

Seaford Neighbourhood Plan Housing & Development Focus Group

Statement on Seaford's Local Landscape Character and Views



August 2017

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View looking west over Seaford embedded in its surroundings
 Source: <http://www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk/our-coastline/>

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this report

Following a request for community support in March 2017, a group of volunteers, coming from different parts of Seaford, came together to form the Key Views team (the "Team"). With the support of the South Downs National Park (SDNP) the Team has produced this statement on Seaford's local landscape character and views.

This report aims to capture the unique character of the site and situation of Seaford, and the intimate links it has to its environment through time and space. This study also identifies the value placed on this landscape by those who live here and identify views that capture this unique character. By raising awareness of these views, their value to the lived experiences of those in Seaford can be recognised and potential threats and opportunities of any proposed landscape change can be fully appreciated. This is in accordance with the purpose of Landscape Character Assessment as set out by the Department for the Environment (DOE) in 2014.

The analysis undertaken for this report supports the current planning boundary as set out in the Joint Core Strategy Local Plan Part 1 and the very detailed work undertaken by Lewes District Council and the SDNP to establish it.

1.2 Definition of landscape character

Landscape can be defined in many ways depending on perspective and purpose, but to explore this definition gives meaning and value to this study in Seaford. To the physical geographer, the landscape is the unique assembly of landforms (Prosser and Bishop 2000), whereas the human geographer Sauer stressed the agency of culture as a force in shaping the visible features of the Earth's surface. Within his definition, the physical environment retains a central significance, as the medium with and through which human cultures act. He suggested that the cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result (Sauer 1925).

Within Seaford, it is therefore important to identify the unique combination and interaction of both physical and human features as they define the landscape character. The working definition for landscape character is therefore summarised well by the European Landscape Convention (Florence 2000)

Landscape is defined as an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. Landscapes which are different from one another are said to have their own landscape character comprising a distinct and recognizable pattern of elements, or characteristics.

Guidance from the DOE (2014) also recognises the importance of settlements, such as Seaford, which have a unique Seascape Character. This Seascape Character is usually aimed at intertidal areas, but includes characteristics that shape our lived experience of Seaford, such as climate, human uses of the coast and sea, surface water features, coastal processes and sunken and buried characteristics.

Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the process of identifying and describing variation in character of the landscape. LCA documents identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features that make landscapes distinctive by mapping and describing character types and areas. They also show how the landscape is perceived, experienced and valued by people (DOE 2014).

This document serves to refer to established LCA for the area including those by Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). Whilst the LCA assessments usually refer to what makes a landscape distinctive, they do not always capture what landscapes mean to local people (CPRE 2005).

1.3 Methodology for development of local landscape character

The methodology used to develop this statement is based on that developed by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and set out in its publication: *Unlocking the landscape: Preparing a Community Landscape Character Assessment* (2005).

2. Existing Landscape Character Assessments

There are several existing or partial LCA that have been written for Seaford. These include elements documented in the following:

1. SDNPA: Integrated Landscape Character Assessment
2. SDNPA: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice/landscape/>
3. East Sussex County Council Landscape Assessment 2010
4. SDNPA View Characterisation and Analysis Report
5. Lewes District Council Landscape Capacity Assessment

The following is a Landscape Character of Seaford, which draws from some of these key studies.

2.1 Historic Landscape Character

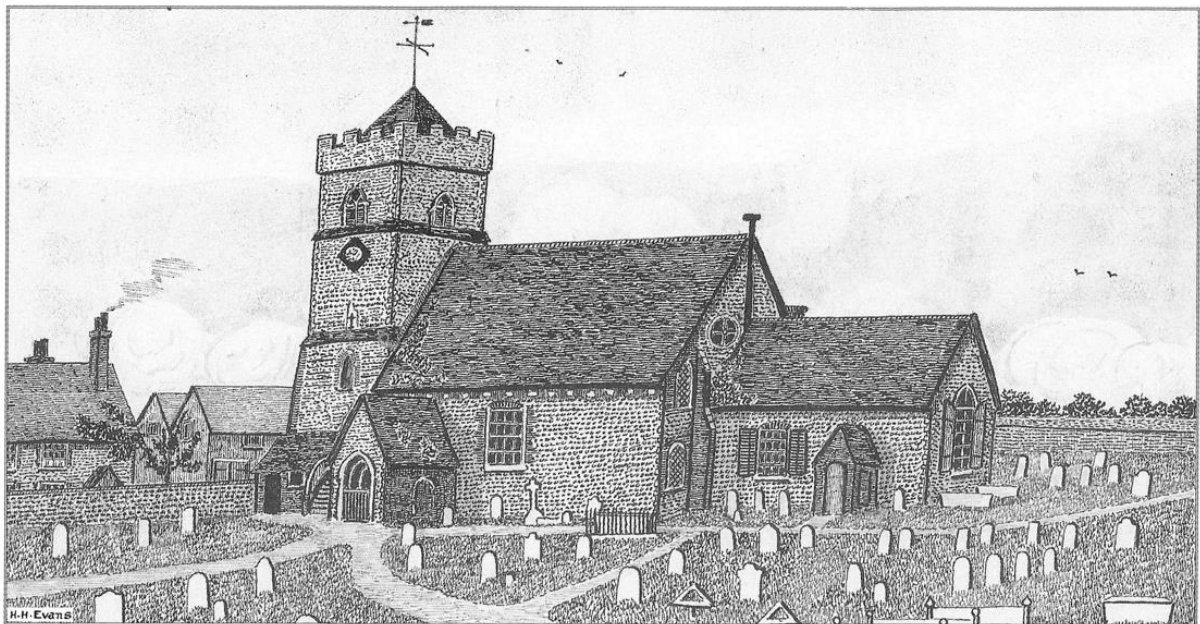
140 Million years in the making....Unique foundations of Seaford...

The chalk and flints of Seaford give the backdrop and foundation for Seaford. The geology of Seaford tells of an epic journey as the South of England travelled from the tropics 140 million years ago to its present location. These Cretaceous rocks, ranging from 140-100million years ago, are testament to the tropical seas where they were formed, and the tumultuous tectonic forces of the Miocene that squeezed and buckled them into the characteristic form we see surrounding Seaford today. The geological context for Seaford is unique, and forms the foundation in which Seaford sits. Etched on this geological canvas are the unique bournes and bottoms such as at Hope Gap, which tell their more recent story of periglacial processes, and fluvial history during the last ice age. This glaciation of 18,000 years ago was fundamental in producing rivers which produced the Seven Sisters, and has placed the view from Seaford Head looking East on the international map. The rising sea levels of 10,000 years ago brought the shingle flints from the seabed, producing the beaches and aggregate we see today, lining not just the coast, but the walls and buildings of Seaford. This unique geological history of Seaford sets the scene for a truly unique place.



Imprint of historic civilisation...

Human history surrounds Seaford, with evidence of Palaeolithic human activity from pockets of Chalk-with-flint that survive along the chalk ridge surrounding the east of Seaford. During the Mesolithic, following the last glaciation, human communities returned to the South Downs with evidence just outside Seaford. Stronger evidence exists around Seaford for more recent Neolithic habitation dating to 4,000 years ago, including evidence of burial chambers. Both Bronze Age and the following Iron Age left its imprint on the surrounding area, with the change in style of settlements being evident. Less evident around Seaford is the influence of Romanisation, but as the Roman authority declined, and competition from groups occurred, we see the impact of Saxon incursion taking hold. Early Saxon settlements are found perched at the base of the dip slopes such as at Bishopstone on the western fringe of Seaford. The Medieval period saw a strong Norman presence, with foreign nobility exerting political influence which is felt today in the architecture and field systems around Seaford. This post-Medieval period is represented by changes in agricultural patterns which have led to the opening-up in scale of fields. As we come closer to the present day, we see at Seaford and the surrounding area last century relics of political relationships, the anti-invasion defences.



The church consists of a tower, nave, north and south aisles, and a kind of "apartment" at the east end resembling an inn parlour, with sash windows and shutters complete.

Mark Antony Lower, M.A., F.S.A.

The register is one of the oldest in this part of England dating back to 1558, and is entitled "A Register Booke in parchment, for the Towne of Seaforde."

St Leonard's Church, thought to date from around 1090

2.2 Landscape types

The SDNPA Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2005) ("ICLA") sets out to document and describe the variety and contrast, distinctive form, historic character, biodiversity and special perceptual qualities, buildings and settlement, and views of the South Downs National Park, which surrounds Seaford. The document also attempts to identify the forces for change that threaten this character of the National Park, pressures that are evident in Seaford too.



View looking East over Seaford, embedded in its surroundings.

Source: <http://www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk/our-coastline/>

The National Park that surrounds Seaford is described as:

...a landscape of national significance, long recognised for its distinctive and highly valued character – it comprises some of the most visually dramatic scenery in Southern England – an archetypal chalk landscape imprinted with human history. (SDNPA 2005, p. Xii)

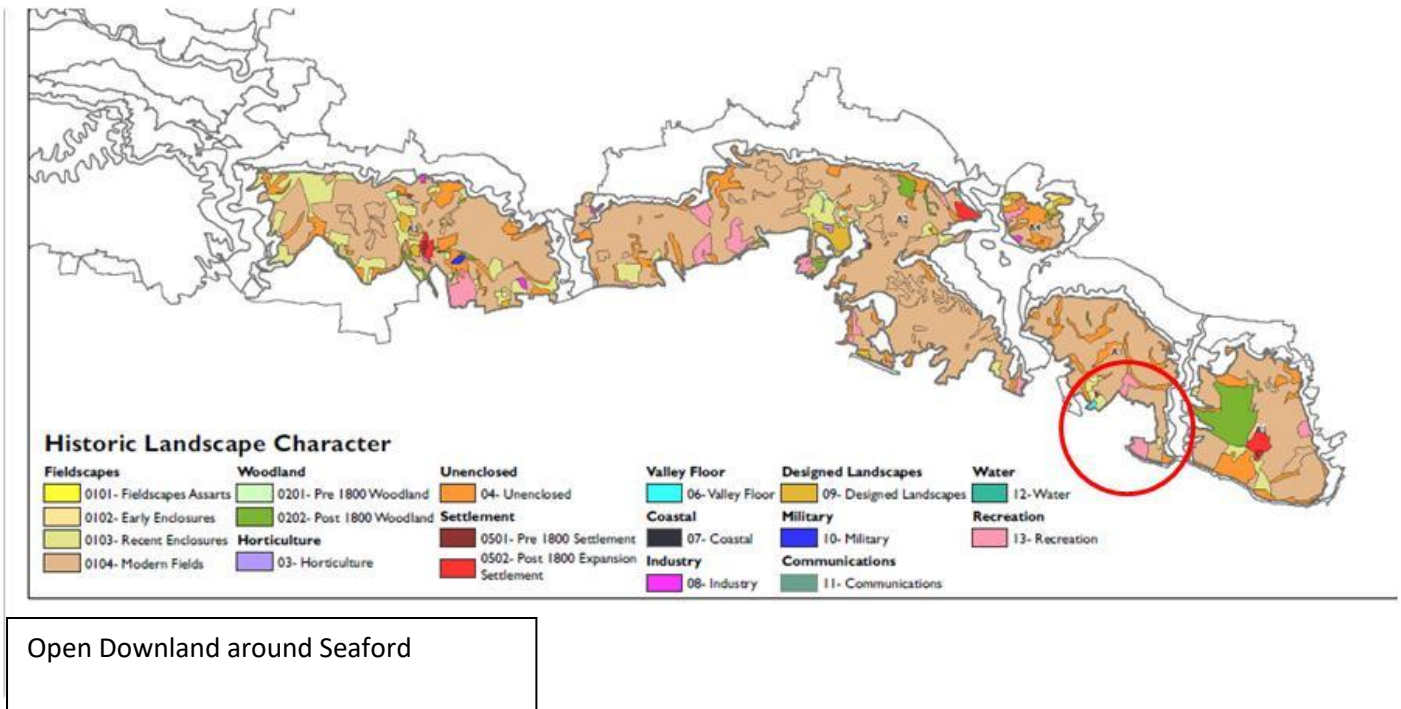
Seaford is bordered to the East and North with a dramatic chalk escarpment with a northerly aspect, and the gentler dip slope feeding into the coast at Seaford. This simple landform structure provides significant diversity, surrounding the town. The ICLA defined 18 specific landscape types, for 49 character areas. Within these 18 landscape types the area surrounding Seaford is classified as A: Open Downland, and R: Shoreline.

2.2.1 Open Downland

The Open Downland can be seen the figure below. Some of the key features of this area around Seaford include:

- Large scale open elevated landscape of rolling chalk downland, with dry valleys and scarp slopes. Secluded dry valleys are a special feature, such as Hope Gap
- Dominated by the solid chalk geology with very occasional surface clay capping and wind-blown sand creating local pockets of variation in the landscape.
- Large scale geometric arable fields, resulting from 20th century field reorganisation, in Sussex with fields of 18-19th century origin in Hampshire.
- Visually permeable post and wire boundaries. Few visible hedgerow boundaries and woodland cover limited to small deciduous woodland blocks and distinctive hilltop beech clumps.
- Ploughed arable fields on chalk dotted with flint contrasting with swathes of arable crops which create strong seasonal variation in the landscape.
- Fragments of chalk downland turf and rare chalk heath, together with associated scrub and woodland habitats which are confined to steep slopes where arable cultivation has proved difficult.
- Extensive use of the land for sport, creating a distinct land cover pattern of open downland interspersed with small woodlands.
- Blocks of modern farm buildings punctuated within the open landscape. At a more detailed level flint sheepfolds, barns and shepherd's cottages are a visual reminder of the former extent of sheep grazing.

- Large open skies and distant panoramic views – creating a dramatic and dynamic landscape changing according to prevailing weather conditions.
- Dark night skies - In May 2016 the South Downs National Park was designated an International Dark Sky Reserve and Birling Gap to the east of Seaford is one of the best observation sites within the National Park as it is possible to see the Milky Way with the naked eye from there.



Lived experience of the landscape

The nature and scale of the open downs provides vast open views, with rolling topography and open seascape. The relatively low presence of vertical features reveals expansive open skies, which allow the weather conditions to dominate the lived experience of residents and create a dynamic environment which varies with the seasons. The rolling topography and dynamic sea conditions give rise to constantly changing views, which are a unique feature of Seaford.

Low noise levels, the sounds of the sea, the lack of light pollution in the night sky and a sense of Seaford nestled into its natural environment contribute to a sense of tranquillity and a special, almost secret quality to Seaford.

Biodiversity

High value arable, recreation and conservation land form the borders of Seaford. Pockets of unimproved chalk grassland also exist, alongside significant areas of calcareous grassland and scrub to form a mosaic of semi-natural habitats. Areas of arable and recreation land that are managed less intensively provide valuable habitat and support a large range birds, invertebrates and specialist plant communities including some rare and protected species.

Sensitivity

The Open Downland landscape bordering Seaford has a number of sensitive natural, cultural and aesthetic /perceptual features that are vulnerable to change. Key landscape sensitivities include:

- Open uninterrupted skylines and exposed undeveloped character resulting from the rolling topography and absence of enclosing or vertical features. These are especially vulnerable to interruption by development or clutter.
- A strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness and areas of deep 'remoteness' associated with the hidden dry valleys. This quality is being affected by traffic pressure on the roads and tracks

that cross the downs and development on the edge; the night time glow of the Seaford areas is discernible.

- The vast, open character and long views across the landscape resulting from the uniform land cover of grassland and crops, visually transparent post and wire field boundaries and sparse hedgerow/woodland cover. This means that any landscape change or development has the potential to be highly visible.
- The mosaic of habitats, including arable land and pasture that supports arable weeds and farmland birds which could be vulnerable to further intensification of farming methods.
- The sense of unity and cohesion given by the repeated use of flint, brick and clay tile building materials. It is vulnerable to unsympathetic additions, extensions or conversions, which would disrupt the intact built character. The distinctive isolated barns are especially vulnerable.
- The more subtle features of the historic landscape, such as hedgerows and tracks, ancient field systems and tumuli, which are not protected and are vulnerable to change and loss.

The very open character and long views mean there are few screening opportunities making this landscape type highly sensitive visually. With respect to sensitivities specific to the Ouse to Eastbourne Open Downs, paragraph A1.8 on page 77 of the ICLA states:

"the strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness is being affected by traffic and development on the edge of Seaford and Eastbourne and the landscape is visually sensitive to change within the adjacent urban areas."

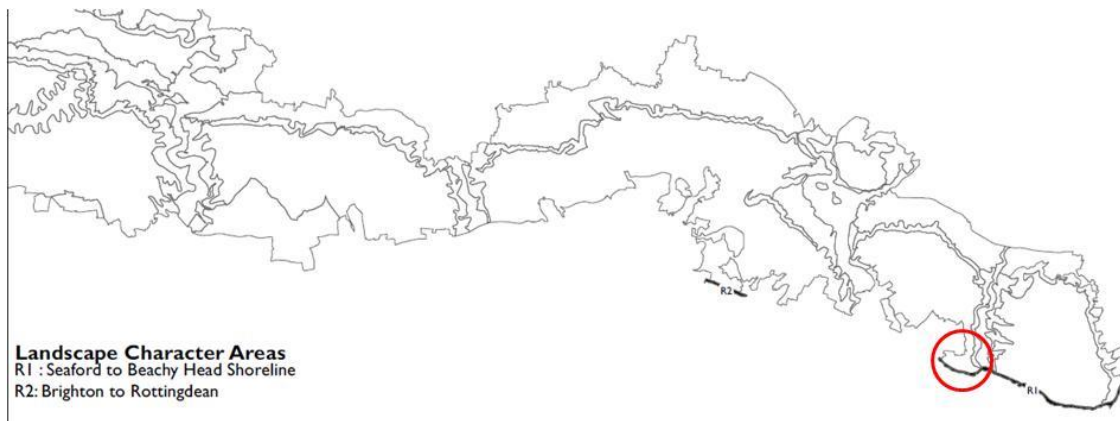


Eastward view over Seaford showing its long shoreline, (Source: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps>)

2.2.2 Shoreline

The unique shoreline at Seaford is of two broad types. The first characterised by a large uninterrupted shingle beach borders Seaford to the south west. The second, which falls within the SDNP and extends east from Seaford (see figure below), is a coastline with a rocky platform which gently slopes away from the base of the cliff. The platform has been eroded to a relatively level surface in places, although in detail it is irregular, with rock pools, steps and runnels into which the ebb and flow of the tide is channelled. On this platform lies chalk rubble and flint shingle. As chalk falls from the cliff, it is eroded by the sea leaving the hard flint nodules which accumulate on the shoreline where wave action erodes the flints into rounded pebbles to form a shingle beach. This is a constantly changing environment as a result of geomorphological processes, including longshore drift which moves the shingle along the

beach from west to east. Where the chalk cliff has been, or is under threat from erosion by the sea, a number of sea defences have been introduced to control and prevent further retreat of the cliff.



Chalk Cliff Shoreline

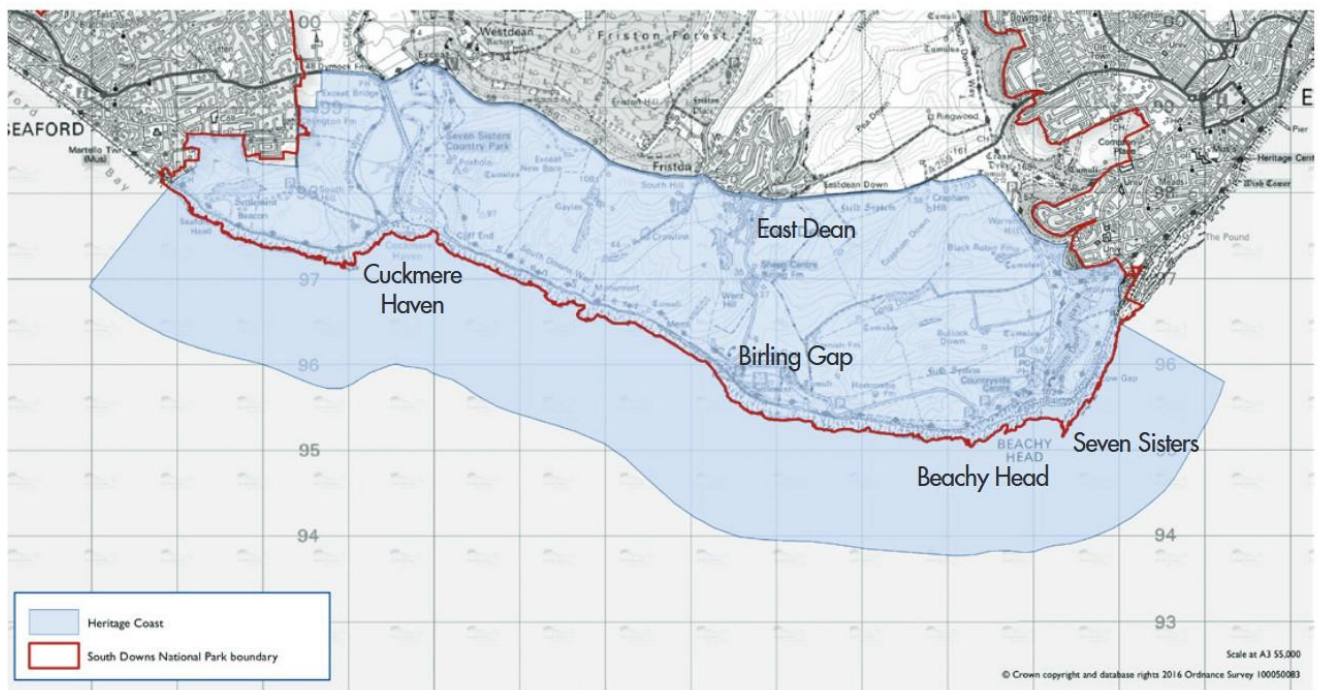
Lived experience of the coast

The character of the shoreline is highly dependent upon the weather. On a winter's day wind and waves buffet the shoreline resulting in an exposed, wild landscape which is open to the elements. On a warm summer's day, the microclimate on the beach creates a still and hot environment. However, whatever the weather this is a remote landscape with a strong sense of wilderness and a sense of being close to nature, even along those areas close to urban settlement. There are long views along the coastline to the dramatic white chalk cliffs and even more extensive views out across the sea to the horizon.

The Coastline is also a feature of national importance because of its very high scenic quality. Seaford's coast from Splash Point eastwards is within the defined Sussex Heritage Coast. It stretches from Eastbourne, along the iconic chalk cliffs of Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters, past Cuckmere Haven and on to Splash Point at Seaford. There are magnificent views both towards Seaford Head and from Seaford Head to the Seven Sisters which must be one of the most famous 'seascapes' in the world.

Heritage Coasts are 'defined' rather than designated, by agreement between the relevant maritime local authorities and Natural England, and were established to conserve outstanding stretches of undeveloped coast in England. Heritage coast designation is therefore non-statutory. However, the majority of heritage coast areas fall within statutorily designated landscapes such as national parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The Sussex Heritage Coast falls entirely within the boundary of the South Downs National Park.

SUSSEX HERITAGE COAST

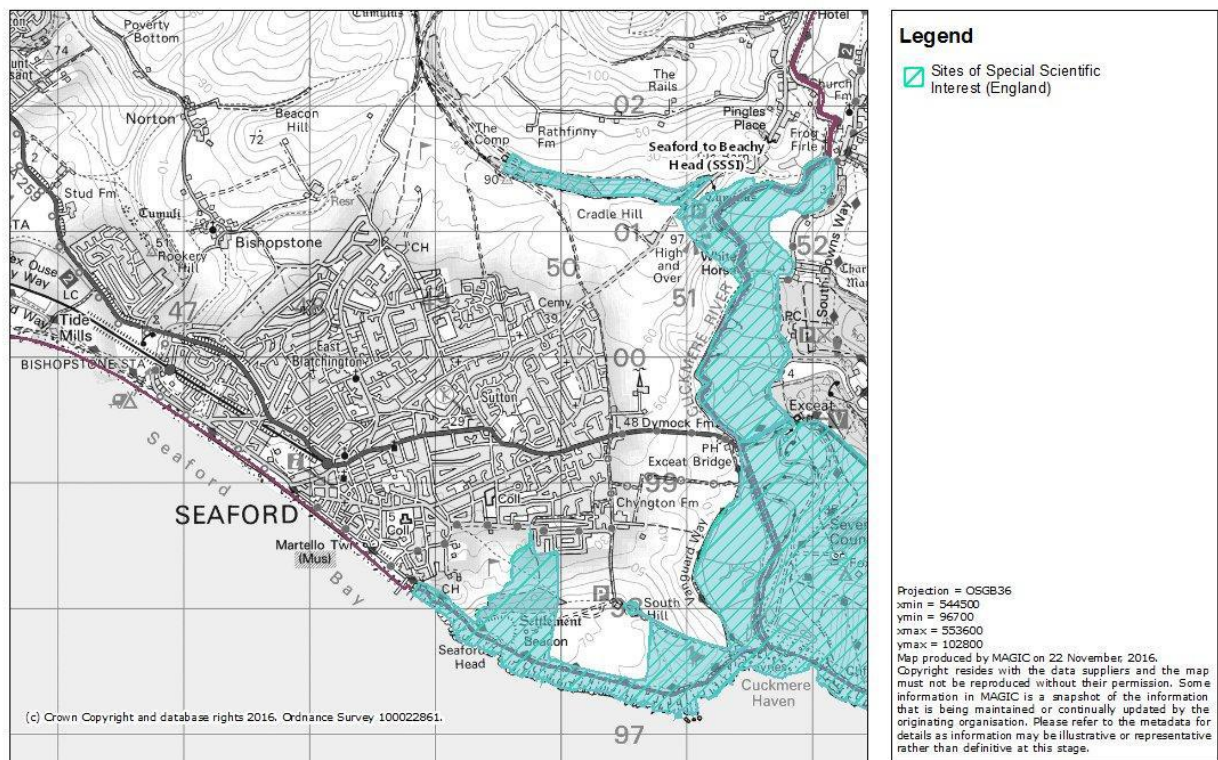


Source: Sussex Heritage Coast – A strategy and action plan 2016 - 2020

Biodiversity

Features of ecological note include cliff nesting sea birds, such as kittiwakes and herring gulls, together with occasional patches of shingle vegetation that have colonised along the shoreline. The plant communities range from open and sparsely vegetated shingle along the strandline (where characteristic species include yellow horned-poppy, sea kale, sea beet, curled dock and sea mayweed) to closed grassland swards (which occur further inshore and support a range of grass, herb and moss species).

Seaford to Beachy Head is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The cliff top area, cliffs and foreshore are part of the Heritage Coast and include the SSSI, the Nature Reserve and the Seven Sisters Voluntary Marine Conservation Area ("VMCA"). The VMCA runs from the Martello Tower at Seaford to the Wish Tower at Eastbourne, and out to sea for about 2km. The VMCA covers the wave cut chalk platform and recognises its significant biological, geological and archaeological interest.



http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/citation/citation_photo/1002008.pd

Natural England suggest that

"Seaford to Beachy Head is an outstanding site of national importance for its biological and geological features. The diverse range of habitats includes herb-rich chalk grassland, chalk heath (a unique, rare habitat on chalk soils), maritime grassland, foreshore and chalk cliffs, river meanders, and Greensand reef. Together, these habitats support a number of nationally rare, nationally scarce and nationally significant plants, invertebrates and birds."

The majority of the area lies on chalk but the River Cuckmere breaches the chalk cliffs to form a broad alluvial valley. There is also a distinct coastal zone which is of geological interest, particularly for its chalk stratigraphy, periglacial geomorphology and the study of chalk landscape evolution.

The area is also nationally significant for the hundreds of species of passage birds, which use the Downs as a route-finding landmark.

Sensitivity

The steep chalk cliffs which are vulnerable to erosion, often result in large cliff falls which deposit chalk rubble onto the beach. The exposed, wild character of the landscape could be vulnerable to built development or insensitive engineering works. The shingle vegetation community which is susceptible to trampling, and the geological interest associated with the chalk cliffs, is sensitive to change.

Long, scenic views along the coastline to the dramatic white chalk cliffs and extensive views out across the sea to the horizon which could be vulnerable to inappropriate development along the shoreline, or the adjacent open downs or offshore. The open nature of the shoreline makes this landscape particularly sensitive visually.

The Rampion wind farm, currently under construction, is visible from the Sussex Heritage Coast.

The Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre carried out an ecological data search for Seaford on 16 June 2017 in which it consulted data sets on designated sites, habitats and ownership maps and protected, designated and invasive species.

Summary of results

Sites and habitats

Statutory sites	1 Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) / 1 National Park / 1 Local Nature Reserve / 1 Country Park
Non-statutory sites	7 Listed Wildlife Sites / 2 Local Geological Sites / 3 Notable Road Verges
Section 41 habitats	11 habitats
Ancient and/or ghyll woodland	Present

Protected and designated species

International designations	82 species	11,719 records
National designations	212 species	24,278 records
Other designations	600 species	51,434 records

Total **641 species 55,662 records**

Invasive non-native	55 species	1,208 records
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Seafront character

The seafront has suffered constant ravages by the sea with twenty major floods over the past 300 years with water reaching the church gates in the 1870s. Until the present sea defences were completed in 1988 much of the land behind the beach, between the promenade and the town, was at risk from flooding from the sea and few people lived there.

Seaford's beach has undergone dramatic changes over the past century. The three mile stretch of beach we see today looks vastly different from the early 1900s when large numbers of wooden groynes punctuated the beach to restrict longshore drift.

Apart from a terminal groyne at Splash Point (foreground) there are no longer groynes to check longshore drift. Shingle accumulates quite rapidly at the Splash Point groyne, and each year has to be taken back in large tipper lorries to replenish the beach at the western end of Seaford. Consideration may need to be given to future strategies for managing this such as investment in further groynes or the construction of a Swansea Bay style tidal lagoon.



Through erosion and weathering the cliffs at Seaford Head have retreated significantly over the past 500 years. In the early 1900s there was quite a wide beach at the bottom of relatively vertical cliffs. By the late 1920s buttresses had begun to appear at the foot of the cliffs and by the 1950s these had developed further and were beginning to impede the longshore drift of beach shingle towards the east.



The buttresses then began to develop caves and became detached from the cliff where they remain as stumps on the beach until they are worn away by the sea. There is a persisting buttress at Seaford Head while the cliff on either side has retreated. The buttress now acts as a groyne restricting the eastward movement of shingle, thus helping to create a small beach. However, the new groyne at Splash Point is restricting the supply of shingle from further west.

According to research by Imperial College, erosion rates at Seaford Head had remained relatively stable, at around two to six centimetres each year, for thousands of years. However, around 200 to 600 years ago the rates rapidly accelerated, increasing to between 22 and 32 centimetres each year. The researchers suggest that rising sea levels and increasingly severe storms have rapidly eroded the Seaford Head shoreline. The loss of beach means that the cliffs are exposed to the eroding wave action forces, which is causing them to collapse into the sea.

Paragraph A1.10 on page 77 of the ICLA state: "This coastal edge of this character area has one of the highest rates of erosion in Europe. The cliffs are receding at about 30-40cm each year on average. The process is intermittent with major falls occurring after heavy rain or rough seas, often two of three times per year. Where these falls occur they protect the base of the cliffs from the sea and usually there are no falls in the same places for eight or nine years until the sea undercuts the cliffs again. Continued erosion may cause potential loss of landscape features coastal property and coastal paths."

The seafront is impacted by the significant overuse of signage on posts along the promenade. Consideration may need to be given to limiting signage to a level more in keeping with the unspoilt nature of the seafront.

2.3 Townscape Character

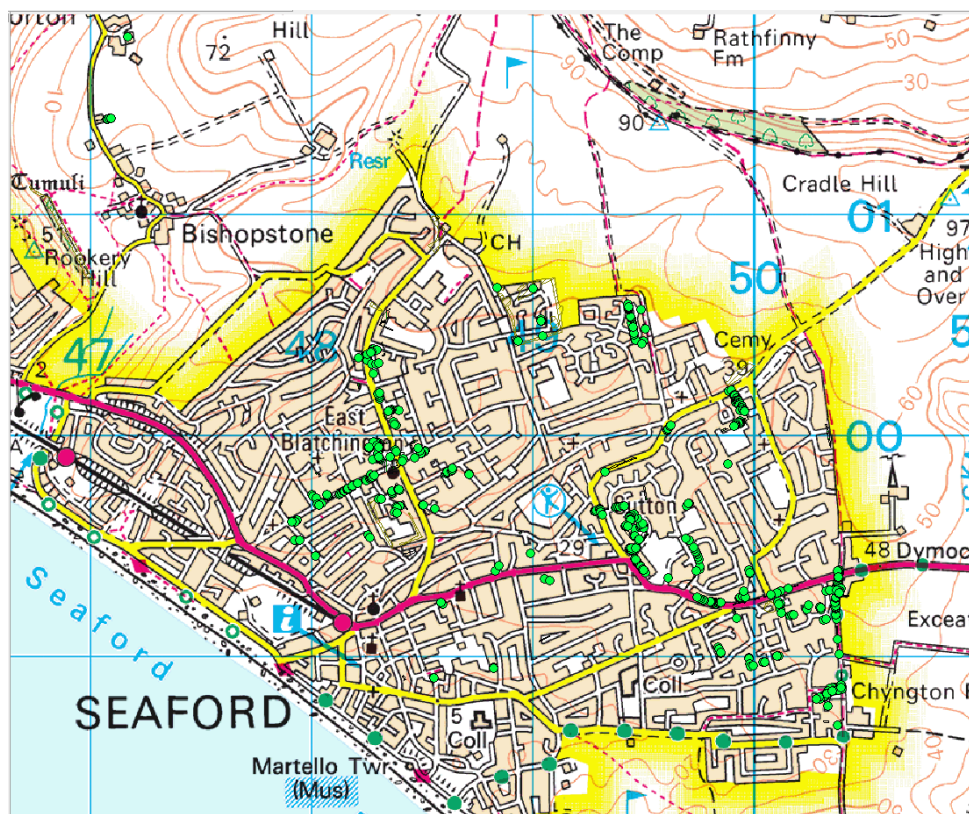
There are several natural landscape features within the town which contribute to the character of the environment and may also be vulnerable to change. It is therefore important to retain these features of landscape importance, which include:

- the copse of trees to the north and south of Alfriston Road (East of Cradle Hill) which provide an important green entrance into Seaford from the north west;
- the embankment vegetation north of Newhaven Road (adjoining the Bishopstone Estate), which is again an important feature when approaching Seaford;
- the hedgerows and verges bordering the Buckle Bypass, which provide an important green entrance into Seaford from the west;
- the trees and hedgerows bordering the Eastbourne Road, including Newlands School, which provide an important green entrance into Seaford from the east;
- the embankment vegetation east of Marine Parade (railway line) which forms an important approach to the Esplanade;
- the grounds of Corsica Hall which provide an important foreground setting for Seaford Head;
- the hedgerows and trees bordering the Heritage Coast to conserve the important setting of Seaford Head;
- the trees at the Rookery, Bishopstone, which are a valuable asset to the landscape in an area relatively devoid of trees on the downland;
- the important hedgerow along Grand Avenue which preserves the important skylines around Bishopstone; and Kings Hedge which provides a strong but permeable feature separating the back gardens of the Clementine Avenue homes from the agricultural land but linking them at the same time via 2 centuries-old footpaths;
- the trees and hedgerows around Normansal Park Avenue.



View along Kings Hedge from Grand Avenue

Within the built-up area, there are several areas where the treescape is protected and there are approximately 100 tree preservation orders in place in the town.



Map showing location of tree preservation orders

3. Key Views

The SDNPA made us aware that we could identify 'key views' within the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan. As Seaford is recognised as having some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, we decided to follow their recommendation and have taken the opportunity to create one document citing all Seaford's significant views in order to preserve them for future generations.

3.1 Existing Policy Framework

The latest draft of the South Downs National Park Local Plan includes Strategic Policy SD6: **Safeguarding Views**, the purpose of which is to ensure that development does not harm views or landmarks, to encourage conservation and enhancement of key view types and patterns, and to ensure development does not detract from the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality that are characteristic of the National Park. The Policy states:

1. *Development proposals will be permitted where they conserve and enhance views and landmarks and do not harm the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality of the National Park.*
2. *Development proposals will be permitted that conserve and enhance the following view types and patterns identified in the Viewshed Characterisation Study:*
 - a) *Landmark views to and from viewpoints and tourism and recreational destinations;*
 - b) *Views from publically accessible areas which are within, to and from settlements which contribute to the viewers' enjoyment of the National Park;*
 - c) *Views from public rights of way, open access land and other publically accessible areas; and*
 - d) *Views which include or otherwise relate to specific features relevant to the National Park and its special qualities, such as heritage assets (either in view or the view from) and biodiversity features.*
3. *Development proposals will be permitted provided they conserve and enhance sequential views, and do not result in adverse cumulative impacts within views.*

Retained Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan 2003 seeks to protect significant public views. It states:

Development requiring planning permission will be expected to comply with the following criteria, and be supported by justification statements where necessary:

(f) development should not result in the loss of significant buildings, public views or spaces between and around buildings, or trees or other landscape features which make an important contribution to the character of the area.

All the retained policies of the Lewes District Local Plan 2003 are currently being reviewed as part of the preparation of the Lewes District Local Plan Part 2 or the South Downs Local Plan. The retained policies may be carried forward, re-worded or deleted. The South Downs National Park Local Plan has not yet been adopted. It is therefore vital that the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan sets out its own policies to protect key views.

The local landscape character assessment process supports the SDNP View Characterisation and Analysis described below and the views identified in the four Conservation Area Appraisals described on pages 28 to 38. However, more view types and locations have been added within the Neighbourhood Plan area to include panoramic views, seascapes, gateways and significant local views. These are set out on pages 39 to 55.

3.2 Landscape Character and Key Views Policy

Proposed Policy SEA1 Landscape, Seascape and Townscape Character of Seaford

New development within the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan Area will conserve and enhance the landscape, seascape and townscape character of Seaford. In particular, subject to other relevant development plan policies, development will be permitted provided that it conserves and enhances:

- a) the landscape setting of Seaford, including meeting the purposes of the South Downs National Park and protecting the character of the Heritage Coast;
- b) the key views as identified in the Seaford Landscape and Key Views Report;
- c) tranquillity and dark night skies;
- d) the natural, locally distinctive and heritage landscape qualities and characteristics of Seaford including trees and hedgerows, particularly in areas which are currently deficient in such natural assets;
- e) features of biodiversity, geological and heritage interest, including appropriate management of those features; and
- f) the River Cuckmere, its margins and associated wetlands, preventing development which would adversely affect its quiet and natural character or have a direct or indirect effect on its wildlife and geological features.

Particular views identified in this policy are the views set out in Conservation Area Appraisals and the views as selected by residents (see maps on pages 29, 32, 35, 37 and 40).

3.3 South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis Report

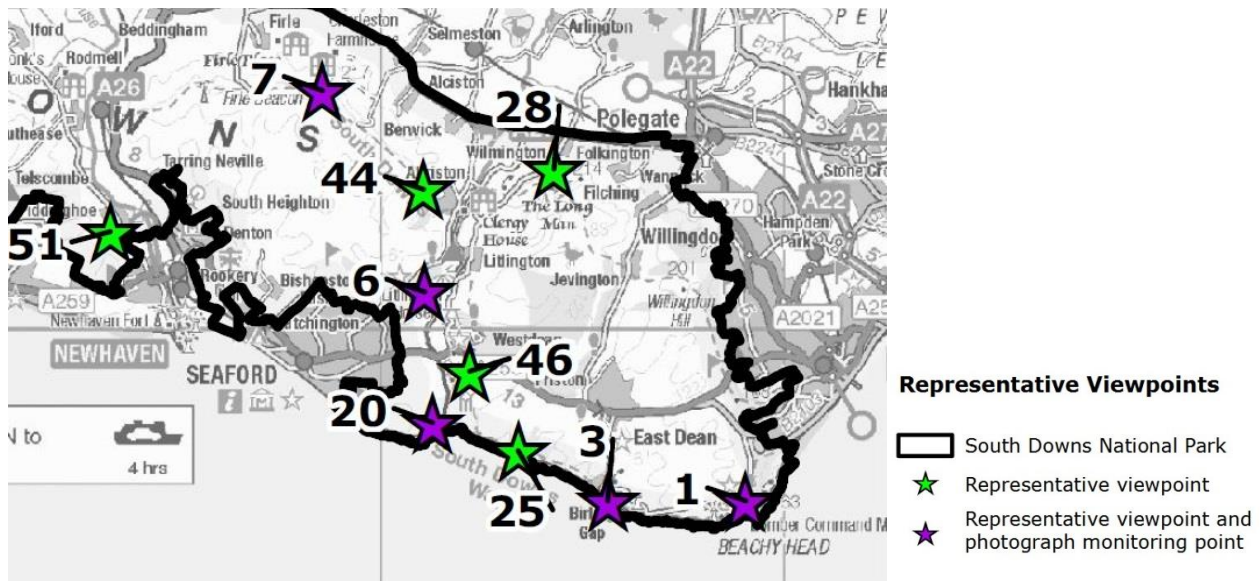
This report comprising a mapping and analysis of views to, from and within the National Park was completed by the SDNPA in November 2015. It intends to provide evidence on the types of views available in the National Park and its setting. It offers an analysis of:

- key view patterns
- a range of representative views and key areas of overlapping visibility
- the key types of view to inform decisions about change

The report includes a Viewshed Study of the South Downs National Park. It has taken 120 of the most widely known views and landmarks in the National Park and, using computer modelling, has mapped visibility based on the landform/topography based on 'bare earth' conditions - without taking account of anything above the ground such as buildings or trees, covering an area up to 35km from each viewpoint. These 360 degree views, called Zones of Theoretical Visibility, show areas visible at ground level as well as heights above which objects would become visible from those viewpoints. These are used to help assess and understand the impact of visible change in the views.

3.3.1 Representative Views

Within the report, 78 different views were identified to represent types found across the park. The map below shows the seven viewpoints visible from or within the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan area.



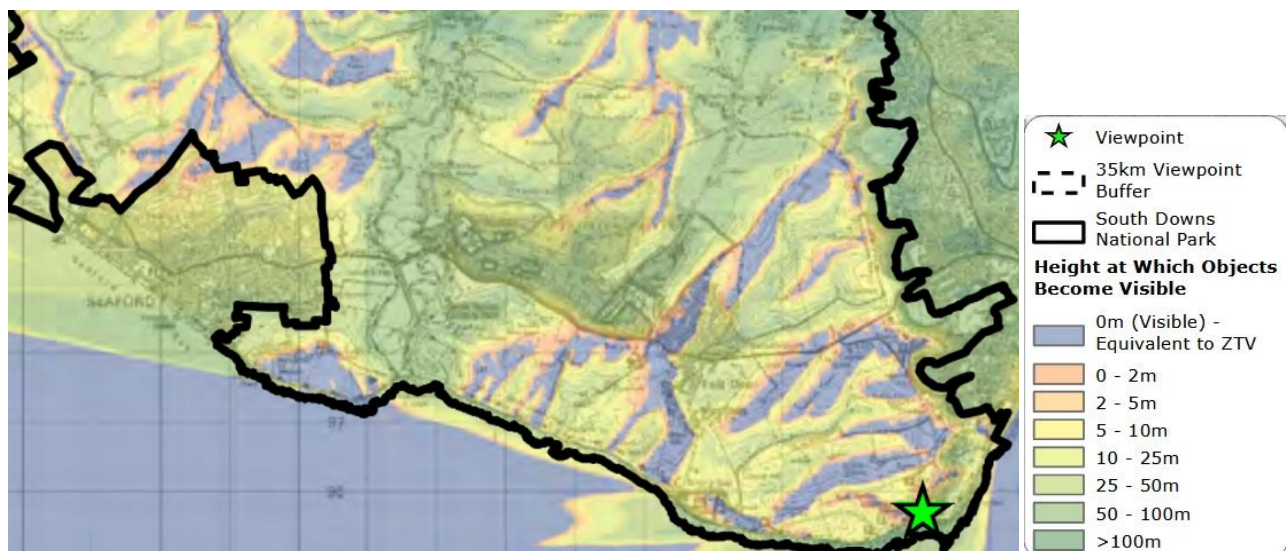
SDNPA Viewshed Characterisation and Analysis Representative Viewpoints

The SDNPA has identified Zones of Theoretical Visibility from each viewpoint, calculated from an observer height of 2 metres above ground level.

View point 1 – Beachy Head

This viewpoint is located at the Compass Rose and is a good point from which to appreciate views of the south east coast. Views can be seen of the Seaford Head Nature Reserve and land in the SDNP to the north and west of Seaford.

Beachy Head viewpoint has been selected as a photographic monitoring point by the SDNPA because it is a well visited OS marked viewpoint that provides extensive views of the south east coast, from Dungeness in the east, to Selsey Bill in the west. The view from Beachy Head is also representative of the type of views encountered from Seaford Head and from the South Downs Way along the Seven Sisters.



View point 3 – Birling Gap

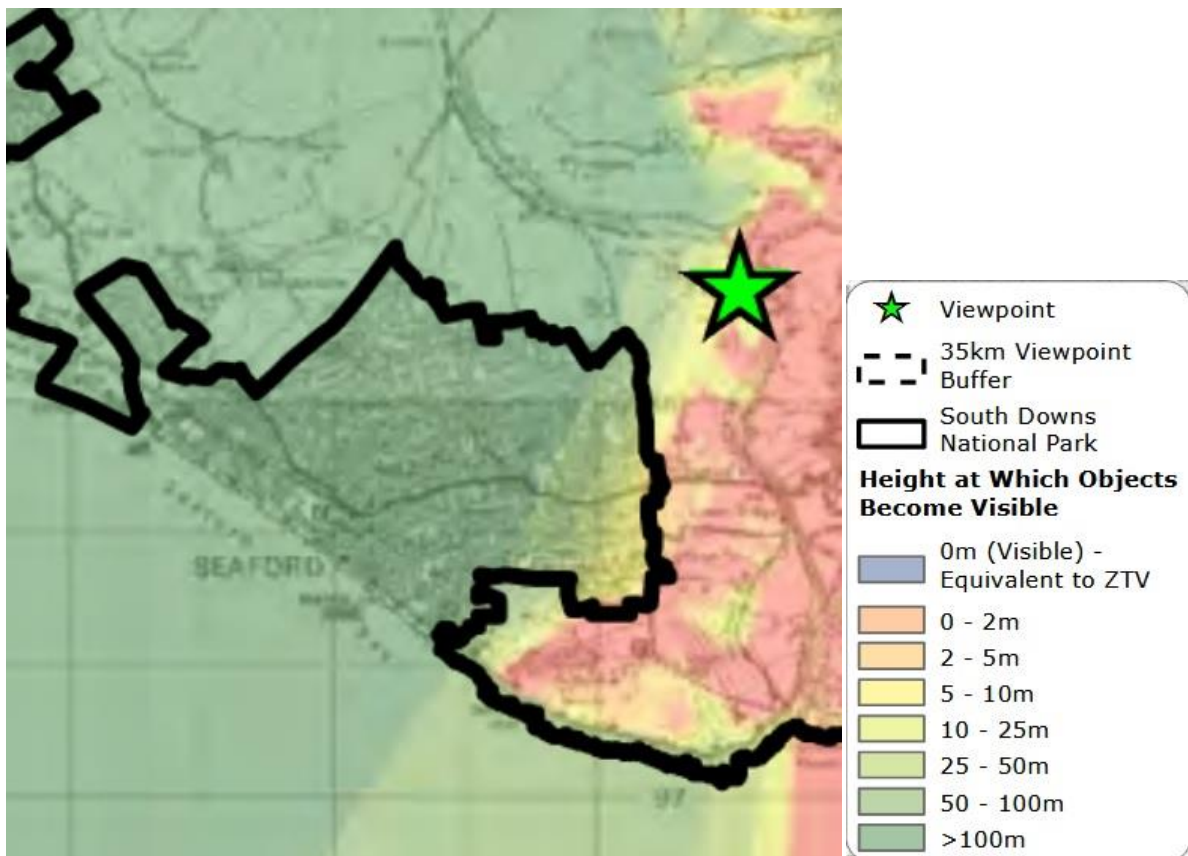
Noted as a well visited viewpoint that reveals the scenic coastline, dramatic views west are visible from this area east of Birling Gap along the Seven Sister cliffs to Seaford Head and out to sea, revealing the iconic chalk sea cliffs. Birling Gap viewpoint has also been selected as a photographic monitoring point.



Viewpoint 6 – High & Over (White Horse)

Located at the crest of a steep slope enclosing the Cuckmere River valley, this OS marked viewpoint provides elevated views along the chalk river valley to Alfriston and Seaford. This view reveals the patterns of the river channel and marshland of the lower Cuckmere and the views towards Seaford Head, the south eastern edge of Seaford and out to sea.

This viewpoint has been selected as a photographic monitoring point because it is a good point from which to appreciate the Cuckmere valley cutting through the chalk downs.

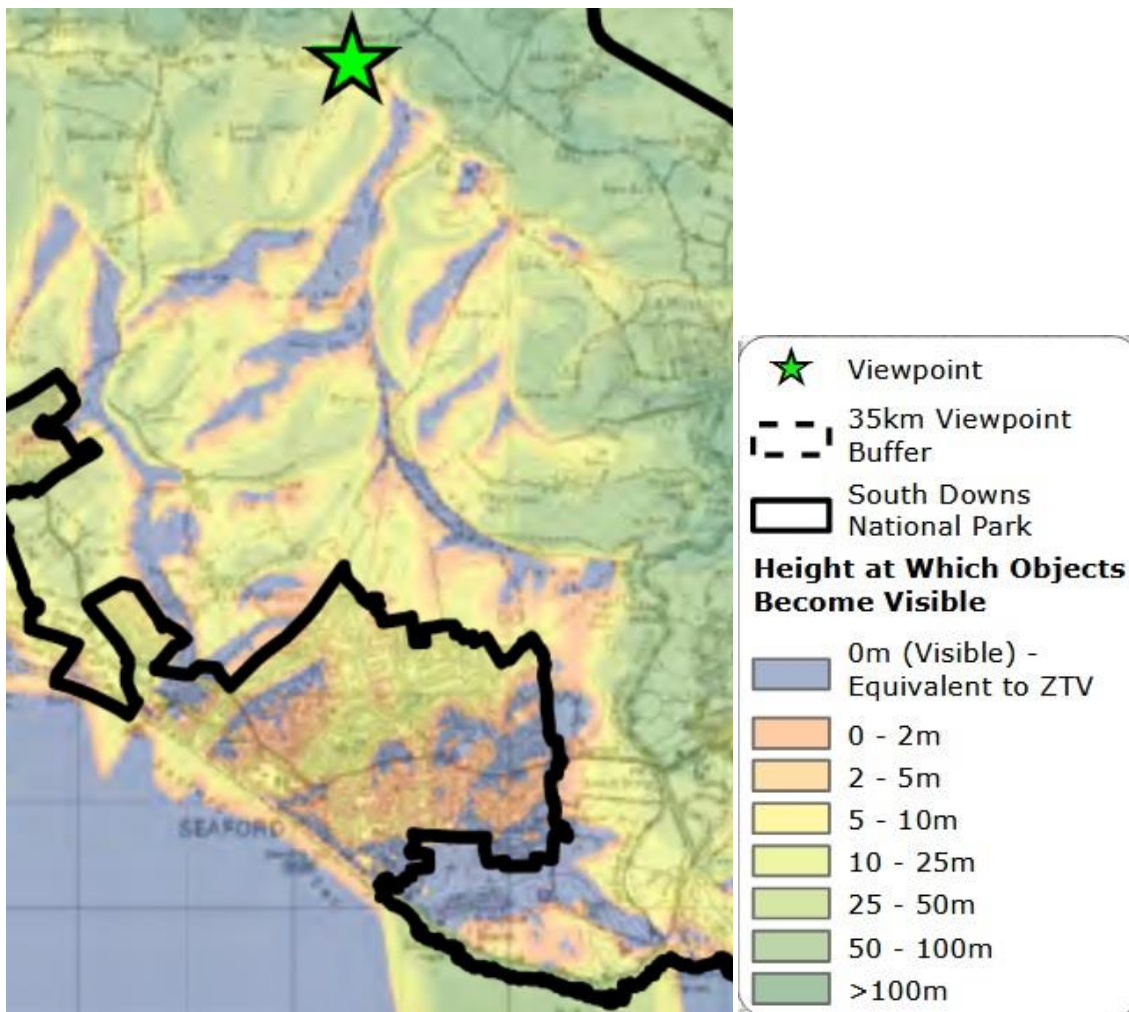


South Downs National Park Viewshed Analysis – Panoramic photographs towards Cuckmere Haven, South Hill Barn and Seaford Head taken from Viewpoint 6, High & Over

Viewpoint 7 – Firle Beacon

Located at a high point east of the River Ouse, this is a natural observation point where views extend over 360 degrees: north over the Low Weald, north-west to the historic landmark of Caburn Fort, south east along the scarp and south to the sea. The south eastern and eastern edges of Seaford are visible from this viewpoint as well as the eastern end of the seafront and certain central and western sites. It is noted in the South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment as a key view from Landscape Character Assessment H1 Ouse to Eastbourne Downs Scarp.

This viewpoint has been selected as a photographic monitoring point because it provides a good location from which to experience views from the scarp over the Low Weald.

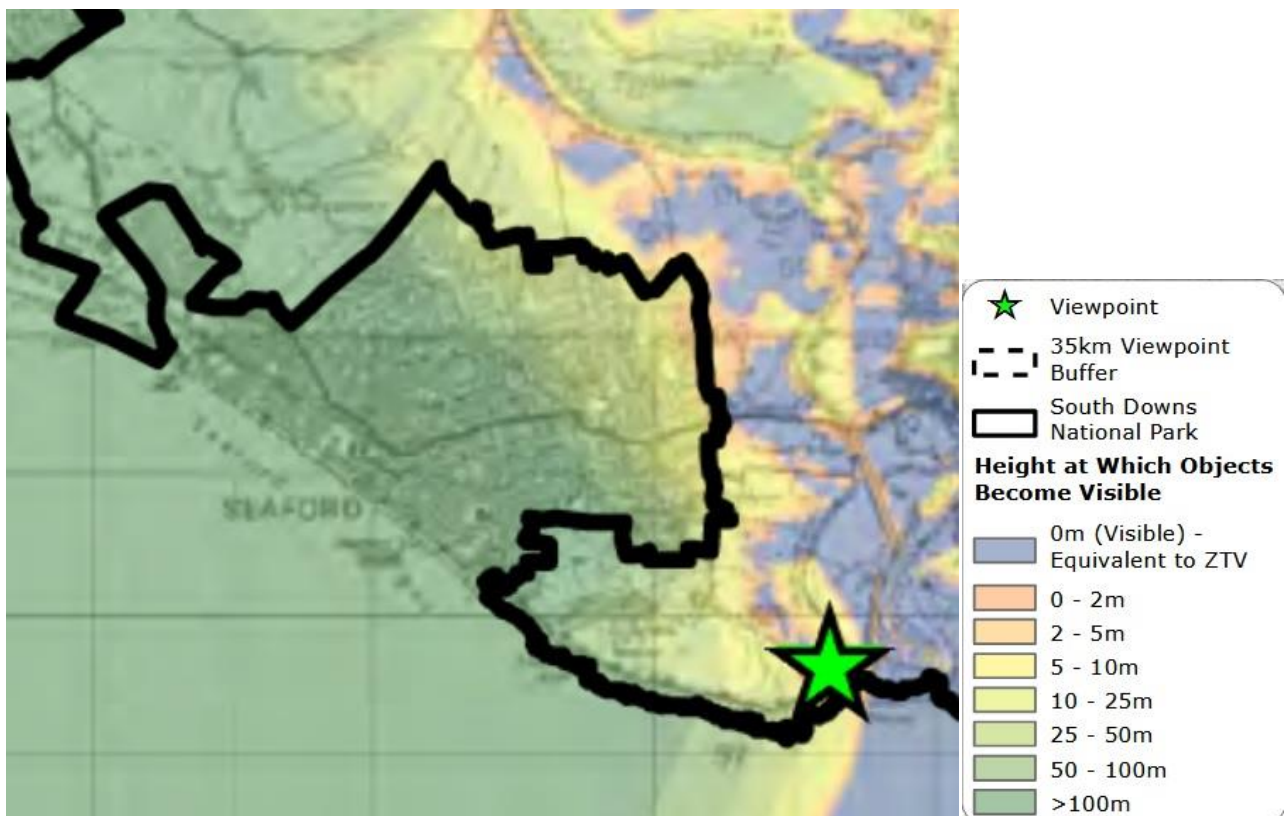




South Downs National Park Viewshed Analysis – 5 panoramic photographs from Cuckmere Haven to Newhaven taken from Viewpoint 7, Firle Beacon.

Viewpoint 20 – South Hill/Seaford Head

Views east towards the cliffs of the Seven Sisters with cottages at Cuckmere Haven in the foreground are available from South Hill, approached by a bridleway tucked away at Seaford's south eastern edge. This location provides views of some of the most iconic landscape features of the South Downs and is a popular location used for photography and paintings. It is a SDNP photographic monitoring viewpoint and this view is considered to be one of the best views in England as set out in The Guardian's '50 Best Views in England'. Views towards the eastern and north eastern edges of Seaford are also visible from this viewpoint.

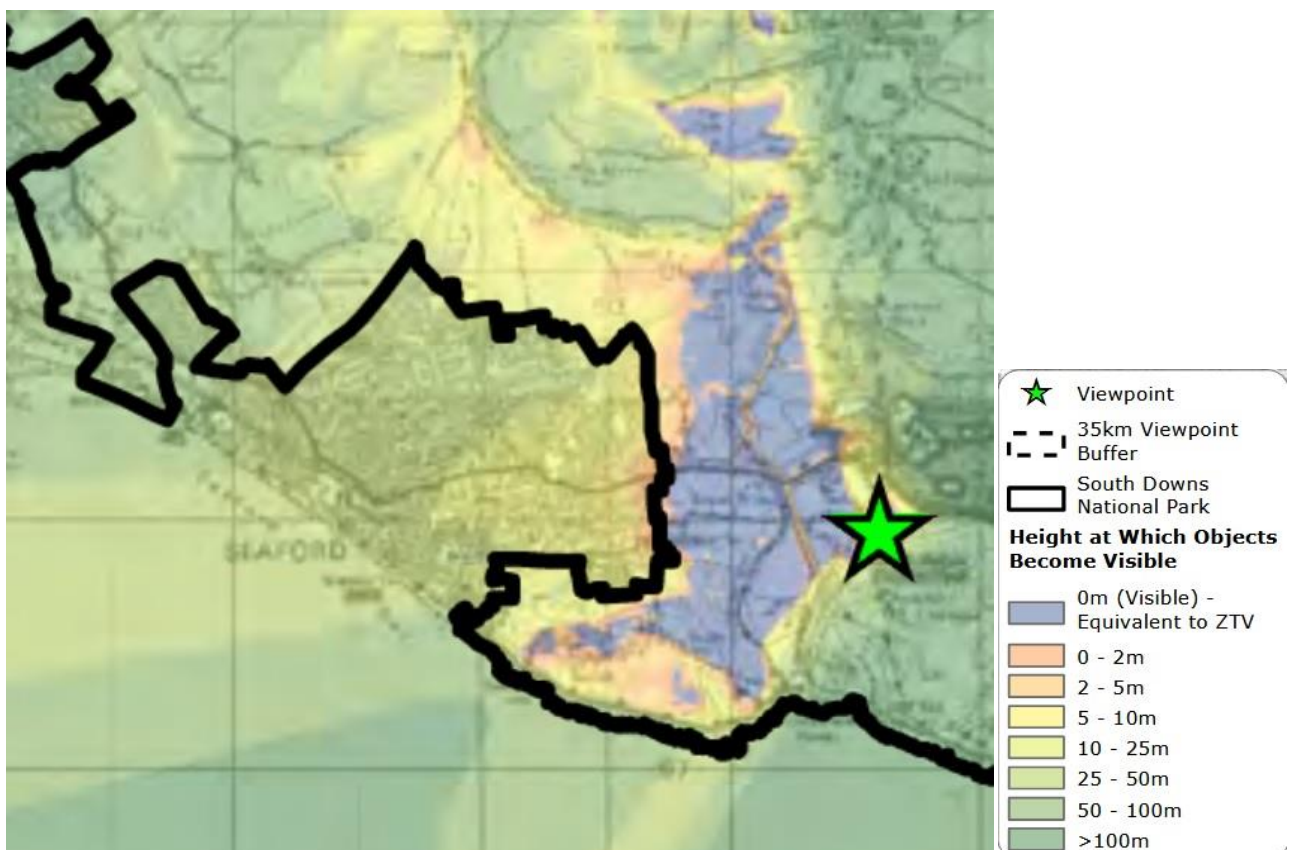




South Downs National Park Viewshed Analysis – Panoramic photograph of the Coastguard Cottages taken from Viewpoint 20, South Hill

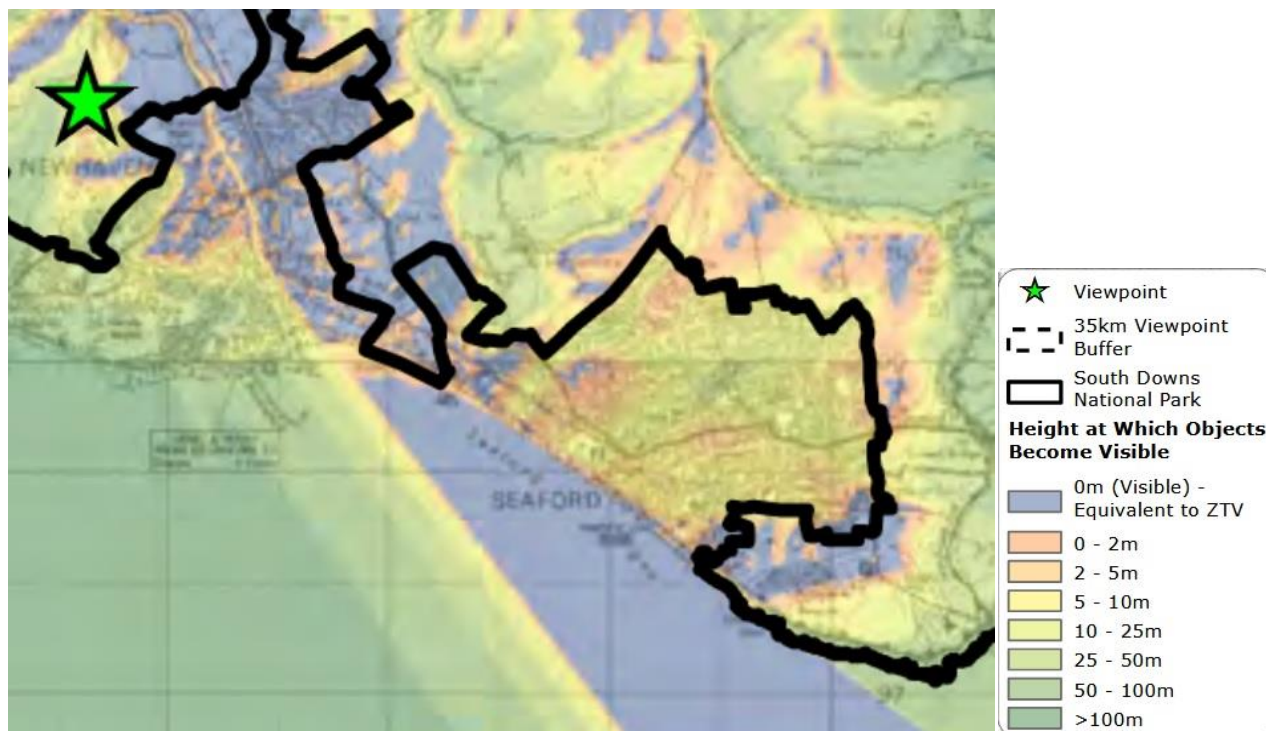
Viewpoint 46 – Seven Sisters Country Park

This viewpoint, on the South Downs Way and in the Seven Sisters Country Park, is a good location from which to view the Cuckmere meandering from the downs above. This view is noted in the literature for the South Downs Way and is widely photographed. The eastern edge of Seaford is visible from this viewpoint and parts of Seaford Head.

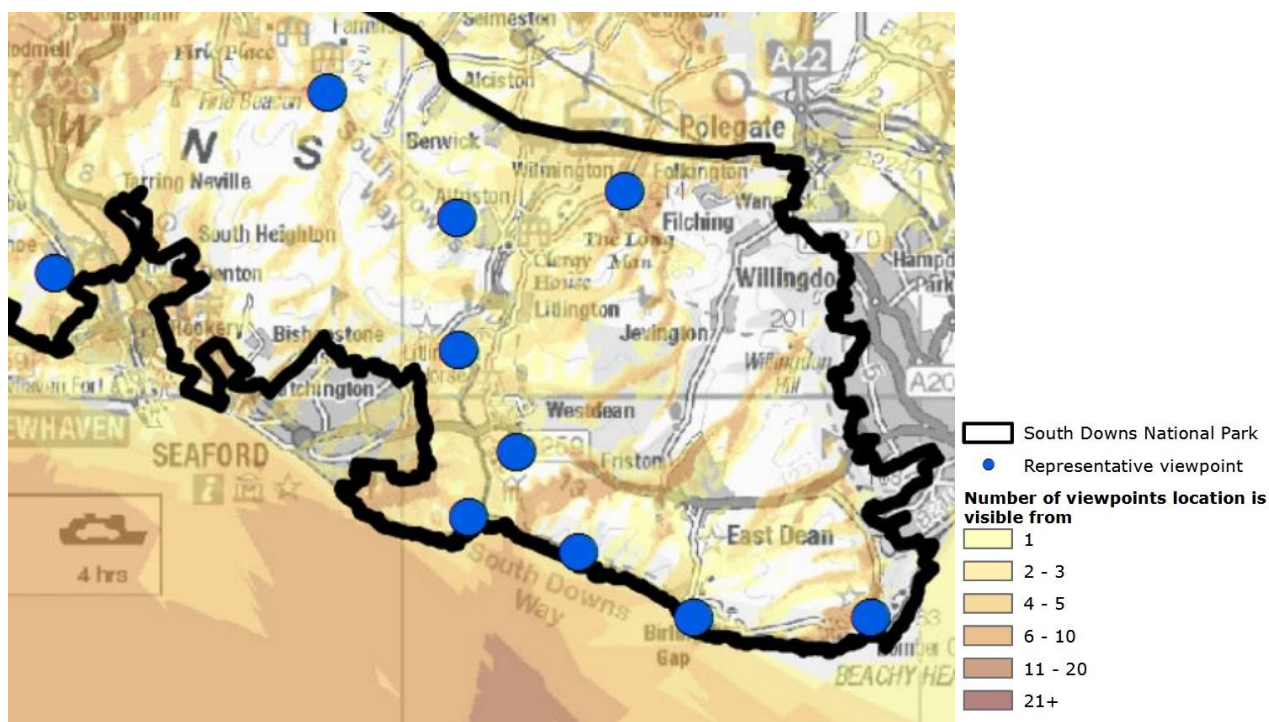


Viewpoint 51 – Nore Down above Piddinghoe

This viewpoint, located on a public footpath, provides views of western Seaford and south eastern Seaford and Seaford Head.

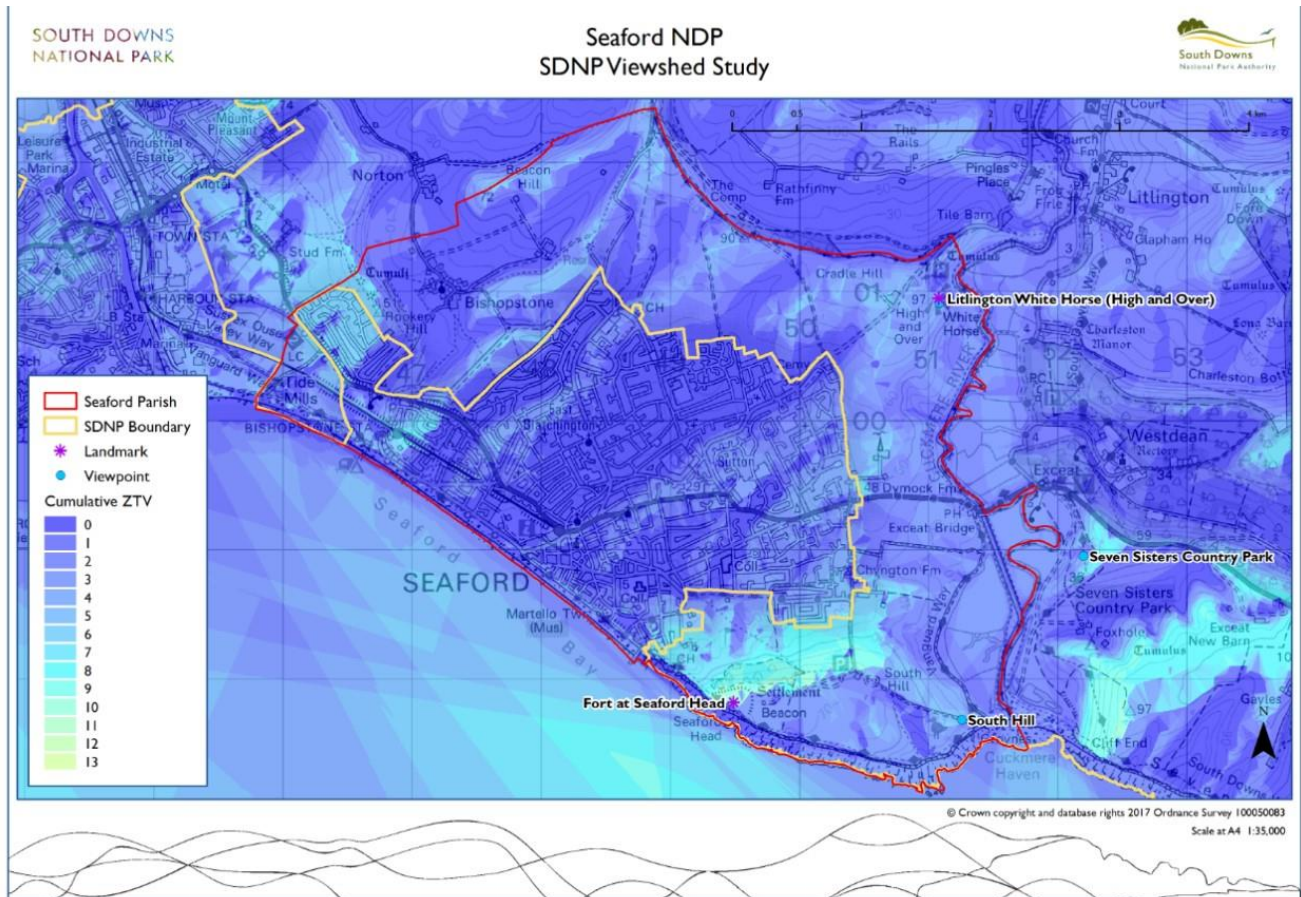


The following two maps show the cumulative analysis of visibility from the viewpoints. The first map shows Seaford from a distance and the location of the nearest viewpoints.



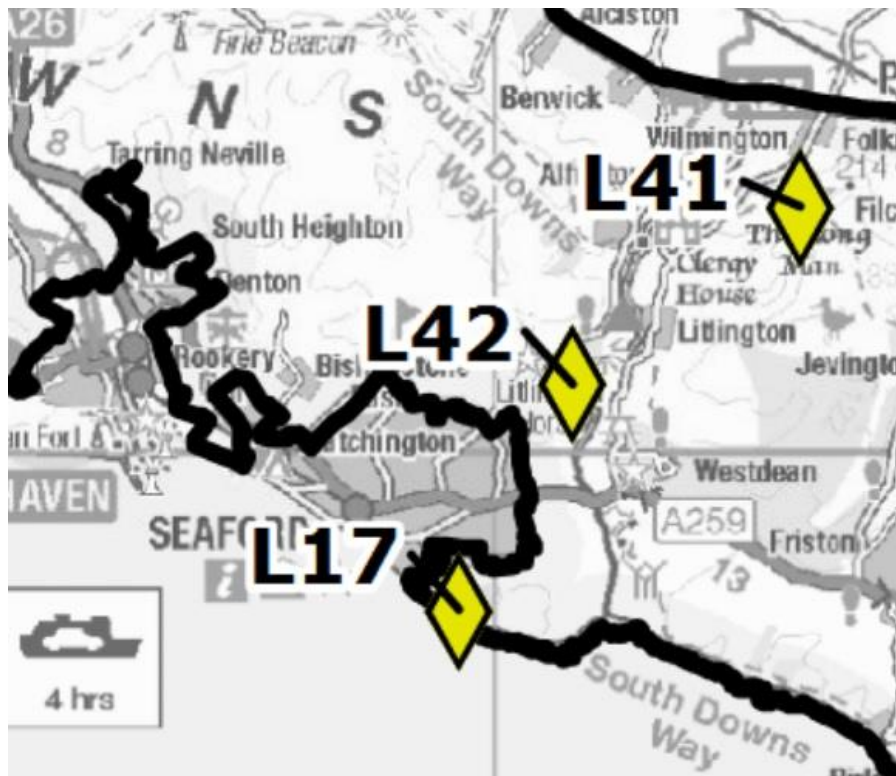
SDNPA Viewshed Characterisation and Analysis – Cumulative Zone of Theoretical Visibility

The second map shows the Seaford parish boundary, the SDNP boundary and the Cumulative Zone of Theoretical Visibility with the number of viewpoints visible based on bare earth conditions. The lighter the colour, the more viewpoints are visible.



3.3.2 Landmarks

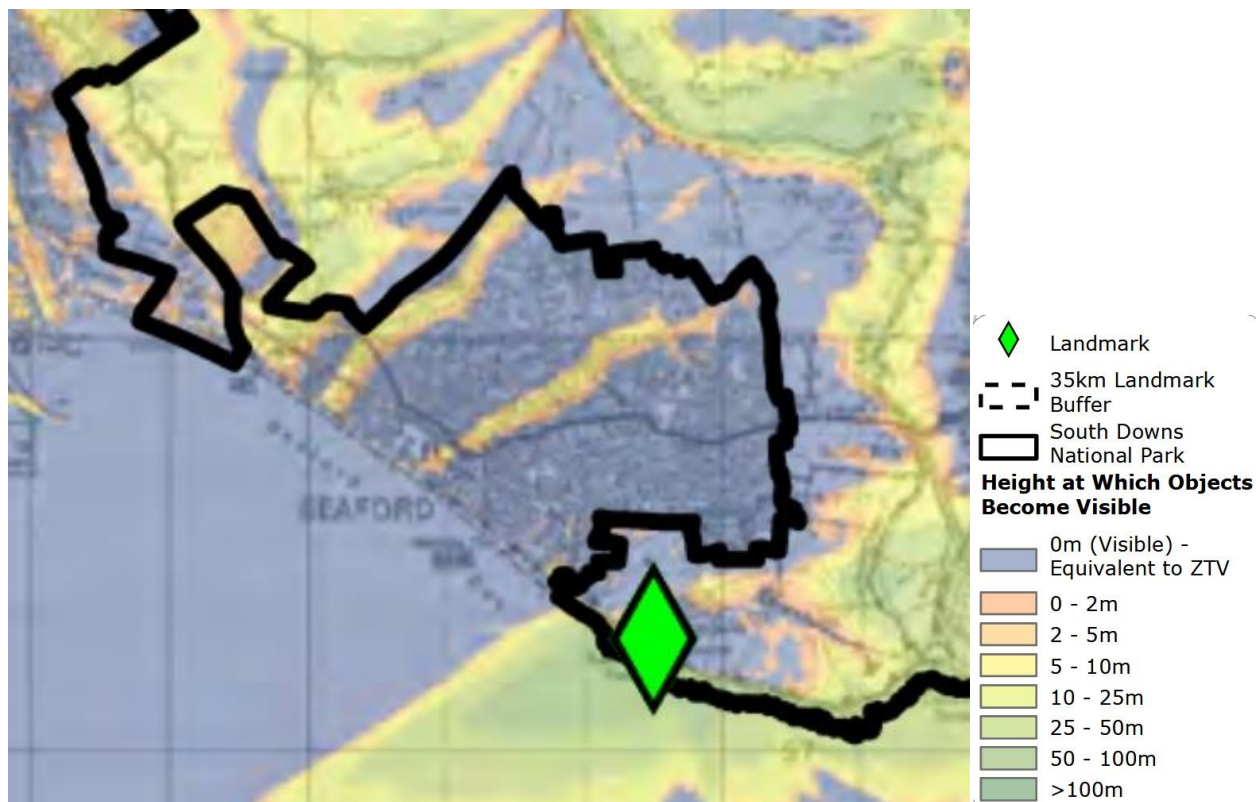
Within the report, 43 different landmarks were identified across the park. The map below shows the relevant landmark within the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan area: L17 – the Fort at Seaford,



SDNPA Viewshed Characterisation and Analysis Landmarks

Landmark 17 – Fort at Seaford

Panoramic views of virtually the whole of Seaford are possible from the Fort.



3.3.3 Special Qualities, Threats and Management Guidance

The SDNPA View Characterisation and Analysis (2015) identified two types of view that are present within the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan area:

- Views from chalk cliffs looking out to sea
- Views associated with major river valley floodplains

An analysis of special qualities, threats and management guidance has been undertaken by the SDNPA in respect of the various viewpoint types.

Views from chalk cliffs looking out to sea

These relate to viewpoints 1 - Beachy Head, 3 – Birling Gap and 20 – South Hill/Seaford Head and these viewpoints are also designated as photographic monitoring points.

Description

This view type includes views from the dramatic chalk cliffs, where the downs meet the sea at the east end of the National Park. The views are of the dramatic coastline and out to sea.

Special Qualities

The elevated position of these viewpoints on the downs above the coastal plain means they represent 'breathtaking views' that are noted in the first of the Park's special qualities. These views demonstrate the geology of the park and the dramatic chalk cliffs. It also reveals a rich variety of wildlife and habitats including herb-rich chalk grassland, chalk heath, maritime grassland, foreshore and chalk cliffs, river meanders, and Greensand reef sea cliffs (the second of the Park's special qualities), the tranquillity of the park (the third) and historic sites.

Threats

Threats to this view type could result from changes that affect the coastal chalk and cliff habitats, the dramatic form of the cliffs and undeveloped skylines, the undeveloped nature of the coastline and seascape, the long views along the cliffs and out to sea or inland views of undeveloped downs. Anything that forms an intrusive development in the view by day or night will change the view. The National Trust and the SDNPA both warned that breath-taking vistas from both Beachy Head and the Seven Sisters cliffs will be harmed by the sight of the Rampion wind farm on the horizon.

Aim & Management Guidance

The aim is to ensure that there remain opportunities to access and appreciate these views, and to ensure the special qualities recorded above are retained. In particular, it will be important to:

Maintain the long views along the cliffs and out to sea, particularly views that demonstrate the geology of the park, the dramatic chalk cliffs and open sea beyond.

- Maintain the undeveloped character of the downs and shoreline, particularly the undeveloped skylines.
- Minimise visibility of new development by day and by night – ensure it does not detract from the tranquillity associated with these viewpoints.
- Maintain the distinctive habitats that characterise the coastal edge including herb-rich chalk grassland, chalk heath, maritime grassland, foreshore and chalk cliffs, river meanders, and Greensand reef.

Views associated with major river valley floodplains

These relate to viewpoints 6, 7, 46 and 51. Viewpoints 6 and 7 are also designated monitoring points.

Description

This view type includes views from the downs over the distinctive wide, U shaped alluvial valleys that cut through the chalk and reach the sea in the south-eastern part of the National Park. There are also more contained views along the valley floors. These views often contain settlement which contrasts with the adjacent open downland.

Special Qualities

These views illustrate the distinctive wide U shaped valleys that cut through the chalk. The topography means these are often breathtaking views and it is these types of views that form some of the special qualities of the South Downs National Park. This view type often also reveals many of the other special qualities of the South Downs, such as the rich variety of wildlife and habitats (including some of the iconic chalk and wetland habitats of the South Downs), the sense of tranquillity associated with the valleys, the largely 'unspoilt' nature of the landscape and lack intrusive development.

Threats

Threats to this view type could result from changes that affect the iconic chalk and wetland habitats of the South Downs, the sense of tranquillity associated with the valleys, the largely 'unspoilt' nature of the landscape and lack of intrusive development, or form intrusive new developments within the view either by day or night.

Aim & Management Guidance

The aim is to ensure that there remain opportunities to access and appreciate these views over the valleys, and to ensure the undeveloped and unspoilt nature of the valleys within the views are retained. In particular, it will be important to:

- Maintain the ability to access these viewpoints and the dramatic topography that enables these breathtaking views.
- Maintain the distinctive U shaped valley topography and meandering course of the rivers.
- Maintain the rich variety of wildlife and habitats (particularly the iconic chalk and wetland habitats).
- Maintain the mostly 'unspoilt' nature of the valleys and general lack of intrusive development which result in a sense of tranquillity.
- Consider opportunities to remove existing intrusive development from views.

3.4 Significant Public Views - Views identified in Conservation Area Appraisals

There are four conservation areas within the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan area:

- Seaford Town Centre Conservation Area designated in 1969, extended in 1976 and 1988 and reviewed in 2005
- Bishopstone Conservation Area designated in 1976
- East Blatchington Conservation Area designated in 1976, extended in 1988 and reviewed in 2005
- Chyngton Lane Conservation Area designated in 1990

Retained Policy H5 of the Lewes District Local Plan 2003 seeks to protect significant public views affecting a conservation area and the following 27 views described in this section are defined in the relevant Conservation Area Appraisals.

Retained Policy H5 states:

Planning permission and/or listed building consent will be granted for developments within or near to Conservation Areas, provided that they:

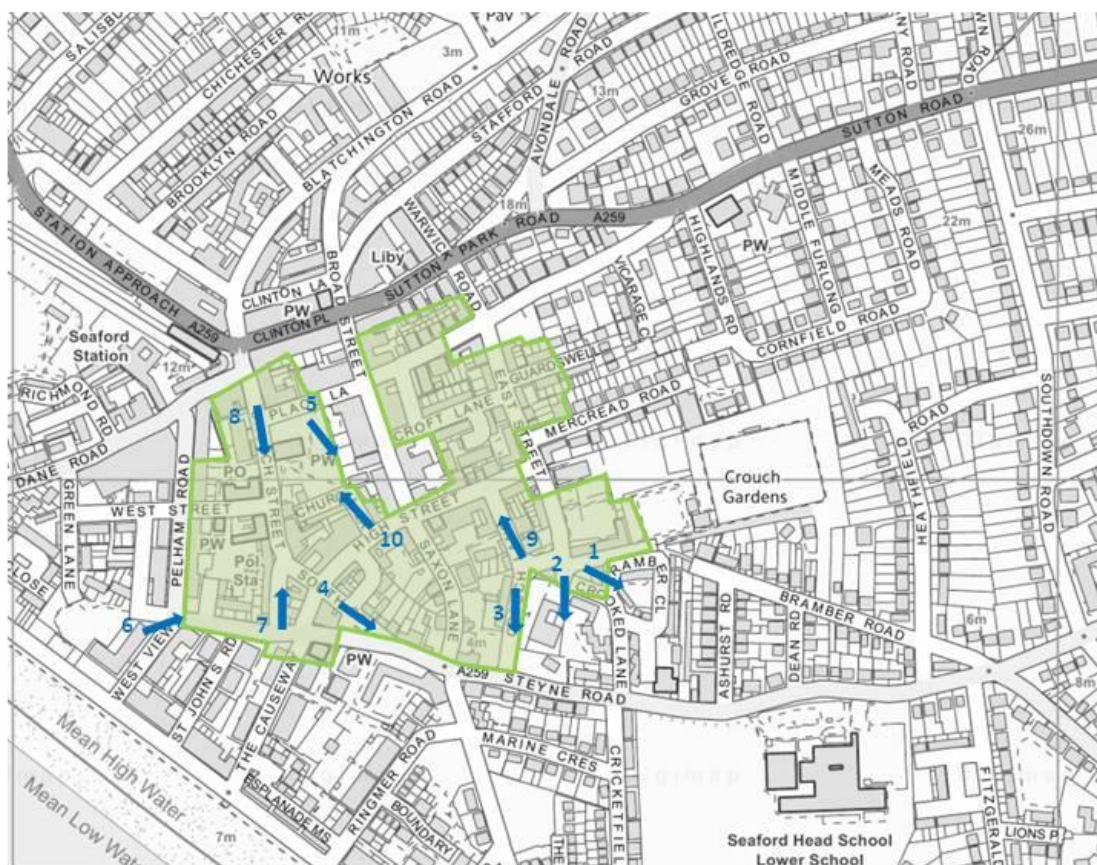
(f) protect open spaces, trees and significant public views

Unfortunately, despite the wording of this policy, planning applications have been granted that directly impact significant public views. For this reason, we have set out below the extracts from the relevant Conservation Area Appraisals that identify significant public views so that decision makers can be fully informed about the impact of development on these views when making planning decisions.

3.4.1 Seaford Town Centre Conservation Area

The town centre is located on rising ground from the coast, although not enough to provide many viewpoints. There are however several gaps through which glimpses of the sea, Seaford Head and the surrounding countryside can be seen, as well as views into the town of the church. One of these was from the top of the churchyard or Place Lane where a heartening glimpse of the cliffs at Seaford Head [could] be seen, connecting the bustling town with its coastal roots. A similar view can be enjoyed along South Street from the junction with Church Street. These views are important in the overall setting of the Conservation Area and should be considered when new development is proposed. In addition to views described in the Seaford Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal, the related Conservation Area map identifies further important views within the Conservation Area – Church Road, corner of Steyne Road and Pelham Road, Crouch Lane and St Leonard's church.

Unfortunately, a recent planning approval for development at Talland Parade now blocks the views towards Seaford Head from the churchyard and Place Lane. Glimpses of Seaford Head remain from Bramber Lane green space, the junction of South Street and Church Street, and the junction of Crouch Lane, Crooked Lane and East Street. The Martello Tower and the sea are also visible from this junction; however, the proposed development at the Constitutional Club may impact upon these.



Map showing Seaford Town Centre Conservation Area 1





1. Glimpse of Seaford Head from Bramber Lane green space



2. Glimpse of the sea next to the Constitutional Club



3. View to the Martello Tower and sea from the junction of East Street and Crouch Lane



4. Glimpse of Seaford Head from the junction of South Street and Church Street



5. View from the churchyard, where scaffolding now blocks the view towards Seaford Head



6. View from the corner of Steyne Road and Pelham Road



7. View northwards up Church Street towards the church



8. View southwards down Church Street



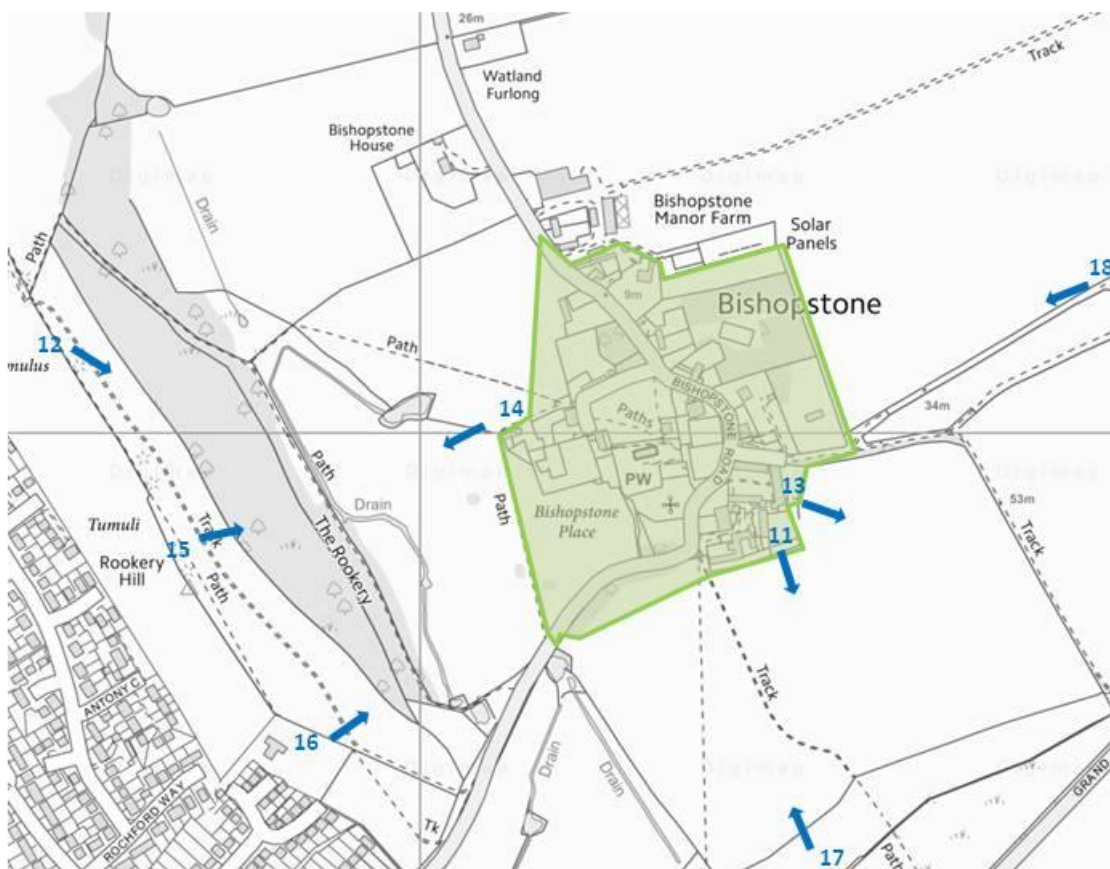
9. Crouch Lane



10. St Leonards Church

3.4.2 Bishopstone Conservation Area

There are many important views from the Bishopstone Conservation Area. These are primarily from the Churchyard southwards over low open fields (originally formal parkland of Bishopstone Place) towards the "Rookery Scarp" and the sea beyond. There are similar southerly views from the lower ground around Field Cottages. Views in the other directions are of the high and rolling open downland that surrounds the village. The most prominent view of the Conservation Area is as the village is approached from the south. The key elements of this view are the remote setting of the village in the valley and the nature of the downland ridgelines forming the valley; the dramatic setting of the Church amidst its fine setting of elms; and the undeveloped low, flat foreground. There are also important views from footpaths along the top of the Rookery scarp to the south west, looking down over the village. Another important view into the Conservation Area is from Manor Farm looking southwards towards the Church.



Map showing Bishopstone Conservation Area 2





11. View southwards over low open fields



12. Bishopstone south-eastwards to Seaford Head



13. Looking towards Grand Avenue



14. Looking towards Rookery Hill from Field Cottages



15. Looking down on Bishopstone from the west



16. Bishopstone in its setting



17. Bishopstone from the south



18. Bishopstone hidden in the valley taken from the east

3.4.3 East Blatchington Conservation Area

When approached from the north via Firle Road, the views into the Blatchington Conservation Area are that of a rural lane due to the tree-lined and informal nature of the road. Indeed from one point all that is visible is trees and two rustic outbuildings on the road edge. Views northwards up Firle Road are similar in Character.

At the north end of Blatchington Hill views south are of a closely-knit group of buildings, although from Blatchington Lane south views are of a road bounded by trees and flint walls, with development set back from the road. The focal point of views at the very southern end of the Conservation Area is the pond and its surroundings.

Unfortunately, the view of the sea from the top of Blatchington Hill, noted in the original Conservation Area appraisal, is no longer visible due to tree growth.





19. Firle Road looking south



20. Firle Road looking north



21. Blatchington Hill looking south to Seaford Head



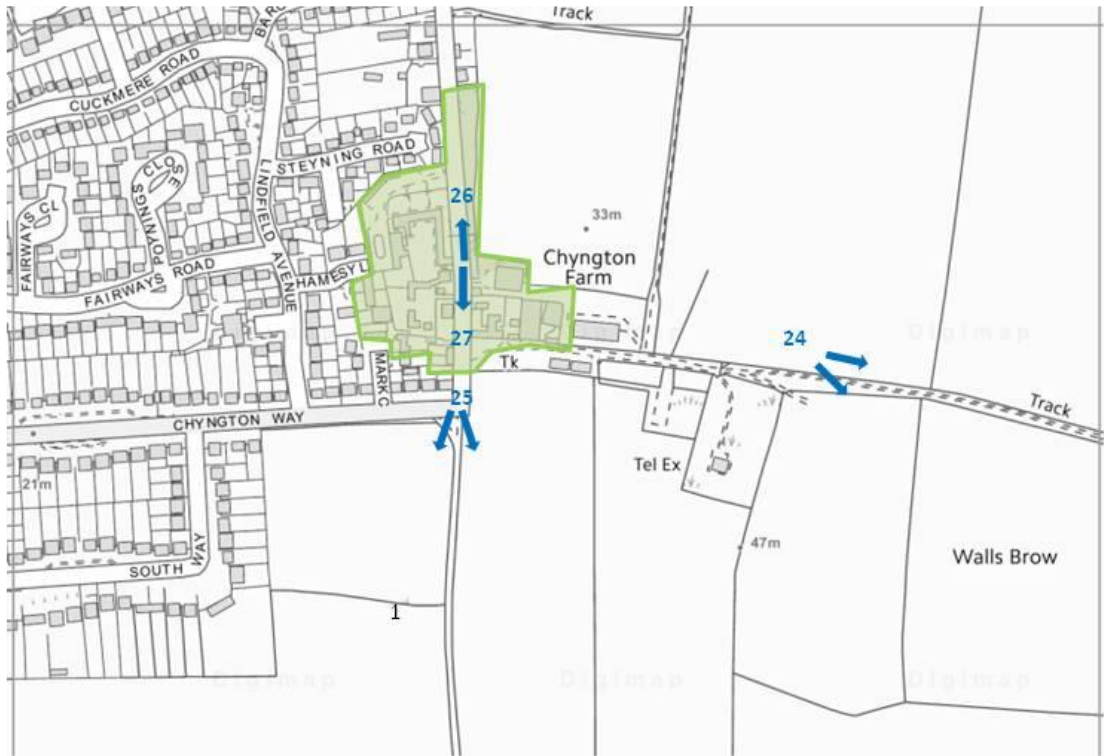
22. Blatchington Hill looking north



23. Blatchington Pond

3.4.4 Chyngton Lane Conservation Area

The Chyngton Lane Conservation Area retains the character of a downland hamlet notwithstanding that modern residential development abuts its western and northern boundaries. Panoramic views of the Downs are evident south from Chyngton Lane and east beyond the farm buildings. Looking north along Chyngton Lane, the appearance is that of a tree-lined country lane. There are attractive views into the Conservation Area from the north and south along Chyngton Lane.



Map showing Chyngton Lane Conservation Area 4



24. Panoramic views of the Downs south from Chyngton Lane



Panoramic views of the Downs south from Chyngton Lane



25. Panoramic views east beyond the farm buildings



Panoramic views east beyond the farm buildings



26. View looking north along Chyngton Lane



27. View looking south along Chyngton Lane

3.5 Significant Public Views – Views Selected by Residents

3.5.1 Criteria for selecting views

In addition to the 27 significant public views identified in the four conservation area appraisals, the following section describes the work carried out by the Team in 2017 to identify the further significant public views valued by both residents and visitors alike. The aim of the Team was to collect photographic evidence of the vital role that views play in how Seaford relates to its landscape, so these can be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

As described in 3.3.3 above, The SDNP View Characterisation and Analysis identified two types of view that are present within the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan area:

- Views from chalk cliffs looking out to sea
- Views associated with major river valley floodplains

The key views assessment process supports this, however, it has added more detail on the types and location of key views available within the parish. The Team decided that Seaford has three categories of views:

- a. Significant public views towards, from and within the National Park
- b. Seascape views
- c. Distinctive local views

Using the SDNP Safeguarding Views policy as a guide, the following criteria were established to provide guidance to the Team on how to identify important views:

- Views to and from viewpoints and sites of tourist and recreational interest including gateways to the National Park, coastline and the town;
- Views from publicly accessible areas (including rights of way and open access land) which are within, towards and from the town and which contribute to the viewers' enjoyment of the National Park, the coastline and the town;
- Views which include or relate to specific features relevant to the National Park, coastline and the town and their special qualities, such as heritage assets and biodiversity features;
- Where a key view is visible from more than one location, selection of the viewpoint which is most accessible, the most frequently visited and offers the most panoramic (least obstructed) view.

The Team visited all corners of the parish during April, May and June 2017 and took 262 photographs of views in the three categories. A screening was then held with all members of the Team to short list the views that best met the criteria. Many views were duplicated as they were taken in different weather and light conditions; from different angles or locations; taken with different perspectives; and re-taken to avoid traffic or because they were out of focus. The Team then considered visual sensitivity in order to reach the proposed final selection.

Visual Sensitivity

This assesses the sensitivity to changes in views and visual amenity attached to particular views.

Visual Susceptibility to Change and Visual Amenity

The susceptibility to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of:

- The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and
- The extent to which their attention or interest may be focussed on the views and visual amenity they experience.

The Team considered high visual susceptibility to change and visual amenity to be:

- Publicly accessible land where attention is focussed on the landscape and on particular views;
- Visitors to the National Park, the heritage coast, the seafront and other heritage assets around the town, whose attention or interest is likely to be focussed on the landscape and/or on particular views;

- Where change would have an immediately obvious and recognisable visual impact and where there is little scope for mitigating these potential impacts;
- Communities where views make an important contribution to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents; and
- People travelling on recognised scenic routes including the A259, Alfriston Road, National Cycle Route 2, the South Downs Way, and the Vanguard Way.

Twenty-three views were initially considered to have a high visual sensitivity and were, therefore, proposed at the public drop-in event on 11th July 2017. Following the event there was a two week period for residents to submit comments and 91 comments were received relating to views including suggestions for other views to be considered, particularly those on the urban fringe such as Grand Avenue. There were no comments wanting any views to be removed. The Team took a further 60 photographs and applied the same criteria described above. The Team has since established that one of the significant public views has already been identified in the Seaford Town Centre Conservation Area map, so this view of St Leonard's Church is now included within the Conservation Area section of this document. As a result of the 11th July 2017 consultation 5 new views were added creating a total of 28 significant public views selected by residents. These are shown in the map and photographs below. Together with the 27 significant public views identified in the Conservation Area Appraisals, this brings the total number of significant public views in Seaford to 55.



Key:

- A. Coastguard Cottages
- B. Panoramic view approaching Seaford from Alfriston near High & Over looking towards the Cuckmere Valley and South Hill Barn
- C. From the same viewpoint as B above, the panorama continues towards the west, overlooking Seaford
- D. View from south of Seaford Golf Club towards the Seven Sisters and the sea
- E. Kings Hedge from Grand Avenue footpath
- F. View from near Blatchington Reservoirs looking south west
- G. Looking towards Seaford and the sea from north of Coxwell Close
- H. View from Normansal Park Avenue field towards the farm at High & Over
- I. Heritage Coast at the corner of Southdown Road and Chyngton Road
- J. View from Seaford Head Nature Reserve above Lullington Close
- K. Cuckmere Valley, looking north from Chyngton Farm
- L. From South Hill Barn picnic area towards the Downs
- M. Seaford Bay looking west
- N. South Hill Barn and the Seven Sisters
- O. 6th Hole, Seaford Head Golf Course
- P. Chalvington Field looking towards Seaford Head
- Q. Looking east over Seaford towards Brighton from near South Hill Barn
- R. From Grand Avenue to Firle Beacon
- S. From Chyngton Way looking south east
- T. From Grand Avenue to Seaford Head
- U. From Grand Avenue to the Sea
- V. Seaford Bay looking east
- W. View from Buckle Bypass
- X. Seaford beach looking west
- Y. Martello Fields, Corsica Hall and Seaford Head
- Z. Steyne Road garden with the Conservation Area in the background
- AA. Crouch Gardens and flint archways
- AB. View through woodland at Normansal Park Avenue

3.5.2 Significant public views towards, from and within the National Park



A. Coastguard Cottages



B. Panoramic view approaching Seaford from Alfriston near High & Over looking towards the Cuckmere Valley and South Hill Barn.



C. From the same viewpoint as B above, the panorama continues towards the west, overlooking Seaford



D. View from south of Seaford Golf Club towards the Seven Sisters and the sea



E. Kings Hedge from Grand Avenue footpath



F. View from near Blatchington Reservoirs looking south west



G. Looking towards Seaford and the sea from north of Coxwell Close



H. View from Normansal Park Avenue field towards the farm at High & Over



I. Heritage Coast at the corner of Southdown Road and Chyngton Road



BB. View from Seafood Head Nature Reserve above Lullington Close



K. Cuckmere Valley, looking north from Chyngton Farm



L. From South Hill Barn picnic area towards the downs



M. Seaford Bay looking west



N. South Hill Barn and the Seven Sisters



O. 6th Hole, Seaford Head Golf Course



P. Chalvington Field looking towards Seaford Head



Q. Looking east over Seaford towards Brighton from near South Hill Barn



R. From Grand Avenue to Firle Beacon



S. From Chyngton Way looking south east

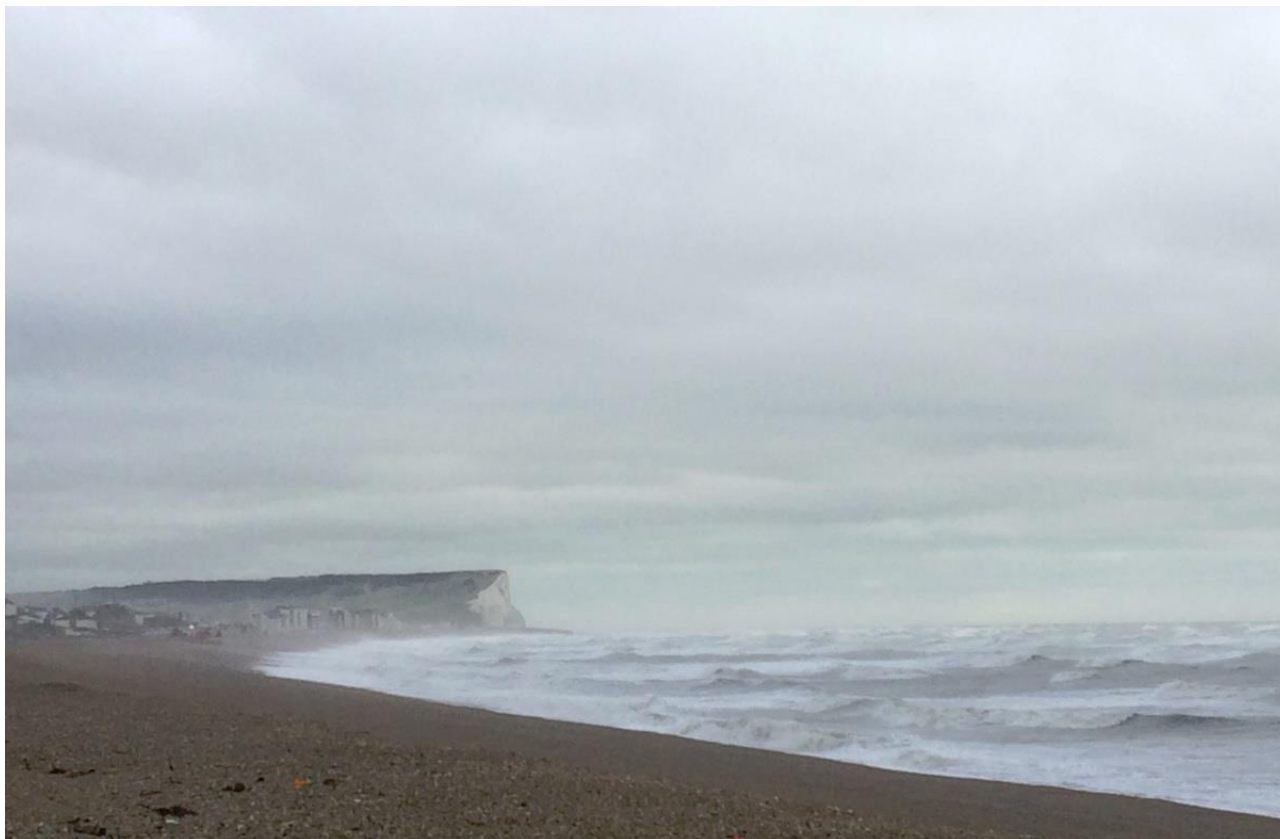


T. From Grand Avenue to Seaford Head



U. From Grand Avenue to the Sea

3.5.3 Seascape views



V. Seaford Bay looking east



W. View from Buckle Bypass



X. Seaford beach looking west

3.5.4 Distinctive local views



Y. Martello Fields, Corsica Hall and Seaford Head



Z. Steyne Road garden with the Conservation Area in the background



AA. Crouch Gardens and flint archways



AB. View through woodland at Normansal Park Avenue

4. Issues, Threats and Mitigation

The South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2005) and View Characterisation and Analysis (2015) identified sensitivities and threats for the landscape character areas that fall within a neighbourhood plan area. The following issues and threats to the landscape in the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan area were identified by the Focus Group and should be considered as a supplement to the findings of these assessments:

- Erosion, demand for access, parking problems, facilities and conflicts of interest arising from diverse recreational use of the SDNP and Heritage Coast. Care should be taken before proposing any significant increase in visitor numbers or new visitor infrastructure to ensure the landscape and views will not be undermined.
- Develop and implement projects to conserve and enhance heritage and archaeological features, and use these to help promote responsible tourism and understanding of the SDNP and Heritage Coast to the general public.
- Since the open downs are adjacent to urban areas it is likely that there will be ongoing pressures for development and change on the urban fringes that lie within the setting of the SDNP. Changes outside the SDNP designated area will impact on the landscape character and views of the open Downs. Measures should be taken to conserve and enhance the unique coastal landscape and retain its open character and uninterrupted views.
- The quality of the views to and from the Downs and Heritage Coast in Seaford and the low capacity it has to absorb development of any significant size, emphasises the need for very careful scrutiny of the proposed location and design of any new development in this landscape.

- Inappropriate development in the setting of the SDNP, Heritage Coast or along the shoreline impacting on views. Maintain the largely undeveloped character of the shoreline, the SDNP and Heritage Coast. Any development should take account of the setting of the SDNP, the Heritage Coast, the shoreline and the Seaford Head Gateways. Measures should be incorporated to protect the buffer zone between the built up area and open downland; reflect the open character of the surrounding downland; be low density and low rise; conserve and enhance views and biodiversity. Building design should be of high quality, and the design, scale and mass of the units should reflect the material, finishes and elements of Seaford's historic character.
- Good quality agricultural land should not be given over to development at a time when it may be needed for agricultural purposes.
- Climate change and resultant changes to precipitation and temperature could impact upon the species composition of habitats, lead to increased incidence of different pests and possible increased use of pesticides, alter the open character of the downs through a demand for growth in biomass crops or demand for wind energy development intruding into open skylines. It could also impact on the rate of coastal erosion.
- Intensification of agricultural production could result in increased erosion, siltation of rivers and pollution of groundwater. It could also result in farm buildings becoming redundant and being converted or insensitively changed.
- Inappropriate sea and coastal erosion defences. The overall management objective should be to conserve the exposed, wild character of the shoreline and protect it from built development and insensitive engineering works.
- Greater recreational use of beaches and the resultant increase on traffic, congestion, tourist facilities and signage. Care should be taken to ensure the shoreline and views will not be undermined.

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Sussex University:
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