and cycling experiences, rather than simply around car access, in order to encourage more sustainable travel. Provide good connections to existing routes to community facilities and bus stops. Also connect where possible to countryside rights of way, including their improvement wherever possible. Routes should be safe, welcoming, accessible, durable and clearly signposted.

Church Path links the various parts of the village to community facilities and provides a safe and pleasant route that retains its rural village character

- Reflect local character with straight or gently curved segments that change direction in response to topography, landscape features or built form. Avoid overly 'wavy' streets that do not respond to natural contours as they are not in character and can create layout problems with regard to plot definition and capacity for on-street parking.
- Use layout features, such as placement of buildings, tree planting, and street surfacing to calm traffic speeds.

This new development in nearby Catsfield has a long, shared surface road that is sympathetic to existing settlement form and scale whilst also being adequate for access and parking needs and providing space for new trees to grow

STREET HIERARCHIES

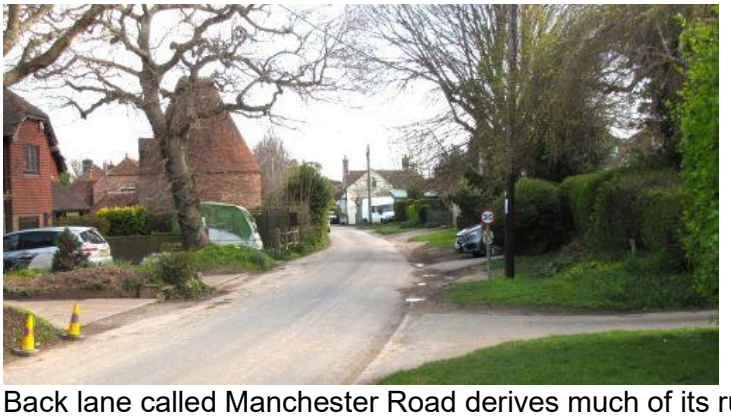
- For new housing developments involving more than a single new access road, the following hierarchy should be used:
  1. Streets that form the main access route connecting to the existing road network have the highest movement function. They should feel public in character, with the longest sight lines, and should include street trees where appropriate.
  2. Side streets are next in the hierarchy. These should have a noticeable reduction in scale, and may often not contain separate pavements.
  3. The lowest order streets will be side and back lanes. These offer only very local access and thus should be designed to be narrower, quieter, and more intimate. They would not normally contain separate pavements. Instead. they would have simple grass verges, and may lead on to courts.

This ‘lowest order street’, a shared surface section of Church Path as viewed from Lower Street, has grass verges and mainly hedges, not screen fences

- In all but the smallest of housing schemes, a variety of these street hierarchies should be deployed; a homogenous approach across the development will not be appropriate.
- Responding to and supporting the street hierarchy in three dimensions is critical. The scale of subsequent plots, buildings and trees, and the degree of building enclosure and street width to building height ratio, all should respond to the type of street.

STREET CHARACTER

- Design streets to be pedestrian friendly.
- Care should be taken to design new streets in housing schemes so they reinforce the identity of the area, and appear as rural streets and lanes, not urban or suburban housing estate roads.
- Include soft edges to streets, such as banks, verges or swales, which have both visual and ecological value.



Back lane called Manchester Road derives much of its rural character from grass verges (recently damaged by construction traffic), hedges and trees

- Stretches of standard concrete-kerbed, tarmac pavements should be avoided as far as possible as they are out of place in Ninfield, except along the A269. Their recent installation along part of the back lane called Manchester Road, as part of a new

housing development, demonstrates the harm they cause to rural character and appearance as shown in the photograph below.

In addition to urbanising road alterations, the house is also out of place on account of its stark minimalist, box-like design, contrasting with the neighbouring house which has been sympathetically extended with tile-hanging, flush roof verges and matching front gable. Not shown in the photo, is the even worse relationship with the old cottages opposite and the landscape as a further 79 similar houses are under construction on the field behind (see photo under DG1). It demonstrates a type of development that should be wholly avoided in future in Ninfield.

ACCESS TO REAR GARDENS

- Access to back gardens of terrace properties should be via cut-throughs or ‘twitten’ lanes between the buildings. Long narrow alleys between high back and side close-board fences or access through homes should be avoided.

STREET JUNCTIONS AND GEOMETRY

- Junctions should, subject to ESCC requirements, normally have minimal corner radii so pedestrians have priority across the mouth of the junction, to maintain a more intimate, human scale and character.
- Access to smaller schemes should be designed as lanes, using materials to minimise the distinction of pavements and road markings.
- Where turning heads are needed, they should be sized and shaped not only to perform their vehicle movement function, but to be a meaningful piece of public realm that relates to, and helps define, the spatial character of the place.

LOCATION OF GREEN SPACES AND OTHER PUBLIC REALM

- Arrange multi-functional public spaces of good size and shape so that they are easy to access and form part of the structure of the site. Whilst the location of green public spaces should take into account existing site landscape features, they also need to work as community gathering points. Designs should avoid pushing public spaces to the back edges of the site, as this makes them remote and hard to access and misses an opportunity to connect into the existing community.
- Streets are also public spaces in their own right and should offer opportunities for socialising and neighbourly interaction. Slow traffic speeds and wide green verges to

the street are useful in supporting the use of streets as public spaces as well as reinforcing the local character of Ninfield.

- Street furniture, detailed to reflect local character, materials and crafts, and public art can encourage social interaction if carefully designed into spaces and located at focal points.
- Green spaces in the public realm in addition to being multi-functional and attractive should also provide for surface water management, wildlife habitats and corridors, planting and structural landscaping, and improved connectivity for walking and cycling.
- Generous-sized spaces offer the opportunity to add large trees to the site and create wildflower meadows, which help to support the character of the area and can contribute to biodiversity net gain.
- Opportunities for children's play should be created across the site.
- Providing space for orchards or allotments can help reinforce local plant species and habitats, whilst being a valuable community resource.
- On-site landscape, spaces and water should be used to form a meaningful interlinking system for wildlife and landscape character, making links into the wider network to maximise the value of provision and take into account the likely effects of climate change.
- Swales and ponds should be designed to offer an ecological as well as an amenity and water management value. These features are best placed in the public realm so that they can be managed efficiently and retained in perpetuity.
- Construction management plans should be put in place to protect existing mature trees and hedges as well as ditches, embankments and other landscape features. Areas of existing and proposed open space including spaces for street trees and verges should also be protected as compaction from machinery, storage areas and relocation can damage soil health and prejudice the future ecological value of the ecological assets.
- Where required (see Validation requirements on Wealden.gov.uk website), include ongoing management proposals for the open space and habitats as part of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (to be included in the planning application).
- Wherever appropriate aim to include community ownership and stewardship to aid community cohesion.

DG4- Using Buildings to Define Streets & Spaces

RELATING BUILDINGS TO THE STREET

- Place buildings so that they have a clear and purposeful relationship with the street, including providing front doors to create an active and attractive edge.
- Align buildings with the carriageway reflecting the function and status of routeways, solar orientation, and topography.
- Arrange buildings to form the edges of courtyards accessed off the street, referencing historic farmsteads in the area.
- Avoid continuous, solid built frontage by using twittens and pathways leading from the street through to parking courts and other development and to footpaths and the countryside beyond.
- Use the siting of buildings to reinforce street character and hierarchy

The new housing (right photo) in Catsfield reflects features of the existing buildings opposite (left photo), fitting well into the setting of the lane.

BOUNDARIES AND FRONT GARDENS

- Ninfield is characterised by enclosed private front curtilages, mostly with hedges but also some walls and fences. Hedges, although requiring good maintenance, are much preferred in order to maintain the 'greenness' of the place, as well as clearly defining public and private space. Low level ornamental planting does not provide sufficient vertical boundary enclosure in the streetscene.
- Close-boarded screen fences are not an appropriate boundary treatment to define plots from the public realm. They are uncharacteristic of vernacular treatments and detract from visual quality and placemaking especially when on long highway boundary lengths or on both sides of narrow footpaths. Screen walls also need careful siting and design to avoid an overbearing effect or excessive visual dominance.

Screen fencing of rear gardens backing onto this main route is a 'blot' on the streetscene

Close-boarded fencing on either side of this extremely narrow twitten (part of a public right of way) is very unpleasant for pedestrians and out of keeping with the village.

ADDRESSING PUBLIC SPACE

- Reflect local character of ‘public fronts and private backs’ and avoid streets without building frontages.
- Buildings on corner plots should have their front doors on the highest order street. Small verges or enclosed private space should be provided between the street and the side wall of the building to avoid an urbanized appearance.
- Avoid ‘left-over’ spaces around plots as it is unclear as to whether or not they are private curtilage or public realm. They serve no visual, amenity or ecological purpose and can be difficult to manage.

DG5- The Right Built Form

DENSITY AND GRAIN OF DEVELOPMENT

- Ninfield, as identified earlier in this Guide, is mainly characterised by relatively low-medium density development (typically in the range 6dph to 15 dph net density) along pre-existing linear routes, without a nucleus, thereby resulting in a grain best described as coarse rather than fine. This character would be maintained by arranging new buildings so as to support a road pattern with buildings relating to movement routes.
- Ninfield has some buildings of higher density so variations in density across development sites in all but the smallest of schemes would help create visual interest in layout and place-making.
- Denser parts of new developments should be around key junctions, green spaces or towards the centre of the development site whereas lower densities should be used to help make the transition to the edge of the site away from the core area towards adjoining countryside.

SCALE, FORM AND MASSING OF BUILDINGS

- Demonstrate in long streetscene elevations how buildings are massed and spaced to reflect and reinforce local character. Use a mix of building sizes, arranged into distinct hierarchical groups of built scale, with attention to elements such as building lines, ridge heights and roof treatments. In combination with road layouts, use some buildings as ‘end stops’ in order to “punctuate” the street and define identifiable rows or groups of houses within larger developments.
- Existing character derives from dwellings being mainly two storeys in height, sometimes with attic-storey accommodation within roofs typically pitched at 45 degrees and this is best maintained in new developments. Wide gable spans, however, should be avoided as this results in buildings that are out of scale with existing buildings, with ridge lines that appear too high.
- Rectangular footprints can also result in buildings that are out of scale. It is preferable to follow the traditional building form with narrow gable spans and typically ‘L’ or ‘T’ shaped footprints.
- Some single-storey buildings mostly narrow footprint and sometimes weatherboarded are locally characteristic but there are very few buildings with more than 3 floors.
- Buildings should have some variations of height and width but within a narrow range so that there is a clear rhythm to the streetscene.

- Front doors should be placed on the main elevations of buildings, to articulate frontages, animating the streetscene and reinforcing local character.
- Variation within the design and distribution of buildings is supported in Ninfield but care needs to be exercised to avoid a ‘catalogue selection box’ approach as it could look too contrived.
- Repetitious use of the same or similar unit type in scale, mass and form, stamped over the site with no reference to context or character creation, should be totally avoided, since it will generally result in an unattractive monotony and feel alien in the local context. Repetition of rectangular, gable-fronted detached houses in rows fails to create a cohesive streetscene and is particularly out of place in Ninfield.

This new development in a large East Sussex village demonstrates that repetitious use of the same building form, especially rectangular gable-fronted houses, fails to create a satisfactory streetscene and combined with the high density and minimalist design looks alien in a rural village.

- Contemporary architecture can create innovative interpretations of rural vernacular buildings, tying them into the sense of place by referencing local patterns of development and building forms. However, stark or minimalist contemporary architecture with an urban character is alien in the Ninfield context.

On another part of the development in the previous photo, these houses are distinctive in their use of weatherboarding and clay tiles with striking window shapes but only on their front elevations.

This very stark and urban design at Stone Cross would not be supported in Ninfield. The materials used, the design and the high density do not fit with our village.

- Terraces should be very short and part of a strong streetscene of regular rhythm, akin to a series of attached houses. Terraces in Ninfield have traditionally been no more than 3 cottages.
- Flats, as on the existing small estates in Ninfield, should be designed to remain domestic in scale and massing, similar to two-storey houses, to form an integral and harmonious part of the streetscene.
- Deep plan buildings should be avoided since they create large, inappropriate roof volumes with excessive overall ridge height and gable width, out of keeping with traditional buildings.
- Clusters of large, detached buildings, apart from those within a low density wooded setting, are uncharacteristic of Ninfield.

DG6- Parking Strategies

INTEGRATING PARKING INTO THE DESIGN

This recent development of weatherboarded houses in another East Sussex village shows how hedge planting can give rural character to a relatively high density scheme and help reduce the obtrusiveness of cars on forecourts.

- Locate parking in a way that maintains the character of the street scene so that cars and hard-standings do not dominate.
- For larger developments, on-street parking, arranged parallel to the street edge, can be acceptable but should be broken up, allowing for crossing of the street including by those with disabilities.

- Open forecourt parking in front of houses without a front boundary enclosure is out of keeping with the character of Ninfield and detrimental to the streetscene. Double driveways should also be avoided since they create wide expanses of hardstanding that are similarly harmful. Instead, separation of plots/ driveways by hedges is encouraged to help green the street and maintain Ninfield's character.
- 'Car barns' of traditional vernacular design with tiled roofs (not flat-roofed carports) can help reinforce local character whereas a proliferation of single detached garage buildings has the opposite effect.
- Parking courtyards can effectively serve terraces or mews but should be small-scale and defined by buildings bordering the space, arranged to animate the courtyard, or bounded by appropriate planting, not enclosed by bleak runs of close-boarded fences to back gardens.
- Courtyards should be accessed from the principal street via 'twitten' lanes between buildings. Courtyards open to the street should be avoided
- There should not be excessive distance between parking courts and the front doors of the properties they serve; they need to be accessible by a clear and convenient route.

The parking is well integrated at this site in Catsfield, some have garages integral to the houses and there are additional roadside spaces nearby for residents and visitors.

DG7- Appearance and Local Details

- Aim to reinforce Ninfield's sense of place by basing it upon the form and detailing of heritage buildings using locally distinctive materials. This should be through a well-executed and detailed version of the local vernacular but may be a contemporary interpretation, drawing out key elements.

This development currently under construction, with its stained weatherboarding and clay-tiled roofs, should help reinforce local character and sense of place in the middle of Ninfield

The following built details are characteristic of Ninfield, and can be translated successfully into both traditional and contemporary designs:-

- Roof pitches for clay-tiled roofs are usually 42.5° to 45°. However, the span of the roofs is historically much less than is typical of current house forms. The latter often have steeper roof pitches and much higher ridge lines than is traditional. This can cause them to appear overdominant and noticeably out of place especially if repeated in significant numbers.
- 'Barn-hip' roof form is common on old and modern buildings alike in Ninfield. This type of part-hip is smaller than a half-hip and can help reduce bulk.
- Large boxed soffits are not characteristic of historic buildings, open eaves are a traditional characteristic as are 'flush verges' on gables, not prominent projecting bargeboards.

Although the tile hanging and barn-hip are sympathetic in principle, the wide gable span and prominent side bargeboard of the modern house appear ill-proportioned and ungainly compared to the old cottages with their narrow spans and flush verges

An example of open eaves in Ninfield.

- Dormer windows on roof slopes are not a typical feature in Ninfield. The cases that exist are mostly relatively small and in scale with the roof, typically with small gables or hipped roofs. Overly large flat-roofed dormers can be very harmful visually especially if near the ridge of the roof.

This bungalow was recently extended with a higher roof and dormers of a sympathetic size and design. The new garage has a barn-hip roof and together they have substantially improved the property both functionally and visually.

- Window heads in brick elevations typically have a curved brick arch whereas straight soldier course brick lintels are not characteristic.
- Windows on brick buildings are traditionally inset with a reveal, not flush with the outer wall surface.
- Chimneystacks help articulate buildings and the wider streetscape. Porches are typically simple canopies or open gables, occasionally monopitches.
- Extensions to existing buildings are best designed to appear subservient to the existing building and match their form and detailing. Owing to difficulty in precisely matching new and existing materials, it is usually advisable to set back the walls of the extension slightly especially where the extension joins onto the side of a front elevation. Although the angle of pitched roofs needs to match, the extension roof is usually best kept below the existing roof plane.
- Porches are typically simple canopies, open gables or monopitches. Enclosed porches need to be in scale with the dwelling and not too large.

Examples of porches in Ninfield

COLOUR

- Use the detailed High Weald AONB Colour Study ‘Guidance on the selection and use of colour in development’ which offers a palette of colours based on an in-depth study of the built and natural environment, helping to blend well into the local landscape. The colours of the materials characterising Ninfield are illustrated in the photographs in the preceding sections showing the local vernacular.

The use of traditional materials that mirror existing dwellings in the parish adds significantly to the character of the street scene. Here, a single storey bungalow on The Green was enlarged to provide a second floor. The colour palette is appropriate in Ninfield.

MATERIALS

- The roofscape should reflect and contribute to local character by using clay tiles. Clay weathers naturally in rich hues of burnt orange, rust and russet. Concrete substitutes neither weather in the same way nor possess the natural depth of hue, fading in some cases. However, clay tiles of bluer-purple colour are uncharacteristic of the area as are contrived ‘mixes’ of colours with a blotched appearance.
- Wherever possible, the historic local vernacular is best reinforced by using small module clay tiles with a camber closely resembling traditional hand-made tiles so as to avoid an entirely flat surface. These are available from a number of national tile manufacturers.
- Local bricks vary in colour due to subtle changes in the underlying clays. Bricks are predominantly medium-dark slightly brownish-red. Grey headers are also characteristic of c19th buildings in local variations of Sussex brick bond (rather than normal stretcher bond). However, lighter red bricks are more typical of late Victorian buildings and dark brownish stock bricks are found on some 1920s-30s houses.
- Also characteristic of Ninfield, in addition to full height brick buildings, are tile-hung buildings. Typical is a brick ground floor with a first floor clad in tile hanging usually of a deep terracotta colour that stands out more than the fairly subdued tones of most brickwork. Preferably, the cladding material should continue all the way around the first floor of a building, not just the front elevation, unless it is an integral part of the architectural design. Tile-hung buildings are more locally distinctive than brick which is widespread over most of Britain. Its use for first-floor cladding is strongly supported for new buildings but, on larger developments, also in combination with brick and weatherboarding (brown-black and/or white).
- Weatherboarding (horizontal shiplap, not vertical or tongued and grooved boarding or rainscreen cladding) is also found on historic buildings in Ninfield. Although in lesser numbers than brick and tile, it is very distinctive and adds to sense of place. Timber weatherboarding for cottages is traditionally painted white whereas for farm

buildings it is usually black-painted or tarred. High quality timber weatherboarding can be successfully left natural and oiled as part of a contemporary architectural approach. The inclusion of weatherboarding, whether white or dark brown stained, in developments is supported as it provides an appropriate contrast with brick and tile-hanging. It helps create successful streetscenes appropriate to a High Weald village.

- The use of local wood for framing; weatherboarding; boundary treatments such as riven post and rail fencing, is strongly supported and helps with the sustainable management of local woodland.

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING DESIGN

As part of any new scheme, we would like to see the issue of sustainability addressed in a meaningful way from the outset. This would include:

- Efficient use of natural resources during construction, operation and maintenance of new homes contributes to mitigating climate change.
- Sunlight and energy efficiency should be considered as an integral part of the layout through passive solar design and natural ventilation systems, orientating buildings wherever possible to maximise the use of solar energy.
- Sustainable building design is encouraged, minimising energy and water consumption for example by using:-
    - small-scale renewable and low or zero carbon energy sources such as solar panels and air-source or ground-source heat pumps (instead of oil or gas boilers or mains electricity);
    - rainwater collected in water butts, and/or underground tanks for washing machines and WCs depending on the size of the house, also by recycling grey water;
    - sustainable construction methods that minimise waste;
    - materials from renewable resources such as locally produced wood to support the sustainable management of woodland and reduce transport costs;
    - minimal lighting and glare from windows, protecting dark skies;
    - facilities to enable recycling of waste and other resources.
- Developments should also consider whole-life performance and costs and take a ‘fabric first’ approach – that is by maximising the performance of the components and materials that make up the building fabric itself before considering the use of artificial heating and cooling systems or ‘add-on’ equipment that may impact adversely on the appearance of buildings, particularly in landscape views.
- Provide scope for flexible and accessible accommodation to meet future needs.

DG8- Ancillary & Storage

- Consider as an integral part of the design, what provision needs to be made for waste and recycling containers in a way that does not detract from the street scene.
- Preferably use locally-sourced timber for storage solutions that support local character and sustain the productive woodland landscape.
- For flats, waste and cycles storage should be integrated into the building.
- New residential development should aim to have underground utility cabling, not overhead power or telephone lines on poles, and wherever possible, opportunities taken to relocate existing overhead services underground.

DG9 - Detailing the Street

SURFACES AND MATERIALS

- Reference local street surfaces and materials rather than standard approaches and be careful to avoid urbanisation of the locality.
- Using permeable paving to avoid excessive water run-off but, if ground conditions are unsuitable, for example impermeable clay, positive drainage provision should be made to avoid surface water accumulation.
- Surfaces should be accessible to those of limited mobility and assist those with disabilities to sense when moving from a safe space to one where they might encounter bicycles or vehicular traffic.
- Kerbs and painted lines should only be used where absolutely necessary for highway safety requirements. Instead use the width and scale of roads, or surfacing changes, to indicate which highways have priority. As previously stated, granite/ stone setts or grass verges characterise Ninfield's roads (except for the A269) whereas concrete kerbs cause undesirable urbanisation.

SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING

- Signage should aim to be be minimal so as to avoid street clutter.
- Lighting should be minimal so as to preserve Ninfield's intrinsically dark night landscape and skies. Detailed guidance about how to protect this increasingly rare environmental asset is provided in a separate paper, and includes:-
    - Only installing lighting, including street lights, where it is absolutely necessary, and in those cases where it is necessary:-.
    - Using passive infrared lights (PiRs) on building access points (e.g. porch lights), low-level bollard lighting on key public routes, and wall-mounted lighting within parking areas; and
    - Ensuring that it conforms to the Institute of Lighting Standards, is directed downwards and capable of night time switch-off.

DG10 - Reinforcing Local Planting Character & Habitats

PLANTING

- A fundamental requirement, in order to maintain the essentially rural character of Ninfield, is that new development should be designed with attractive, locally-appropriate native planting schemes both in the public realm and as boundaries to dwellings. It is essential that this is an integral part of the design, not an afterthought, and that sufficient space is provided.
- Use a multi-layered planting strategy across the site (trees, hedgerow boundaries, open spaces, gardens, and grassland verges) to provide a range of vegetation heights and habitats.
- Use native hedging plants and shrubs such as hazel, hawthorn, guelder rose, dogwood, and field maple. Front garden hedges adjacent to footways can be successfully created from a mixture of hornbeam, beech and hazel for example, to maintain rural character.
- Use trees such as oak, hornbeam, field maple, and birch, including new mature

trees. Planting of Scots pine trees is encouraged as they contrast with deciduous trees, are green in winter and are a characteristic feature of Ninfield. Many of the existing Scots pines are over-mature, being associated with the historic buildings and structures. Similarly, orchard trees such as apples, crab apples and cherries are also encouraged.

- Native wildflowers are an integral part of the area's ecosystem and should be included in landscaping schemes, in order to help redress their widespread loss.
- Avoid areas of ornamental shrubs (e.g. berberis, pyracantha, photinia, mahonia) and locally non-native or invasive species (e.g. laurel, leylandii, rhododendron and cotoneaster). Avoid imported topsoil which could introduce pests and diseases.

The mature hedge is retained and extended with similar planting here in Catsfield.

WILDLIFE

- Maximise opportunities to support characteristic wildlife and retain/provide habitats.
- Strengthen and improve habitat corridors and avoid barriers to connectivity by roads and paths. Where necessary mitigate impact on connectivity through the use of connections e.g. touching tree canopies and wildlife culverts.
- Create safe places and/or nesting opportunities supplemented by nest and roost boxes for species such as pipistrelle. long eared bats, swifts, swallows, house sparrows and starlings.

The End