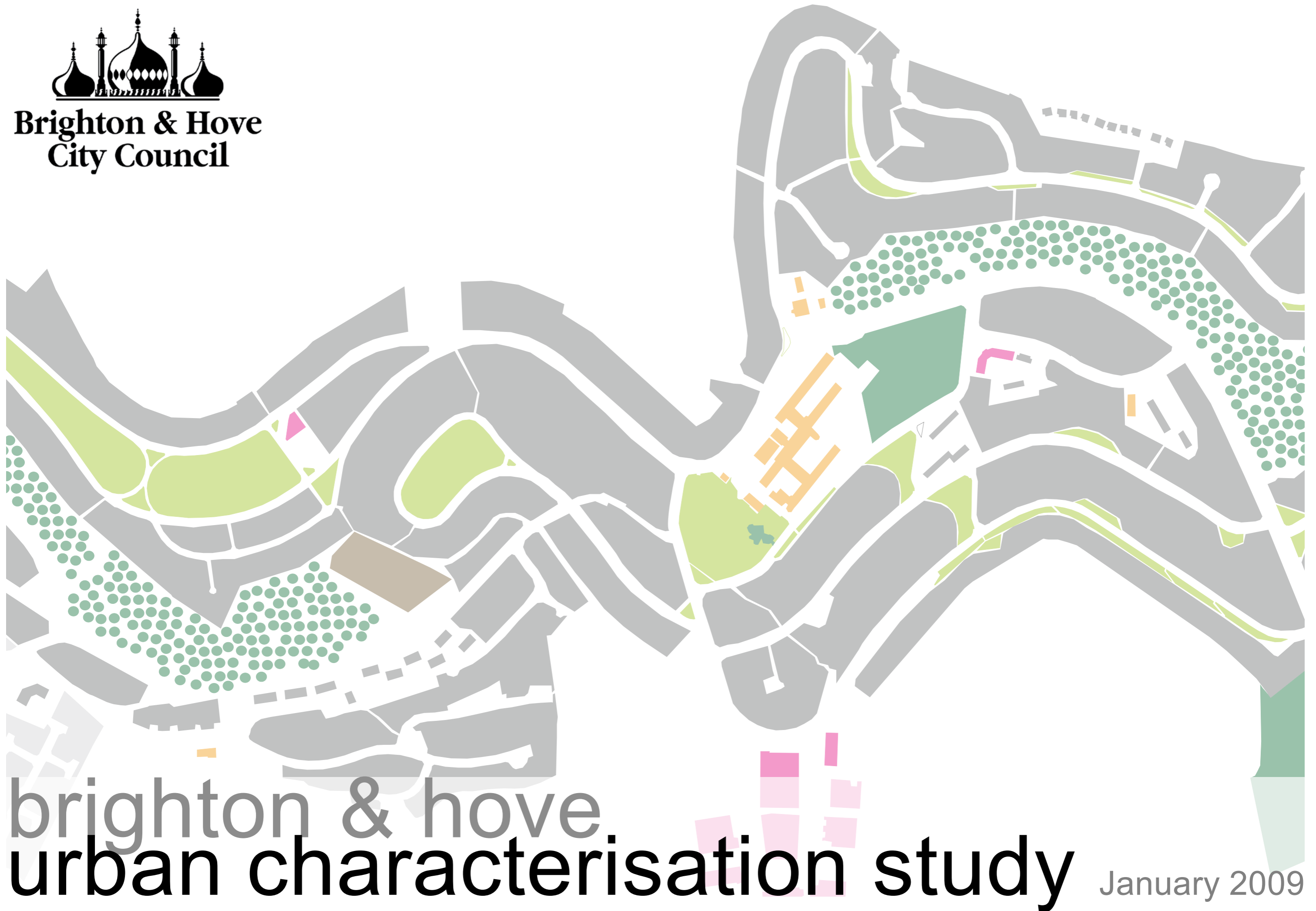




**Brighton & Hove
City Council**



brighton & hove
urban characterisation study

January 2009

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urban characterisation study

forward

This study has been produced by the City Planning Team as part of the 'evidence gathering process' necessary to inform the Council's emerging Local Development Framework.

I commend it to you as a comprehensive piece of city-wide urban analysis and character assessment, which provides an understanding and appreciation of Brighton & Hove's many and varied neighbourhoods.

Cllr. Geoffrey Theobald OBE,
Cabinet Member for Environment

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introduction

1.1 purpose of the study

Brighton and Hove is an historic English city and resort. It is famous for its cosmopolitan lifestyle, elegant Regency architecture, its iconic Victorian seafront and its high quality churches. It has expanded progressively during the 19th and 20th Centuries along the coast and onto the downs. During the later part of the 20th Century the city has undergone significant redevelopment to meet changing needs and aspirations.

Delivering quality change that safeguards the best of the city's urban character and secures positive improvements elsewhere requires a clear understanding of the city's urban character, past influences that have shaped its appearance, for better or worse, and the current trends and pressures upon it.

This study aims to provide that understanding through analysis of the city's urban structure and its neighbourhoods. It will help guide decisions about the location, form and type of future development, and more particularly will inform the Core Strategy component of the City Council's Local Development Framework.

The study aims to provide a comprehensive and objective 'evidence based' document that can provide a starting point for how future developments might contribute positively to the evolving urban character of the city.

Seafront from the Palace Pier



1.2 document background

Brighton and Hove has rich and diverse patterns of development. To a greater or lesser degree each district or neighbourhood within the city exhibits particular urban characteristics unique to that area, and which give it its sense of place or local distinctiveness, and which in turn may contribute to a sense of civic pride and local well being. There may also be characteristics or features that have a negative effect.

For nearly 40 years the city council has focused on preserving the special character and appearance of areas of special architectural quality or historic interest by designating conservation areas. These areas now account for 20% of the built up area. Elsewhere, and more recently, the concept of delivering an 'urban renaissance' through the application of tried and tested urban design principles has been used to regenerate inner city areas. With growing pressure to provide increased housing and services there is also now a need to consider sustainable development objectives including making best use of land.

Most development change is small and incremental. In some cases however the change may be large with a more immediate and dramatic effect. But in either case it is incumbent upon the council to consider the effect such change, large or small, will have on the special and unique identity of the city, and the particular qualities of its neighbourhoods.



North Laine shopping street

1.3 background policy

National planning policy statements

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development: The government is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment, and requires a high level of protection for the most valued townscapes. It recognises that the condition of our surroundings has a direct impact on the quality of life and that the conservation and improvement of the natural and built environment brings social and economic benefits for local communities. It advises that development plan policies and planning decisions should be based on up-to-date information on the environmental characteristics of the area.

PPS12 Local Development Frameworks: It is important that local planning authorities have an understanding of what exists already before deciding what to change. Background documents are required, which provide a robust evidence base for future planning policy documents.

Local planning policy

Brighton & Hove Local Plan: policy QD2 requires that all new developments should take into account local neighbourhood characteristics, including built form, street layout, topography and natural landscape, landmarks and views, linkages with available local facilities, and patterns of movement.

Victorian suburb



introduction

1.4 methodology

The Urban Characterisation Study aims to identify, analyse and describe in a systematic and objective way those elements or combination of elements that help to form the character of a place.

Using best practice developed by the Countryside Agency for Landscape Character Assessment, the city can be broken down into distinct landscape character types. Within these landscape types the city can be broken down into neighbourhoods based on local association.

To obtain an understanding of relationships between topography, settlement patterns and developments in human activity each neighbourhood has been analysed against the following criteria:

- **Historic influences**
- **Settlement typology**
- **Topography and microclimate**
- **Land Use**
- **Scale and density**
- **Architecture**
- **Socio-economic characteristics**
- **Movement**
- **Open space**

The criteria chosen have been adapted from best practice provided by a number of key urban design publications including:

1. By Design: urban design in the planning system towards better practice: DETR
2. Urban Design Compendium: English Partnerships & The Housing Corporation
3. Towards an Urban Renaissance: Urban Task Force

1.5 structure

The first part of this study is structured to give an initial city wide context, providing a brief overview of how topography and historic human activity have shaped the four landscape types within the city. Other key criteria have been identified that have had a profound effect on the development of the city, its visual character and how it functions.

The detailed character assessments for each neighbourhood are arranged under the four landscape character types so that they can be easily located. These are:

- 1. Urban Coastal**
- 2. Urban**
- 3. Suburban Downland Fringe**
- 4. Downland Settlements**

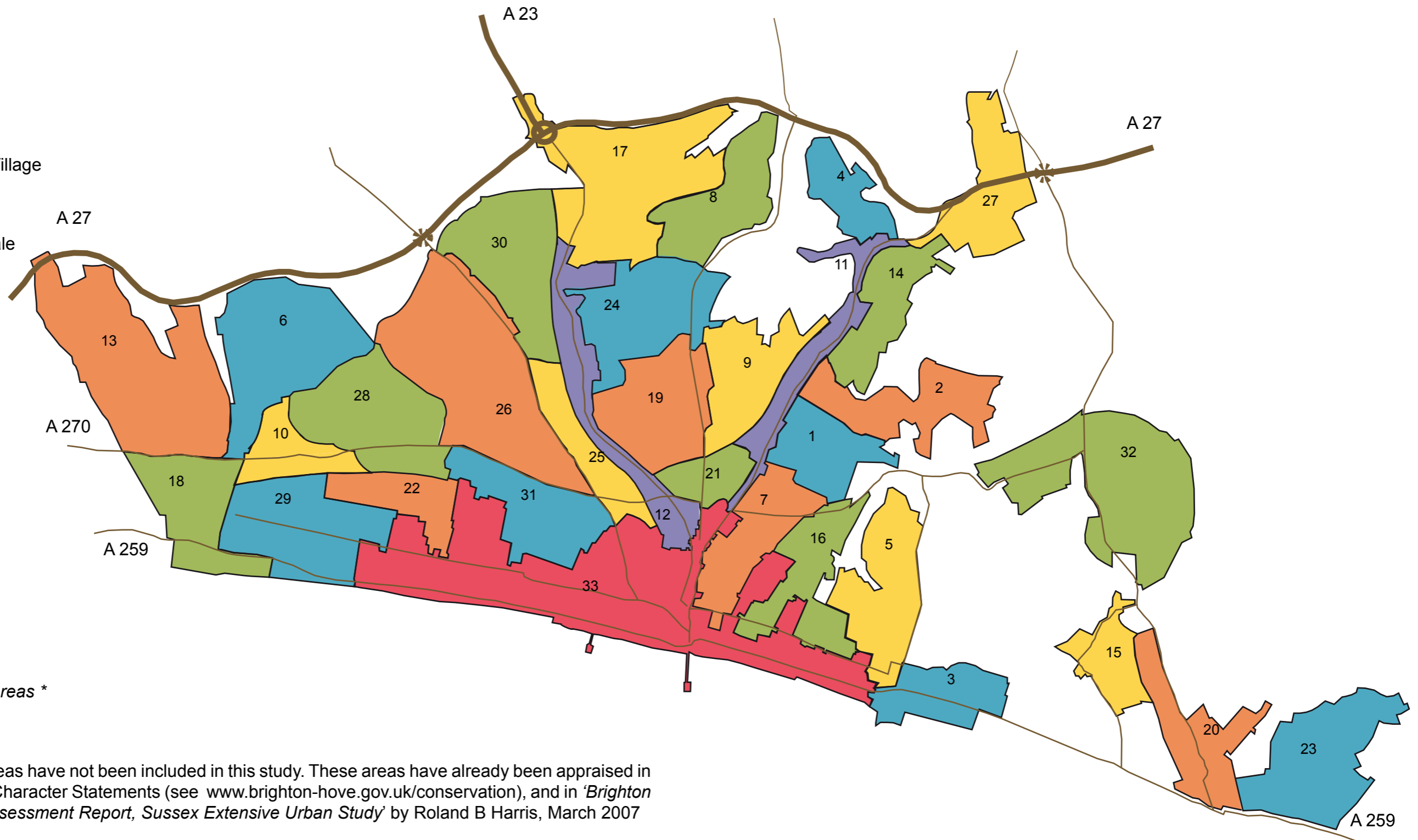
The study identifies different townscape types within the city. These have been mapped and interpreted to produce a broad quality assessment of the city's landscape.



map of neighbourhoods

key to neighbourhoods

- 1 Bear Road
- 2 Bevendean
- 3 Black Rock
- 4 Coldean
- 5 East Brighton
- 6 Hangleton
- 7 Hanover & Elm Grove
- 8 Hollingbury
- 9 Hollingdean
- 10 Knoll
- 11 Lewes Road
- 12 London Road
- 13 Mile Oak & Portslade Village
- 14 Moulsecomb
- 15 Ovingdean
- 16 Pankhurst & Craven Vale
- 17 Patcham
- 18 Portslade-by-Sea
- 19 Preston
- 20 Rottingdean
- 21 Round Hill
- 22 Sackville
- 23 Saltdean
- 24 Surrenden
- 25 Tivoli & Prestonville
- 26 Tongdean
- 27 University
- 28 West Blatchington
- 29 West Hove
- 30 Westdene & Withdean
- 31 Wilbury
- 32 Woodingdean
- 33 *Central Conservation Areas **



* The Central Conservation Areas have not been included in this study. These areas have already been appraised in individual Conservation Area Character Statements (see www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/conservation), and in 'Brighton & Hove: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Study' by Roland B Harris, March 2007

visual character

relationship between topography and views



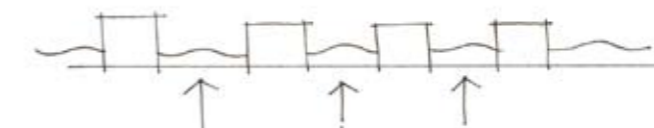
Developed valleys with views out to surrounding downland



Undulating landscape allowing glimpses to the countryside beyond



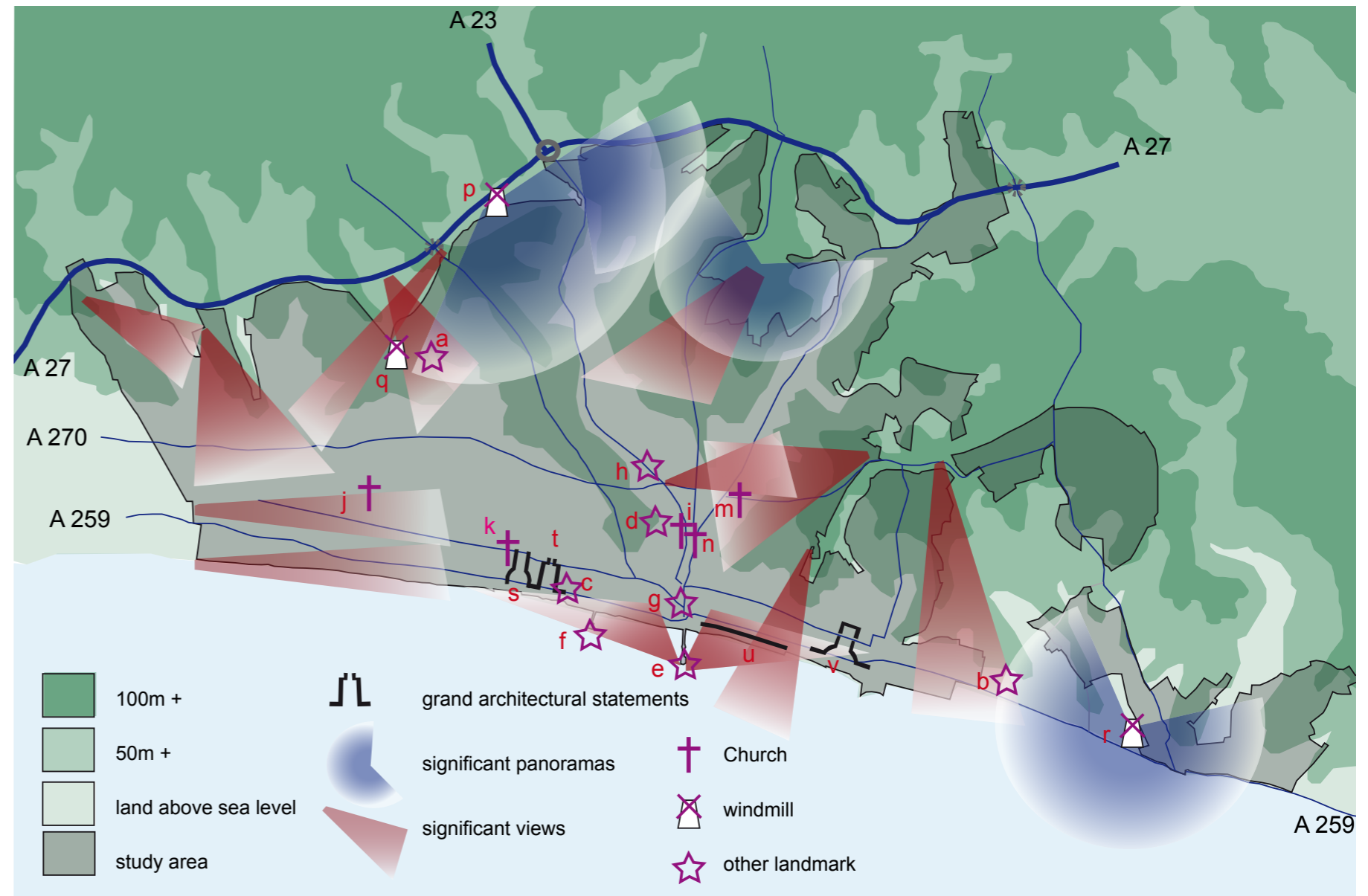
Steep slopes allowing for city-wide panoramas



Gently sloping landscape allowing glimpses down to the sea

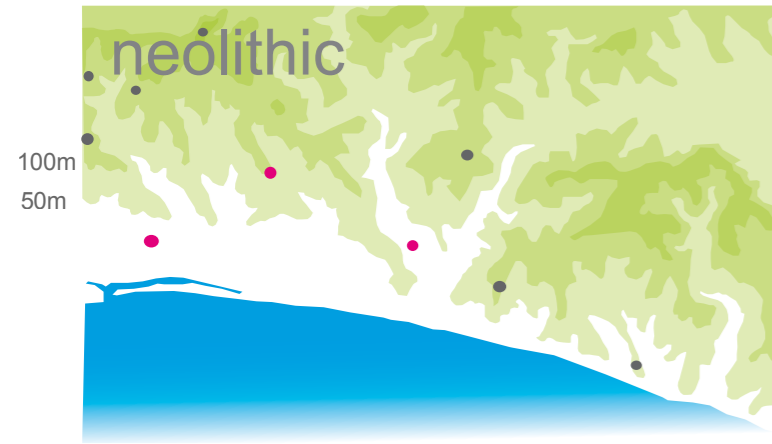


significant views and landmarks



historic development

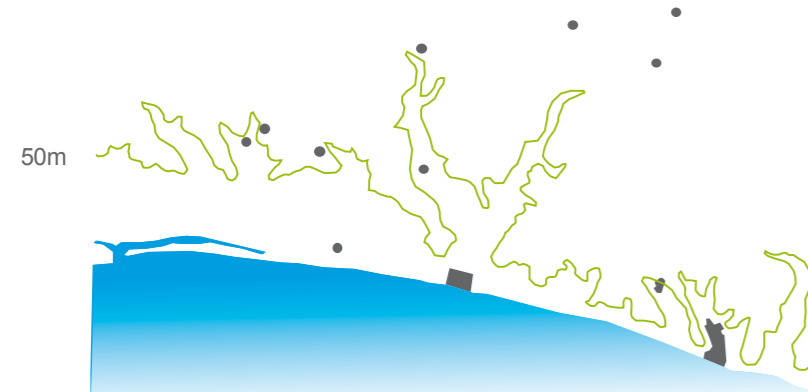
urban growth



Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements were once located on the high ground along the coast within the Brighton area. Later a Roman Villa was located within the Preston area. It was not until the early Saxon Period that the settlement of 'Brighthelmstone' grew up at the point where the Downs met the sea.

During the medieval period the settlement developed into a fishing village surrounded by agricultural holdings on the adjacent hills. During the sixteenth century the town grew with the success of the fisheries. By the 1640s Brighton was one of the largest and most important towns in Sussex. Its success however was short lived due to military attacks and a resulting decline in the fishing industry. Severe storms destroyed most of the town in 1703 and 1705.

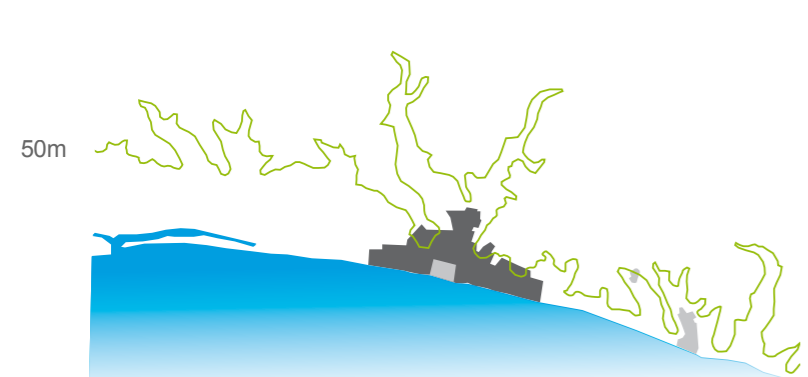
medieval



Fishing remained an important industry up until the town began to develop into a resort in the 1730s. Nearby Shoreham was an important port used to distribute timber from the Baltic and Canada to smaller towns along the south coast.

Brighton began to develop into a holiday and health resort with the popular publications of local figure Dr Russell. He was an advocate of the curative powers of bathing in seawater and by 1750 was sending many of his patients to Brighton. He encouraged local businessmen from Lewes to invest in Brighton. This saw the growth in visitor facilities such as libraries, lodging houses, baths, shops and the selling of luxury goods. With this came a wealth of service trades and general building trades to support the development. With London traffic came an increase in the transport trades such as blacksmiths, stables, coachmakers and saddlemakers.

1750-1850



The small fishing village town transformed into a modern Georgian town with its focus in the Old Steine. At this time there was no promenade. The town of Brighton expanded onto surrounding farmland. Much of this was still cultivated in the strip farming system. Terraced housing developed over the historic field pattern, which can be still seen today in the street pattern of the North Laine in particular. By the time George, Prince of Wales arrived in 1783 Brighton had already established itself as 'the nation's premier resort town'.

key

- extent of urban growth at start of period
- urban growth during this period

1850-1900



The early nineteenth century saw the greatest growth in population and Brighton was one of the fastest growing towns in England. The major developments of Brunswick Town and Kemp Town, built as locations for wealthy visitors, saw an increase in manufacturing and servicing for local needs. These included iron and brass foundries, brick and lime kilns, furniture making, food processing and a rapid expansion in tourism. Much of this development was within the flatter land of Hove seafront, however linear development had started to grow up along the main routes. These routes followed the floors of dry valleys into the centre of the town.

The arrival of the railways in the 1840s saw an increase in heavier engineering and an increase in visitors, particularly day trippers. Middle-class families began to commute to London and so the fashionable inner suburbs of Preston and Cliftonville grew up around train stations.

1900-1945



Developments in public and private transport meant that Brighton and Hove could expand even further into its rolling hinterland. The city doubled in size with the building of inter-war garden suburbs and large detached homes with sea views.

Notable developments since the Second World War have been the Brighton Marina and the Universities.

1945 - 2001



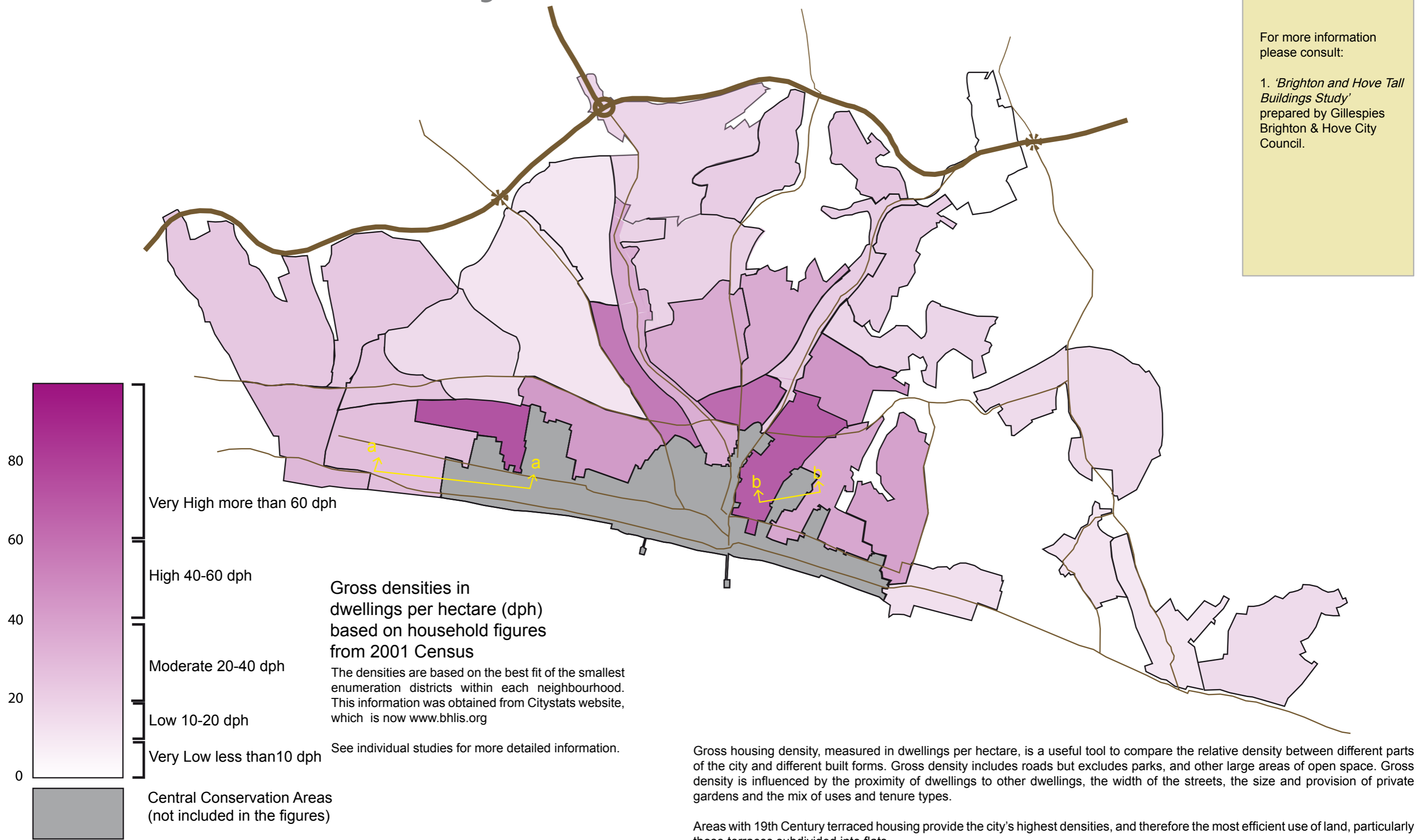
For more information please consult:

1. *'The Encyclopedia of Brighton'*
T Carder, 1990
ISBN 086 147 3159
2. *'The Encyclopedia of Hove and Portslade, Vol. 1-13'*
J Middleton, 2003
3. *'Brighton & Hove: Historic Character Assessment Report, Sussex Extensive Urban Study'*
Roland B Harris, March 2007

scale & density

For more information please consult:

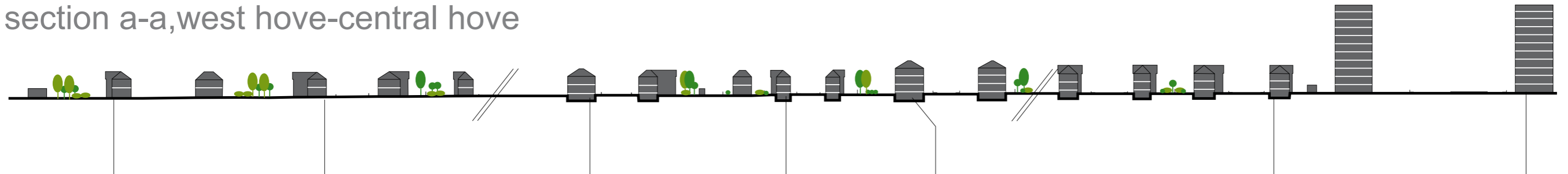
1. 'Brighton and Hove Tall Buildings Study' prepared by Gillespies Brighton & Hove City Council.



scale & density

The sections below show examples of how density fluctuates across the city due to building type. Net density is the ratio of the dwellings to the plot sizes, in dwellings per hectare, and does not include roads and pavements.

section a-a, west hove-central hove



Two storey semi-detached houses:
net density = 33 dph



Two storey semi-detached houses:
net density = 23 dph



Four storey terraced houses divided
into flats: net density = 160 dph



Three storey semi detached
houses: net density = 66 dph



Four/five storey semi detached
houses converted to flats:
net density = 116 dph

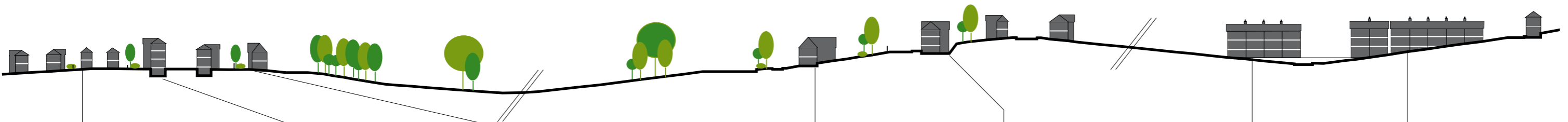


Three storey semi detached
houses converted to flats:
net density = 88 dph



Eleven storey flats:
net density = 184dph

section b-b, hanover-queen's park-pankhurst & craven vale



Two storey terraced houses, with
small rear patio gardens:
net density = 203 dph



Three storey terraced houses,
some divided into flats:
net density = 150 dph



Large 2-3 storey detached/semi-
detached houses with front and
rear gardens: net density = 12 dph



Large two storey detached/semi-
detached houses, some divided
into flats: net density = 47 dph



Two storey terraced houses:
net density = 98 dph



Three storey flats set in amenity grassland: net density= 56 dph



movement

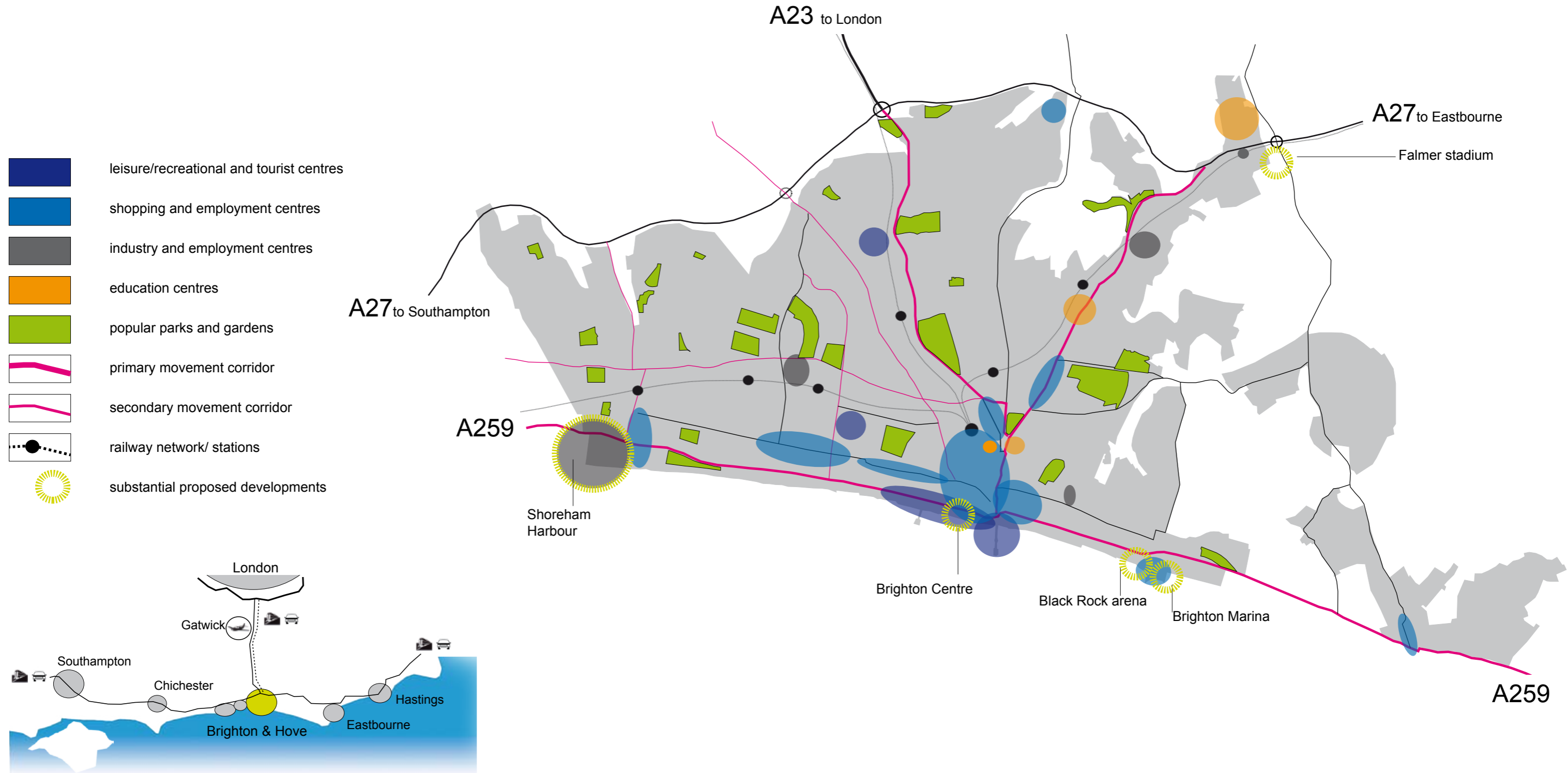
Located on the south coast, Brighton & Hove is part of a chain of coastal towns and cities linked via the A27 from Southampton to Hastings. The city is directly linked to the capital by the A23 and rail.

The 180 degree nature of the city means that Brighton's main movement corridors radiate in from surrounding suburbs and countryside into a dispersed city centre. Unlike many other cities with a 360 degree layout, these routes come to an abrupt end at the Palace Pier requiring vehicular traffic to move parallel to the shore.

Many of the centres of activity are arranged along corridors. Many of the city's leisure, recreational and tourist attractions are located along the seafront and the A259 coast road while a block back from the sea there is a retail corridor stretching from Church Road in Hove, along Western Road, North Street, to the top of St. James's Street in Brighton. The city's universities are located along the A270, Lewes Rd creating an 'academic corridor' from the A27 into the centre of Brighton. The London Road corridor is predominantly residential in character.

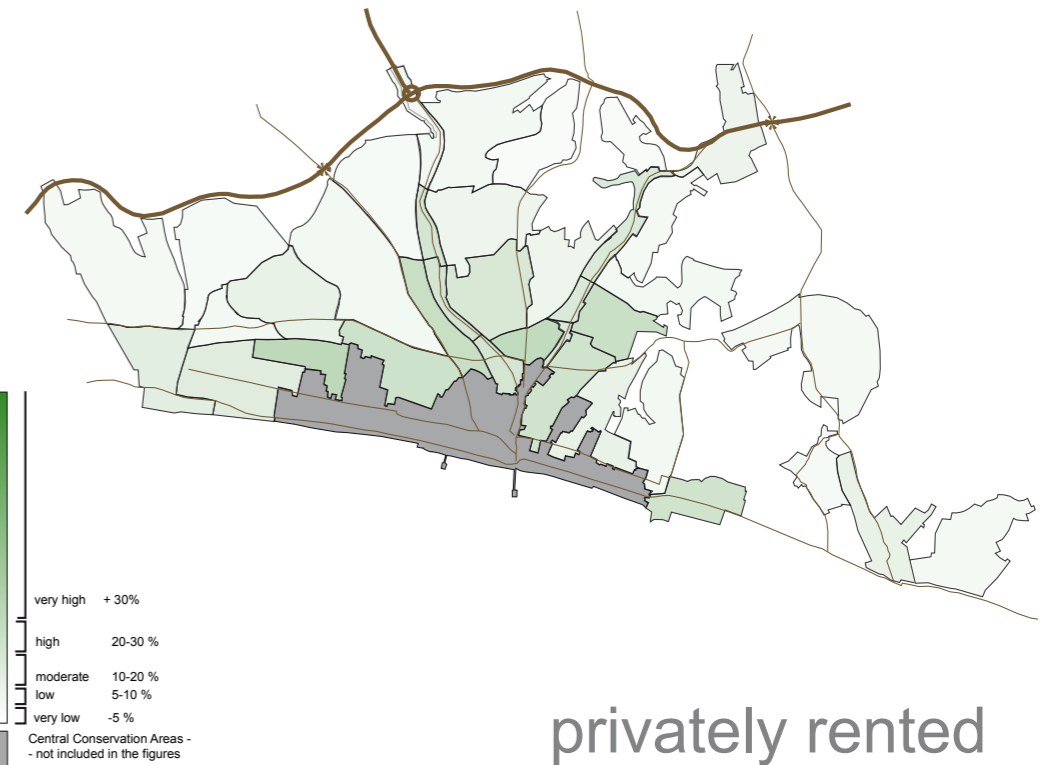
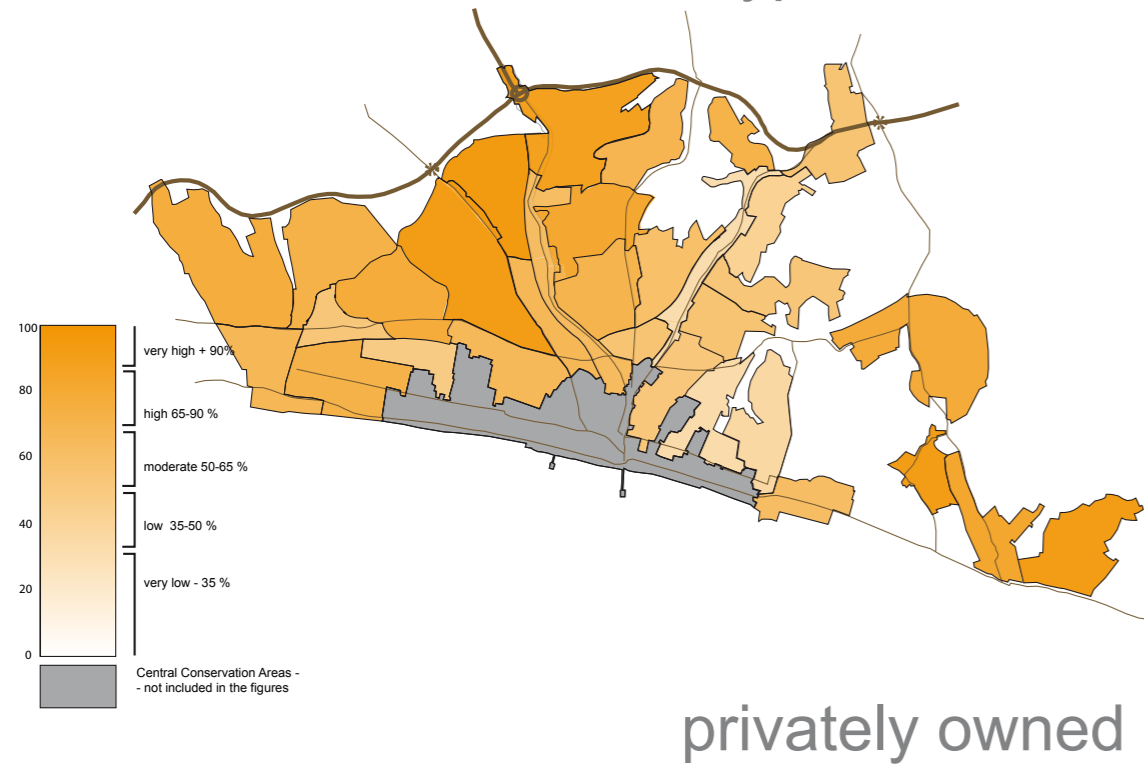
For more information please consult:

1. 'Brighton and Hove Tall Buildings Study' Gillespies Brighton & Hove City Council.
2. 'Brighton and Hove Legibility Study: Public Space Public Life' Gehl Architects Brighton & Hove City Council



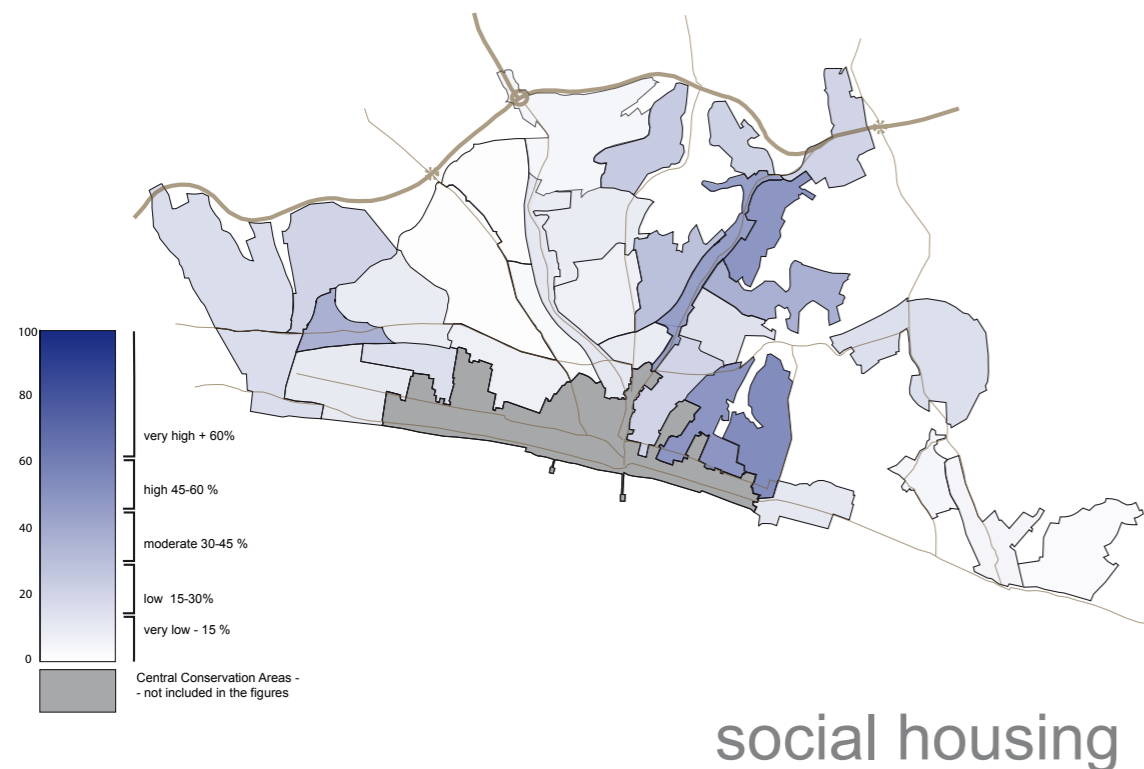
socio-economics

concentrations of tenure type



The household data is taken from the 2001 census and is based on the best fit of the smallest enumeration districts for each neighbourhood. The data was obtained from Citystats website, which is now www.bhlis.org

See individual neighbourhood studies for more detailed information



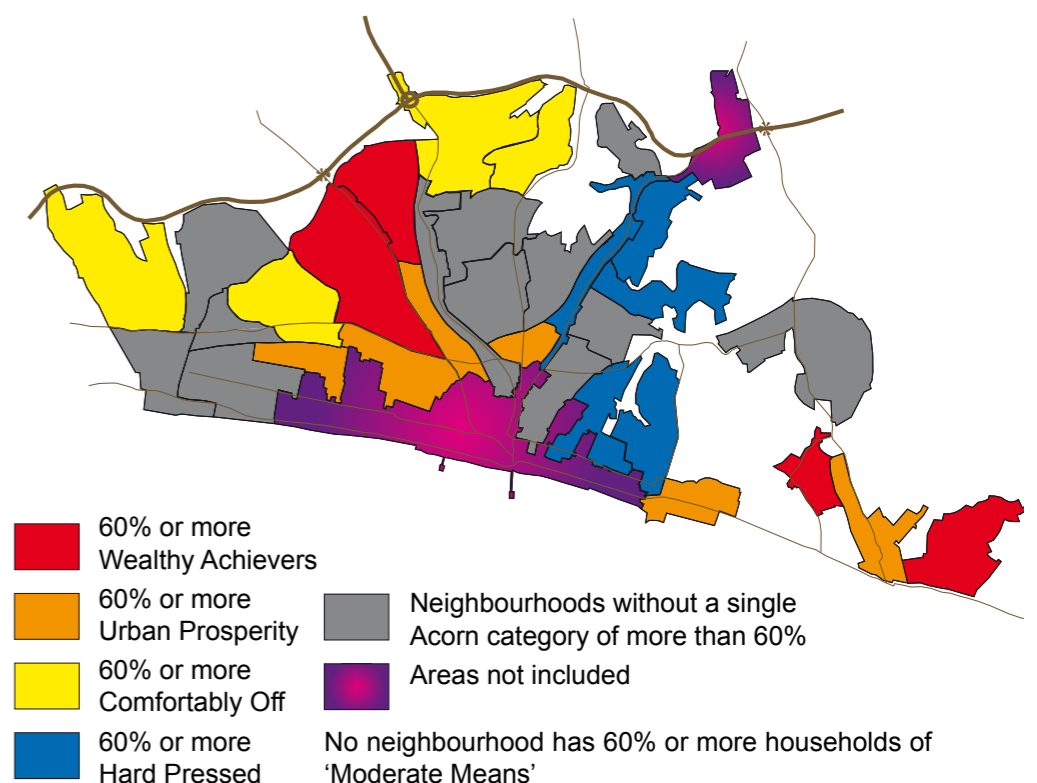
concentrations of demographic types

The concentration of different tenure type is reflected in the concentrations of demographic types across the city. The map shows the main concentrations (60% or more of households) of demographic types, although there are pockets of different demographic types within most neighbourhoods. These demographic types are set by Acorn Data, and were sourced from citystats website (now www.bhlis.org). The main five Acorn categories are described as:

- Wealthy Achievers
- Urban Prosperity
- Comfortably Off
- Moderate Means
- Hard Pressed

These are then broken down into 56 different types. A further Unclassified type, 'mostly communal population', is particularly apparent in this city with a significant student population. The University neighbourhood has therefore not been included in this diagram.

A more detailed Acorn profile is shown at the end of every neighbourhood appraisal to give an in depth insight into the neighbourhoods' socio-economic background.



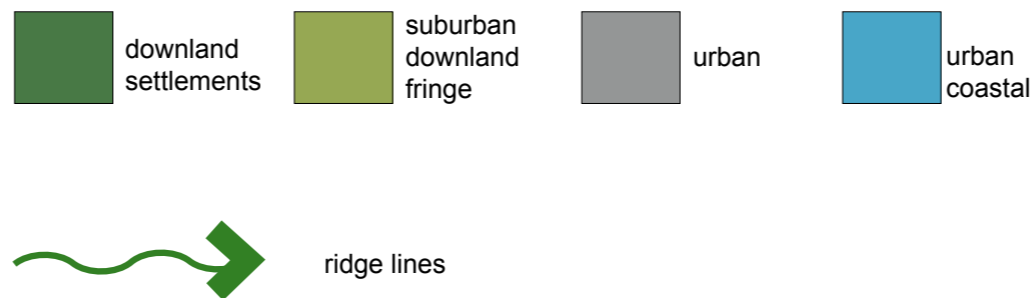
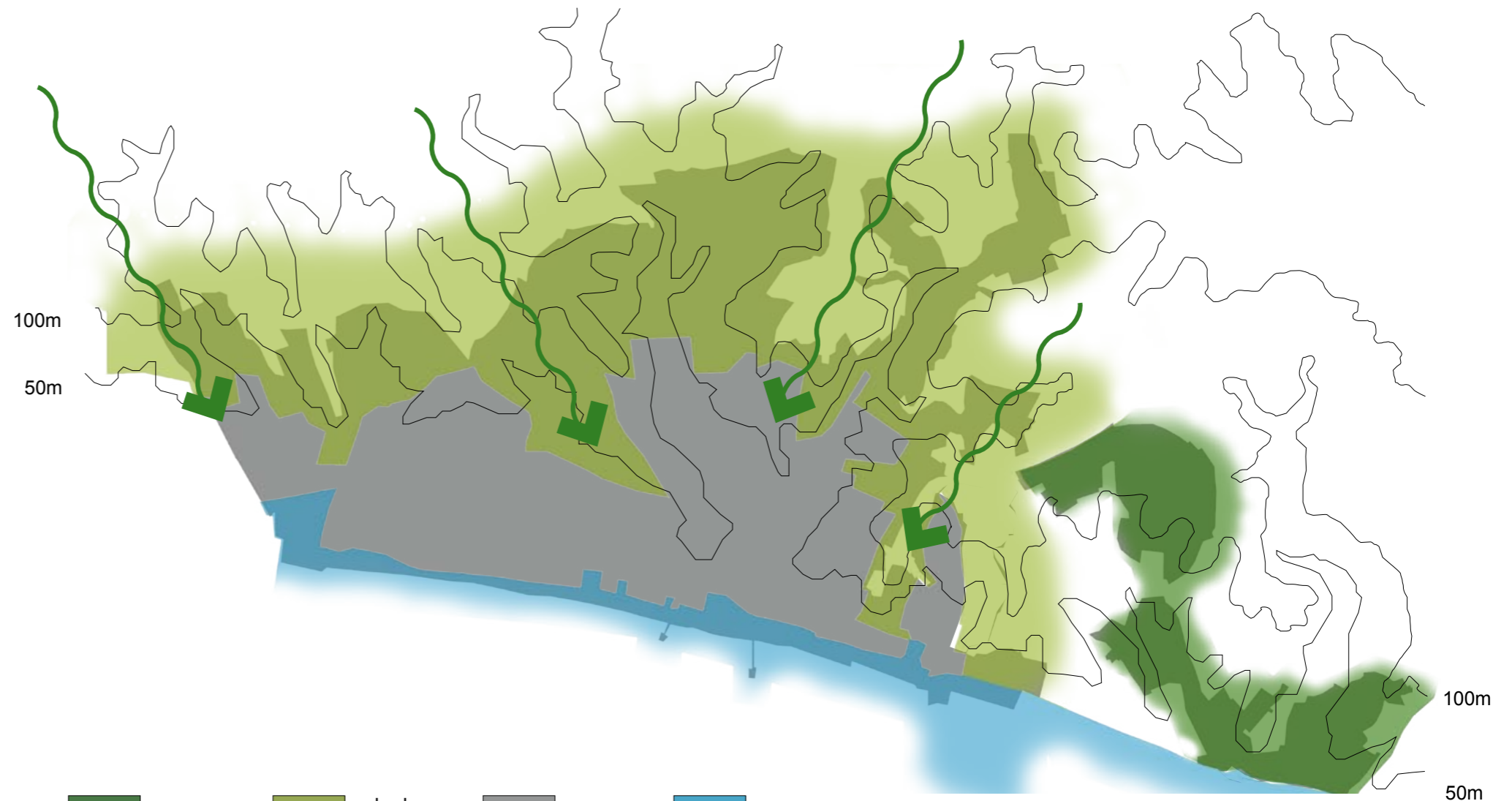
landscape character

Brighton & Hove sits over upper and middle chalk formations creating a smooth rolling relief. The broad rounded ridges and sweeping dry chalk valleys extend into the city. These ridgelines bring a mosaic of woodland and grassland into the urban environment creating a distinct setting for the city between rolling downland and the sea.

The topography, developments in transport, and Brighton & Hove's historical legacy of a seaside resort, have all shaped its urban landscape and influenced the patterns of settlement that we see today. The landscape of the city can be broken down into four distinct landscape character types:

1. Urban Coastal
2. Urban
3. Suburban Downland Fringe
4. Downland Settlements

Each is characterised by its own distinct and influential mix of elements, including geology, topography, vegetation, land use and settlement patterns. The following pages describe each landscape type in turn.



For more information please consult:

1. *'The Landscape of the Sussex Downs (1996). A Landscape Assessment of the Sussex Downs'* published by the Countryside Commission and the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.
2. *'Brighton-Peacehaven-Newhaven, Urban Fringe landscape study'* published by the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.
3. www.citywildlife.org.uk

urban coastal landscape

The urbanised coastline that we see today has evolved over several centuries. It wasn't until 1724 that the first groynes were constructed to protect the town from erosion and storms. The groynes allowed the gradual build-up of the shingle beach, 15 foot deep in places, helping to protect the fragile cliffs and town above. The western cliffs in front of the old town were first protected by a wall in 1811. This was gradually extended. The sea wall ran from the Chain Pier to Brunswick Town in Hove. The cliffs to the east of the town rise to 135 feet above sea level, between Rottingdean and Saltdean, and have been noted for their geological significance. It was not until 1838 that a sea wall was built to protect the crumbling cliffs. Madeira Drive was constructed in 1872.

The development of Brighton & Hove as a seaside resort has greatly influenced the appearance of the seafront. The development of formal architectural set pieces exploiting sea views to the best effect, arranged around formal squares and gardens, to house those coming to bathe and take the air, dominate the seafront. The reclaiming of the beach from the sea over time has meant that the beach itself could be developed. Once used as the fish market and other uses associated with the fishing industry, the arches now accommodate a range of bars, clubs, restaurants and shops.

The arrival of the railways brings visitors and day trippers to the city. It has also allowed the Shoreham Port to develop and so with it came terraces to house its workers.

- topography Low lying beach rising to chalk cliffs.
- geology Upper chalk formation.
- hydrology Free draining chalk formation and raised flint beach.

dominant landscape elements:

buildings Low-mid rise seafront facades with some high rise. The two piers are prominent landmarks along the coast line as are the cliffs in the distance. Port development to the west. Victorian promenades, arches and colonnades in the centre. High quality examples of Regency and Victorian seafront engineering and architecture, including piers.

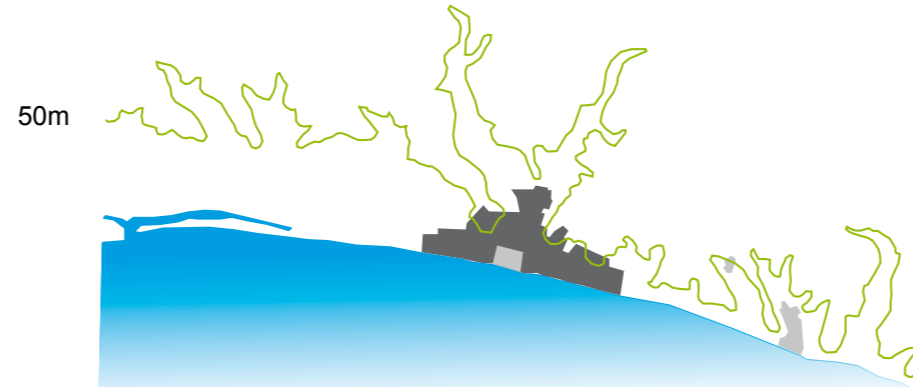
landscape archeology Cliffs to the east are designated both an SSSI and RIGS containing many large fossil remains.

land cover Flint pebble beach, wide paved promenade interspersed with amenity grass lawns and shallow man-made lagoons, very little in maritime habitats.

communications High degree of pedestrian access. A259 runs along the coast and is one of the main approaches into the city centre.

visual character City directly relates to the flat open coastline, offering panoramic sea views punctuated by historic seaside development in the foreground. Its open nature creates an exposed environment during the winter months. The rising chalk cliffs increase visual permeability out towards the sea. Below the cliffs visual connection with the city is reduced.

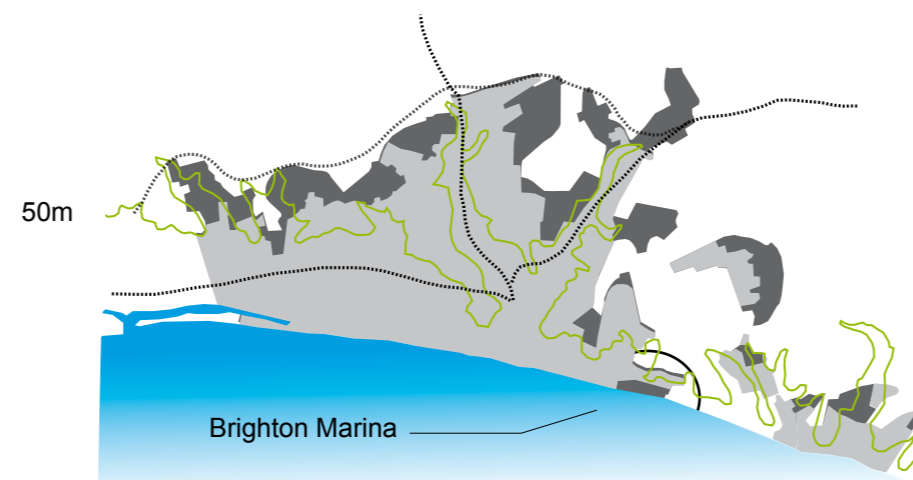
key events



1750-1850
1750 coastal town dependant on the fishing industry



1850-1900 development of resort estates and Shoreham Port



1945-2001
1979 sees the completion of the first phase of the Brighton Marina, a key landmark within the coastal landscape

Grand resort estates dominate Brighton & Hove's seafront



Wide open promenade reclaimed from the seashore

Cliffs and beaches along the coast east of Brighton



Marina development; the Black Rock cliffs are of geological importance



Victorian promenade architecture



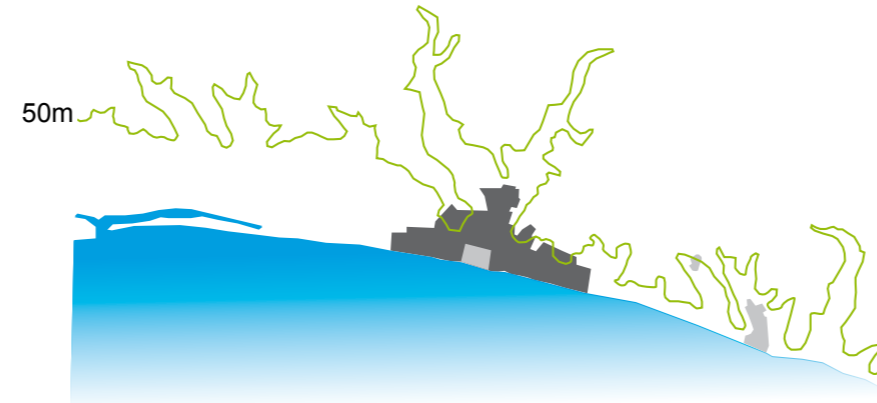
urban landscape

The historic fishing town of Brighton was surrounded by five 'laines', each of which was further divided into furlong strips. These strips of land were leased by tenant husbandmen and farmed in the traditional way into the C19th. Complex land ownerships shaped the city's early incremental growth within the laines. The result is a very regular grid pattern of small scale streets that has built up around the medieval core to the east and west of the central valley.

The arrival of the railways in 1840 meant that development quickly expanded alongside railway land. Victorian suburbs grew up around stations, and industrial uses located themselves close to the railways to allow easy access. Workers' terraces developed close to the industry. Further afield, as and when larger parcels of land became available, speculative developments occurred. A range of distinct late 19th century estates were built for the new middle classes.

- topography Predominately valley sides and coastal plain.
- geology Upper chalk formation and raised beach consisting of marine deposits.
- hydrology The chalk group that underlies Brighton & Hove is the most important aquifer in Southern England.
- dominant landscape elements:
- buildings Predominately medium to high density inner suburban and urban settlement patterns.
- landscape archeology Field patterns and urban growth due to the railways.
- land cover Predominately urban development peppered with historic parks and gardens, recreation grounds, cemeteries and tree-lined streets. High quality townscape. Few local nature reserves.
- communications High degree of public access with road network, pavements and railway.
- visual character Fine textured complex landscape of buildings and vegetation. At times balanced between built form and open space such as historic square and mature tree-lined streets but occasionally a discordant, chaotic angular landscape with little vegetative relief. Significant areas of good quality townscape.

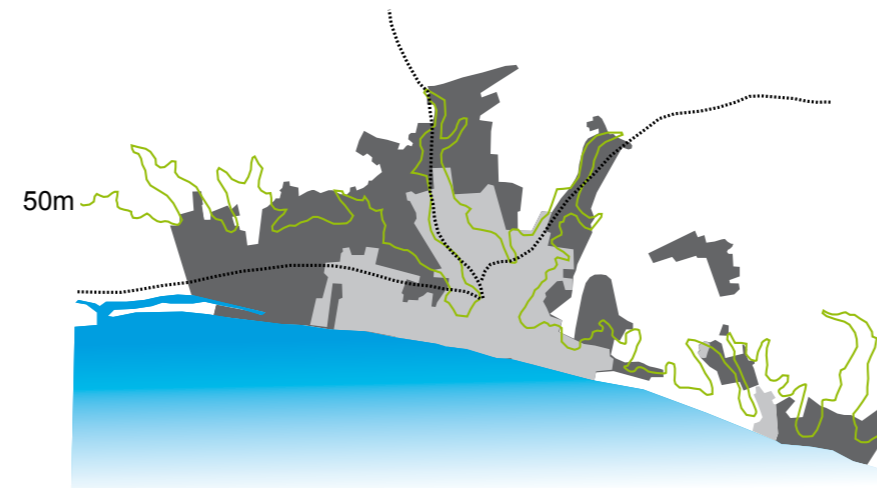
key events



1750-1850 growth of fishing industry. Beginnings of resort development and expansion of town onto agricultural land



1850 -1900 resort development and arrival of the railways see growth of Victorian suburbs



1900-1945 increased urban development along the railway

High density urban environment Regional transport hub



Green elements: the city is well known for its historic parks and gardens and its mature elm avenues



suburban downland fringe landscape

Much of the downland acquired by Brighton Council in the 1920s was developed, and large housing estates grew around the urban core of Brighton & Hove. Some of these have grown around existing historic villages and Victorian suburbs. Developments in private and public transport meant that Brighton & Hove's population could be housed further from the city centre and within the rolling downland that could now be accessed by car and bus.

The result is an undulating landscape of low rise development interspersed by green ridges of woodland and grassland that extend into the city.

topography Open upland with small dry valleys winding through.

geology Middle and upper chalk formation.

hydrology Dry valleys and free draining chalk.

dominant landscape elements:

buildings Low rise suburban settlements developed, enveloping historic villages, and scattered farmsteads.

landscape archeology Pre-historic hill forts, causewayed enclosures, barrows, agricultural terracing and trackways.

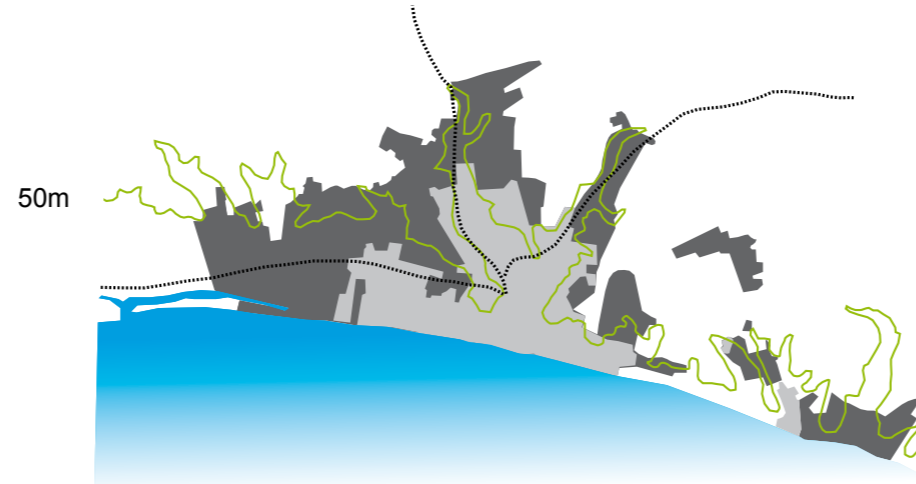
farming Large scale arable, rough grazing, stables, fields, very few and degraded hedgerows.

land cover Isolated fragments of species rich chalk grassland, suburban development peppered with amenity grassland and grass verges, pockets of deciduous woodland, regenerating scrub on former allotment sites. Large scale recreational uses such as golf courses.

communications Degree of public access with road network, tracks and footpaths, railway, communication masts.

visual character Prominent ridgelines of chalk upland extend into the city providing panoramic views across the city and surrounding downland. The uplands can feel remote and exposed. Older developments are located within the more sheltered valleys while twentieth century suburban development has extended along valley sides.

key events



1900-1945 Interwar suburban growth



1945-2001 Post second world war development now constrained by by-pass and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Demands for new and improved housing led to development of suburban housing estates and garden suburbs



Increased car ownership and additional demands for housing, commercial and educational land led to further outward expansion onto the surrounding downland

Rough grazing

Lightly trafficked suburban streets



Chalk grassland

Low rise suburban development on hillsides

Green ridges that extend into the city

Scrub

Pockets of deciduous woodland



downland settlement landscape

The South Downs are a range of chalk hills that stretch from Beachy Head to Winchester. They bound the north and east of Brighton & Hove, and create a distinctive setting for the city. The South Downs are designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are of national significance. In the 1920s and 30s much of Brighton's open downland was purchased for the council in order to protect the downland itself, protect the city's water supply and provide some building land. The council owns some 16,000 acres of farmland, most of which is let to tenant farmers.

Within this downland setting lie rural settlements, medieval in origin. These have grown over time, contributing to the present character of the landscape.

topography Rolling open upland with small dry valleys winding through.

geology Middle and upper chalk formation.

hydrology Dry valleys and free draining chalk formation.

dominant landscape elements:

buildings Low-rise historic village developments nestled along valley floors and isolated farm buildings and landmark buildings. Low rise residential suburbs.

landscape archeology Landscape scattered with barrows and sites of archeological interest.

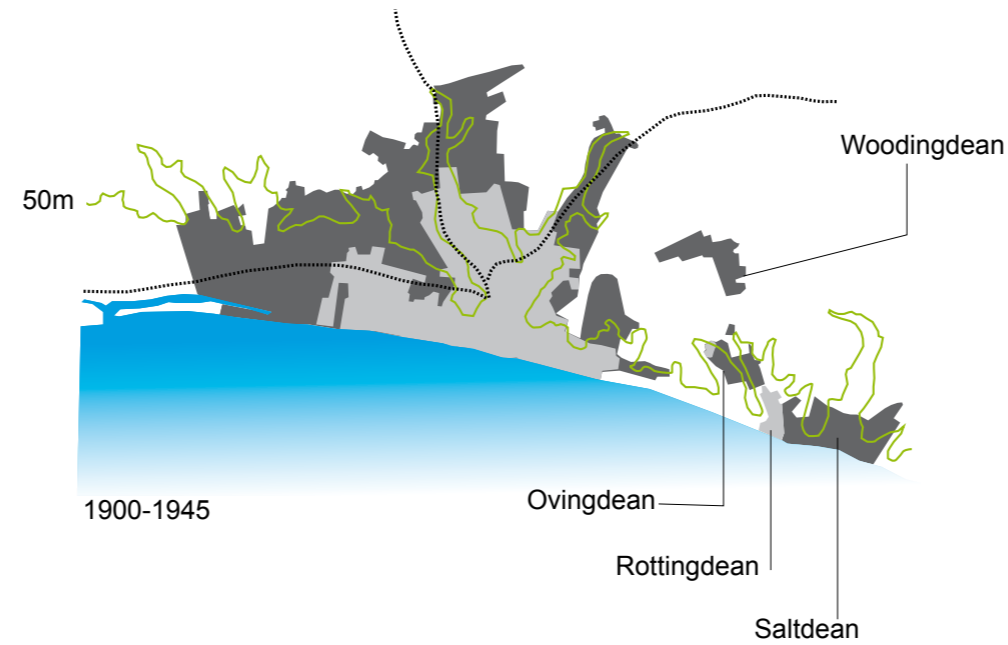
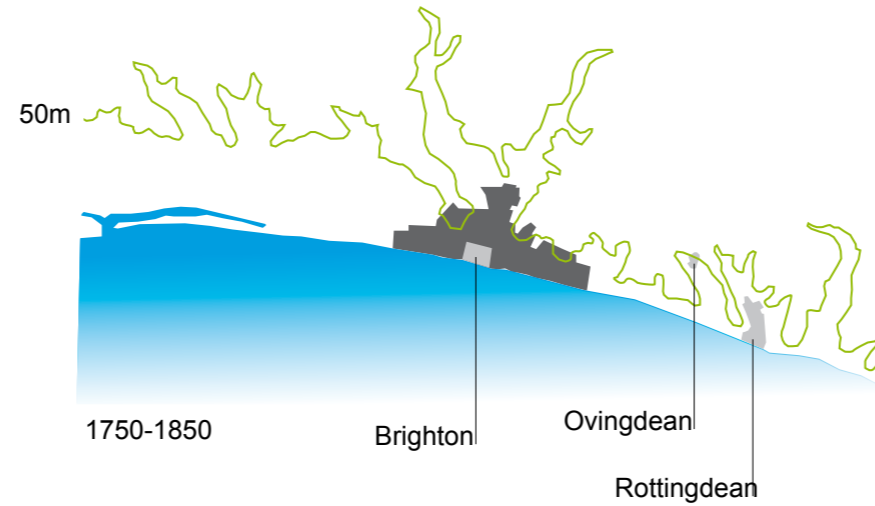
farming Large scale arable and rough grazing fields, very few and degraded hedgerows.

land cover Isolated fragments of species rich chalk grassland, pockets of deciduous woodland and exposed golf courses on higher ground.

communications Limited public access in the form of roads, tracks and footpaths.

visual character Rolling, open landscape with close relationship to big open skies. Panoramic views including glimpses of the sea. Prominent landmarks are visible over long distances.

key events



Downland villages pre-date 1750



Suburban expansion of downland villages and suburban development within the surrounding rural landscape

Rural settlements with historic centres



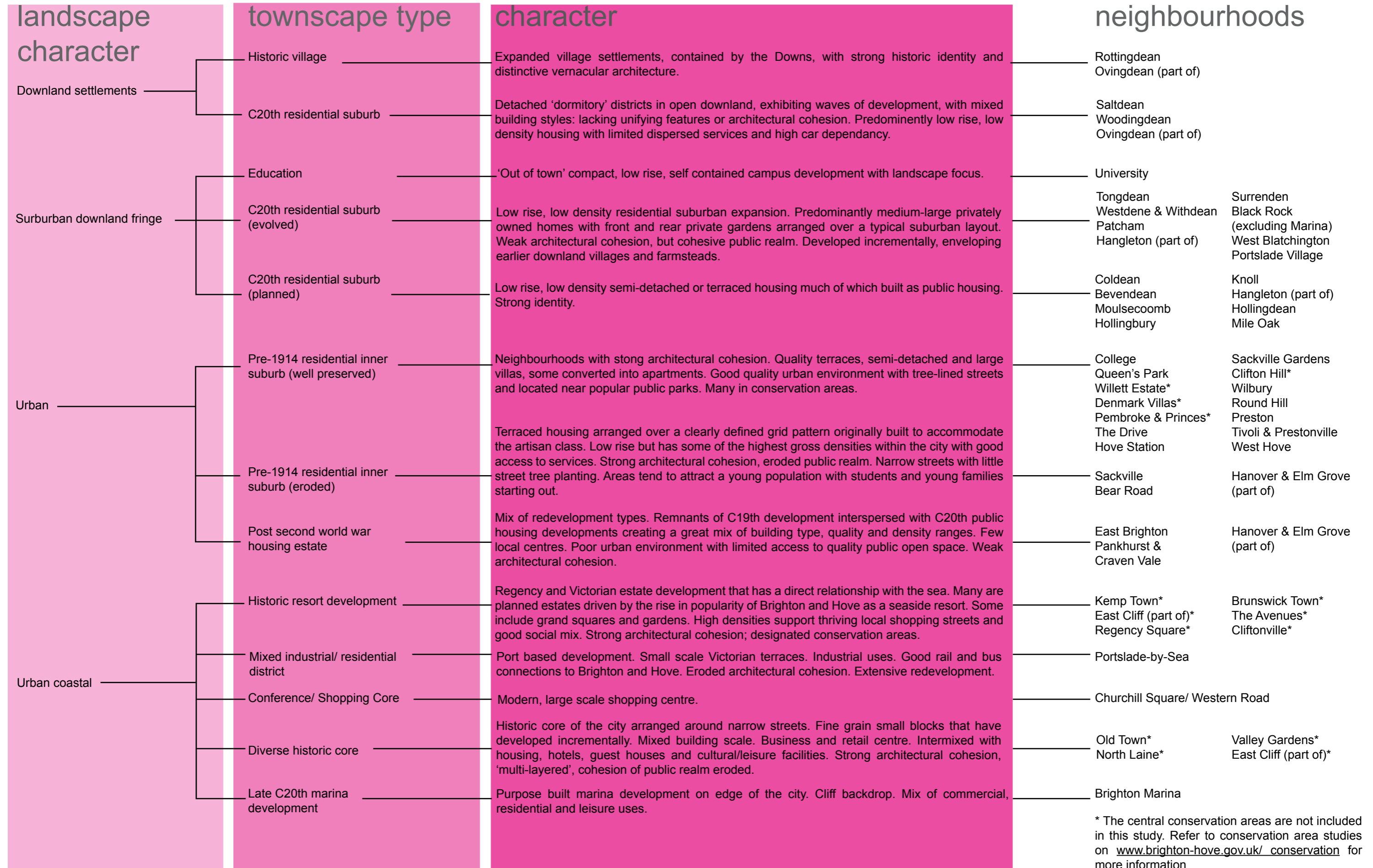
Views out over surrounding landscape Pockets of woodland



Small villages nestling in rolling large scale arable fields



neighbourhood typologies



* The central conservation areas are not included in this study. Refer to conservation area studies on www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/conservation for more information

quality assessment map

