**Seaford Neighbourhood Plan**

**Local Economy & Facilities Focus Group (Working Paper (as at 19th March 2017)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

The Town of Seaford is privileged to be located in one of the most beautiful locations in the UK. There is a strong sense of community in The Town with a peaceful and tranquil environment. These qualities are what attract the Town’s visitors. With reasonable transport links to Lewes, Brighton, London and beyond by train, as well as the A259 road connection (with its regular bus service) means that the majority of Seaford is a “connected” destination. Seaford has seen a doubling of its population since the 1960’s making it the largest town in the district. However, with population growth and a need for an additional (minimum) 185 net additional housing units, there is the need to ensure the necessary local services, infrastructure and economy, support the growth in the population

This report is one of four Focus Group Evidence Reports being put forward to inform the Neighbourhood Planning Process, **Note: This report follows from the Economy and Facilities Draft Evidence Report (made available at the Public Consultation event on 30th November 2016 and on our web site) The November Draft Report made proposals for further work and should be read in conjunction with this report which gives the results of the further work.** [[1]](#footnote-1)

We have consulted widely: including members of the public and various local stakeholders (for example, the Seaford Chamber of Commerce, Tourist Information Office, etc.) This report will form the basis of the consultation of: statutory consultees; adjoining Parishes; etc – see Annex B.

**Approach to our work**

We have used the phrase “policy recommendations” deliberately in this report as we recognise that as this Neighbourhood Plan progresses, some of our policy recommendations may best be considered outside of this Plan’s framework, but have included them here to ensure that the valuable input we have gathered is taken forward. Equally, some of our recommendations are supporting the existing policy framework, which will require no new additional policies, but rather sets out the need for adhering to existing planning policy that is already in place.

The specific work of this focus group is now complete. We will now formally pass this report to the Steering Group and the Housing & Development Focus Group because:

1. This report will also support the Plan’s Steering Group in assessing what formal policies can be put forward into the Plan specifically to support the local economy and facilities for the community; and
2. For the Housing Focus Group this document will be a key evidence source for this Group as they continue to assess where, and what, is the most appropriate development for Seaford as part of this Plan.

We are keen to emphasise that this does not mean the end of consultation with stakeholders and the community, but rather that the work we have done can now inform the wider evolution of the Plan.

**The Overall Vision for Seaford**

The overall Vision(currently in draft) of the Neighbourhood plan is that by 2030 Seaford will have

* retained **its strong sense of community**
* made **greater use of the seafront, heritage assets** and its position as a gateway to the National Park;
* promoted **sympathetic development** respecting the tranquil character of its historic nature;
* improved **the economic environment and social wellbeing** of residents and visitors alike;
* retained **green open spaces, seafront and spectacular views;**
* improved **the transport infrastructure** so that, town centre, railway stations and outlying areas of the town are readily accessible for all;
* expanded **the rich and diverse mix o**f independent shops, light industrial services, businesses, community and tourist facilities;.
* addressed the **shortfall in visitor accommodation**
* widened the **Town’s economic base**

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**Aim and Objectives of this Focus Group**

The aims and objectives below are based upon:

* Answers to the relevant questions in the Neighbourhood Survey undertaken to support the Neighbourhood Plan Process;
* Input from the Workshops held regarding the Neighbourhood Plan;
* The input of the Focus Group and the Steering Group;
* Initial discussion with stakeholders; and
* A range of data sources that we have researched.

A list of the key sources and events utilised to date is included in Annex A.

**Our Aim** has been **:** To examine what enhancements need to be made to the economic infrastructure, physical infrastructure and facilities to promote sustainable development throughout The Town.

In delivering the above aim the Focus Group had the following **objectives**:

1. Examine what can be done to support the local economy, for example tourism, especially to take advantage of our natural assets;
2. To understand the current status of the infrastructure, including educational and medical facilities and the utilities (gas, electric, water, sewage and telephony) and their current ability to expand capacity (if any) in the Town;
3. To examine whether there is the need for any additional social infrastructure such as a community centre or youth facilities;

**SWOT Analysis for Group**

To inform and shape the above objectives, we undertook a SWOT analysis

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| --- | --- |
| **Strengths:**   * A stunning coastline and the South Downs National Park; * Unspoilt seafront with excellent vistas and accessibility; * Good sports facilities; * Seaside gateway to the South Downs National Park; * Number of national cycle routes run through the Town; * A vibrant town centre with a good mix of shops, restaurants, pubs, banks and facilities; * Excellent film location. | **Weaknesses:**   * A potential lack of school provision; * NHS services under continued pressure; * Lack of facilities for young people; * Potential under-provision of tourist accommodation; * Lack of affordable and accessible community “space” * No start up business incubator centre; * Disconnect between seafront (main visitor attraction) and Town Centre, including lack of signage. |
| **Opportunities:**   * To enhance tourism in the Town; * To improve youth and community facilities * To promote sustainable development which supports our strong environment and countryside assets. | **Threats:**   * Increased population growth without the necessary infrastructure; * Seafront does not receive the necessary maintenance it requires. * Health and education services become insufficient. |

***Next Steps***

The combination of the above 5 bullet points created a strong foundation of evidence that was presented on the 30th November at the major consultation evening to get evidence from Town Residents, as well as being made available on our website.After this event we have sought input from a range of stakeholders to both discuss our ideas and get further evidence to inform our eventual recommendations. Annex B sets out a list of the key Stakeholders we have approached. We have continued our strong dialogue with residents through further consultation, including questionnaire(s).

The remainder of this report now sets out evidence against each of the above three objectives, which combined will deliver the aim we have set for this Focus Group. Like other Focus Groups, we have also been very aware of the fact that our role is to look at where we think the Neighbourhood Plan can make recommendations which **add** to the policy framework, which we refer to as our Policy Recommendations. As a result, we have undertaken a full review of what we see as the key current policy framework – this is set out fully in Annex C, but overall covers:

1. The National Planning Policy Framework[[2]](#footnote-2);
2. Lewes District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy[[3]](#footnote-3); and
3. Specific policies that Lewes District Council already have.[[4]](#footnote-4)

As a result, the report also sets out where we think an issue is important, but where additional recommendations are not needed. A key example would be with regard to Seaford’s retail offering where, for example, Core Strategy 6 of the Lewes District Council Core Strategy Part 1 sets out a robust policy already.

***OBJECTIVE 1: EXAMINE WHAT CAN BE DONE TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL ECONOMY,(****for example tourism, especially to take advantage of our natural assets)* 

**National Policy Framework**

The Town is fortunate to be undertaking its Neighbourhood Plan within a strong policy framework. At national level, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out the need for sustainable development which includes the following statement about sustainability:

* ***an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;***
* ***a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being;[[5]](#footnote-5)***

Lewes District Council (LDC) also has a very robust policy framework. In relation to the local economy the Focus Group in particular wants to draw out the following approach by LDC:

**LDC’s overall approach to infrastructure (**Core Policy 7 of the Joint Core Strategy)

The Focus Group is very pleased that LDC has three key policies regarding infrastructure and access:

ST1 (Infrastructure Provision) Replaced by Core Policy 7 of the JCS states: ***Development will not be permitted unless the District Council is satisfied that the infrastructure directly required to service the development, including foul drainage, water supply, education facilities, social infrastructure and transportation are available or will be provided in time to serve the development.***

* ST5 & ST6 (Access for People with Limited Mobility): [Note: Deleted when assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework. Now covered by other regulatory controls.]
  + ST5 states: ***In order to ensure that pedestrian environments are designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities the local authority will have regard to this matter both in determining planning applications and in the design of environmental enhancement schemes. The local authority will be mindful of the standards recommended by the Institution of Highways and Transportation in respect of a barrier-free environment.***
  + ST6 states: ***Proposals for new buildings (or for the alteration or change of use of existing buildings) which are/will be open to the public or are/will be used for employment, leisure, recreation, community services and education or transport purposes shall provide external ground surfaces and approach routes which facilitate easy accessibility to the building by wheelchair users***
* All of our work to date supports*the approach to infrastructure set out in LDC’s existing policy framework.* Indeed, as we cover below in relation to issues such as healthcare provision, it is clear that strict adherence to the policies is necessary. 87% of respondents to our Focus Group’s Survey were in favour of any future development ensuring there is the necessary infrastructure nearby, and where easy access is “built-in”. We specifically engaged with the Seaford & Newhaven Access Committee and they will continue to look at a number of issues as they arise to address them.

**Policy Recommendation 1:** We fully support upholding the approach to infrastructure set out in LDC’s existing policy framework.

**Retail and Sustainable Town & Local Centres**

Of the1100 responses to the **Neighbourhood Plan Survey,** 909 respondents agreed that the Town Centre of Seaford should be protected from non-retail development to preserve it as a viable town centre. Additionally, there were 116 mentions in the Neighbourhood Plan Survey of the need for supermarkets and shops and 58 mentions for cafes/ pubs/ restaurants/coffee bars and visitor accommodation. The Focus Group agrees and has looked at this area in detail, starting with the Regeneration Strategy and the existing policy framework. To support retail centres, the LDC Core Strategy defines Seaford as a “Main Town Centre” and it states on page 102:

***Core Policy 6 – Retail and Sustainable Town and Local Centres***

***Key Strategic Objectives:***

* ***To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the district’s town centres, retail centres and local centres as hubs for shopping, business, entertainment, cultural and community life.***
* ***To stimulate and maintain a buoyant and balanced local economy through regeneration of the coastal towns, towns, support for the rural economy and ensuring that the economy is underpinned by a balanced sector profile.***

This is a strong policy framework for both the economy and Seaford’s retail centre. This is further under-pinned by a range of LDC policies, a list of which is fully set out in Annex C. The combination of these policies creates a very strong “under-pinning” for the Town, especially policies E3, E4 and E5 {Replaced by CP6] These set out how LDC will look at development to promote the viability and vitality of town centres and about the impact of changing retail to non-retail purposes.

Additionally, policy E4 allows residential development above ground floor level and we have considered whether this policy is sufficiently well-known. 89% agreed in the questionnaire (see Annex F) that residential flats above retail premises in the town centre should be encouraged.

We also note that, in response to the Neighbourhood Plan survey, over 40% of those who run business or are self-employed, said they needed no additional facilities. The totality of LDC’s current policy framework, and with recognition that the role of the Neighbourhood Plan is to add to the policy framework and to only suggest policy that is proportionate, we do not believe any further policy is needed regarding Seaford’s retail offering. Rather, we think the existing policy framework should be fully upheld.

All of our work to date support*s the existing policy framework covering the economy, retail and town centres being given full weight when considering future development in Seaford.* 89% of respondents to our Focus Group’s survey supported the existing approach of seeking to plan for homes above shops and 83% in favour of enhancing and preserving the retail centre of Seaford

**Policy Recommendation 2:** That the existing policy framework regarding the economy, retail and town centres is given full weight when considering future development in Seaford as this will support the Town maintaining its commercial, retail and leisure services. Building residential dwellings above non-residential premises should be actively encouraged.

**Business incubator**

Whilst 67% of people in response to our survey were in favour of looking at the concept of a “business incubator” what became clear was that the priority was office accommodation for all – including start-ups. Given the pressures on business, we worked through the Chamber of Commerce where about 80 of their members gave their views in a survey. Overall the key findings were:

* 76% believed there was demand for an Enterprise Centre;
* 67% of respondents stated the need for office accommodation;
* 57% of respondents stated the need for flexible start-up accommodation;
* 52% saw a lack of suitable business accommodation as their highest challenge to growth;
* 43% ranked high costs as the greatest challenge; and
* Only about 1 in 5 said a lack of skilled labour was a growth challenge.

The concept of an Enterprise Centre was based on the “Newhaven Enterprise Centre” which was established in 2007 in partnership with Lewes District Council – full details of this can be seen on their website at: <http://www.basepoint.co.uk/locations/newhaven>.

In summary, as their website states the Newhaven Enterprise Centre provides:

***“fully managed office space in Newhaven. With a range of small furnished incubator units for start-ups, workshops, and larger units aimed at businesses with one to fifteen people our managed office space provides a range of modern business facilities including high speed broadband, serviced meeting rooms, breakout areas, mail and phone service and free parking.”***

The Centre is currently at 91% capacity, with its core strengths being flexibility of tenure, cost, facilities and location.

Given the feedback from the business community, we can see the benefit of such a facility being incorporated into the development plans for Seaford given the growth and job opportunities this could spur for the local community. Given Newhaven’s high occupancy this supports the potential demand.

**Policy Recommendation 3**: As the housing group looks at future development of the Town, active consideration should be given to the viability of a Seaford Enterprise Centre, working within the same principles set out in Policy Recommendation 2 above.

**Promoting sustainable tourism**

An overwhelming majority, 85%, of respondents to the Neighbourhood Plan Survey, agreed that tourism is vital to the local economy to ensure local businesses remain viable. We have also had an initial engagement with the Town’s Tourist Information Office, and the answers to the brief questionnaire are set out in Annex D. Discussion with Accommodation Providers has also been undertaken which provided some useful input and evidence – this is set out in Annex E. As a result, the Focus Group has thought about this issue in three ways:

1. The availability of visitor accommodation;
2. Whether full advantage is taken of the natural assets that Seaford has – notably the Seafront and being a seaside gateway to the South Down’s National Park; and
3. Overall facilities for visitors.

Below we explore each of these three areas, but before we do, we wanted to note the strong policy framework delivered by the Core Strategy and Policy E10[ Replaced by CP6]

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* The Core Strategy on page 98 states:

***Core Policy 5 – The Visitor Economy***

***Key Strategic Objectives:***

* + ***To take advantage of the richness and diversity of the district’s natural and heritage assets to promote and achieve a sustainable tourism industry in and around the district.***

Policy E10 [Replaced by CP6] states:

***Planning permission will be granted for tourism facilities which make the most effective use of the District’s cultural, natural and historic assets, subject to compliance with all relevant District-Wide Policies.***

The Focus Group again acknowledges the strong basis this provides as it explores the above three areas in detail below.

**Visitor accommodation*:*** Whilst the Focus Group recognises that the Town could benefit from additional visitor accommodation, from a policy perspective we have concluded that Lewes District Council already has a strong policy framework in place, in particular:E11, E12 & E13 [Replaced by CP5]

* + – Hotels, Gust Houses and other Services Accommodation
  + E14 – Bunk House Accommodation
  + E15 – Existing Camping/ Touring Caravan Sites

E16 & E18 [Replaced by CP5] [now covered by other regulations– New Camping Touring Caravan SitesE19 [Covered now by other regulations- Static Holiday Caravan Sites

As a result, it is our view that no additional policy is required through the Neighbourhood Plan given our role is to suggest additional policy. Our view is that visitor accommodation could become available if there was sufficient economic demand for more to be provided. Economic growth is therefore the key.

The Focus Group believes that whilst the policy framework with respect to visitor accommodation is sufficient, it is recognised that enhancing and encouraging additional accommodation offerings in the Town would be good for the local economy. We have asked the Housing Focus Group to give weight to this as it continues to develop its work.

**Policy Recommendation 4:** The existing policy framework supporting the visitor economy is sufficient. However, we would ask the Housing Focus Group to give due regard to the needs of visitor accommodation provision, and to enhance, encourage and preserve it where possible.

***Taking full advantage of the Town’s natural assets***

Seaford’s Seafront is a key asset both in terms of flood defence, recreation, tourism and natural beauty. Thankfully, the Town already has a strong policy framework through Lewes District Council’s policies SF14, SF15 and SF16. In effect, there is already policy in place to ensure that the beautiful vistas and unspoilt seafront is preserved as a natural asset of the Town. This should be fully upheld.

However, the Focus Group also recognises that there is the need to consider how best this natural asset can be enhanced, and much work has been done by the Seaford Community Partnership to establish the public’s views on the Seafront. There were a major consultation exercises in 2010 (questionnaire) and a ses front exhibition held in 2012 where 850 people took part and below is an overview of the key issues deemed as needing to be looked at[[6]](#footnote-6):



The Focus Group believes that many of these issues still need to be delivered to help promote the economy and tourist appeal of the Town.

Unsurprisingly, given previous Community engagement and the current planning policy for Seaford, over 96% of respondents to our questionnaire were in favour of enhancing the Town’s main tourism “asset”, the Seafront, to support the local economy, visitor numbers and the opportunities and enjoyment for residents. Respondents to the survey however stated that enhancements should only be made if its unspoilt character Is retained.

The Town Council are currently consulting on their Seafront Development Plan which is likely to include the following ideas put forward in the questionnaire exercise and the Seafront Exhibition in 2012:

* Beach huts to hire;
* Children’s play area including a sandpit, trampolines, large “board games”;
* A café with inside and outside area that provides catering facilities throughout the day.

However, the key issue remains signage, with no obvious signage from the A259.

One of the key issues for local business was the ease and cost of parking. We understand from the local authorities that enhancing and preserving parking flexibility and options, including the current free parking on the Seafront, will remain.

**Policy Recommendation 5:** The existing policy framework to enhance and preserve the unspoilt character should be robustly enforced. The “free parking” policy on the Seafront is key to encouraging tourism, with a dedicated coach bay (with drop off point in the town centre) being beneficial).

***Facilities for tourists:***

The Focus Group has also looked at how it could enhance Seaford’s role as a gateway to the National Park and to promote our own visitor attractions. See Annexes D and E for the results of our discussions with Tourist Information and providers of accommodation.

Our work has demonstrated that Seaford has vibrant visitor attractions with thousands visiting our town every year. However, more can be done to encourage visitors, and to maximise what they do when visiting and the contribution they make to the local economy. 86% of those completing our questionnaire supported making the town more of a Gateway to the National Park.

For example, a local resident presented us with a proposal for tree planting, signage, and very limited landscaping, at the junction of Southdown Road and Chyngton Road. It is these types of ideas that we think, for example, the SDNPA and Seaford Town Council may wish to explore.

**Policy Recommendation 6:** To suggest Seaford Town Council and the SDNPA work closely together to deliver a joint approach to better signage to the National Park from the Town, and possibly associated tree planting and landscaping if deemed appropriate.

The Focus Group recognises that we are fortunate to have a number of key visitor attractions, especially on the Seafront. The Focus Group has taken the view that if

enhancements to the Seafront could be delivered this would be a substantial improvement. 76% of respondents to our Focus Group’sQuestionnaire were in favour of better signage for attractions and the town centre. We note, as you enter Seaford from Newhaven there is no sign for the Seafront. We also note that it is not obvious how you access the town centre from the Seafront. We believe enhanced signage could support the entire Town. Seaford Town Council are currently improving signage of visitor attractions, the Seafront and the town centre so we make no recommendations on this important issue.

As well as a lack of signage, the physical construction of the seawall, road crossings and pedestrian access to the High Street make it difficult for visitors to access the town centre; there is not a clear “Gateway” from the seafront to the town centre. The Focus Group regards linking the Seafront to the town centre as a key priority (and is a Strategic Objective of Seaford Town Council)

Policy Recommendations 5 & 6 above deliver on our proposals for signage. In addition, we remain of the view that the physical construction of the seawall, road crossings and pedestrian access to the High Street make it difficult for visitors to access the town centre; there is not a clear “Gateway” from the seafront to the town centre.

**Policy Recommendation 7:** That as sustainable development in the Town is achieved, any funds that become available should be considered to support a clearer “Gateway” between the Town Centre and the Seafront. In addition, the Local Authorities should work collaboratively to see what can be achieved from existing funding.

We also were made aware of transport suggestions which we will pass to the Transport Focus Group:

* The need for a proper footpath and lighting along the A259;
* Consideration of Cycle Path locations;

Seeing if in existing buses could add the Seafront to their routing, especially services linking Seaford to Brighton, Eastbourne and Newhaven.

***OBJECTIVE 2 :* TO UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE,** (such as educational and medical and the utilities**)** **AND THEIR CURRENT ABILITY TO EXPAND CAPACITY IN THE TOWN**

We recognise that for there to be sustainable development in the Town, educational and medical services are crucial. The Neighbourhood Plan Survey mentioned the need for health facilities 71 times and education/ school 19 times.

In terms of existing policy there is Policy ST1 Replaced by CP7 [which we discussed in full above. In addition to Policy ST1, we are aware that Lewes District Council has the following policy regarding educational facilities 20 Replaced by CP7 [states: ***In areas where there is a demonstrable deficiency of educational facilities or establishments, or where existing educational facilities or establishments are at capacity, additional residential development will be expected to make provision, through commuted payment, for the extra educational demands that it will generate, commensurate with the scale of the development.***

We are not aware of any similar policy for healthcare.

92% of respondents to our Focus Group’s Survey were in favour of us exploring the capacity levels of health and education services in the Town. We have contacted these providers and overall our findings are:

* The two GP surgeries in the Town report that demand is at the upper level of that recognised possible without being detrimental to patient care. Whilst any increase in population would have to be accommodated, the consequence could be longer waiting times based on current capacity;
* For education there is a clear system to estimate future needs and capacity
* There is no obvious concern about dental service capacity overall.

A summary of the key responses we received are set out in Annex G. But what is clear is that expanding medical services has to be a key priority to deliver sustainable development.

We have not identified capacity problems with utilities, but it is clear that detailed

consultation will be crucial to ensure sustainable development. already a core component of the existing policy framework.

**Policy Recommendation 8:** Ensuring that any future development in the Town does not negatively impact patient care, must be a core priority of all Authorities and be a key planning consideration

**OBJECTIVE 3 : TO EXAMINE WHETHER THERE IS THE NEED FOR ANY ADDITIONAL SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Focus Group has looked at five specific areas:

* Provision of sport, play and recreation;
* Provision of services for the young;
* Provision of a community centre;
* Policing; and
* Recycling.

**Provision of sport, play and recreation**:

The Neighbourhood Survey had 181 mentions of the desire for a “bigger, better, modern swimming pool” and 134 mentions of more “sports facilities”. Whilst the Focus Group agrees more would be desirable we had to look at it in terms of policy proposals for the Neighbourhood Plan. We are aware that the role of the Neighbourhood Plan is to add to the policy framework, not to duplicate it. We are aware that Lewes District Council has retained policies RE1, RE2[ Replaced by CP7] and SF12. RE1 and RE2 state:

***RE1 - Provision of Sport, Recreation and Play***

***• The Council will seek (through positive planning and provision, and through the control of development) to achieve provision of outdoor public and private playing space, which are as a matter of practise and policy available for public use, to at least the following minimum standards:***

* ***1.7 ha per 1,000 population for outdoor sports, including pitches, courts and greens, and***
* ***0.7 ha per 1000 population for children’s play, of which about 0.2 – 0.3ha will comprise equipped areas and 0.4 – 0.5ha will be of a more casual or informal nature.***

***RE2 - Existing Recreational Open Space***

* ***Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals which would result in the loss of existing outdoor playing space, or other space with recreational or amenity values regardless of their current or past availability to the public, unless it can be demonstrated that:***

***(a) sports and recreation facilities can be best retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site, or***

***(b) alternative provision of at least equivalent community benefit is made available.***

Supporting text to SF12 states that, at the time it was written, there is a recognised shortfall of recreation space in the Town. (See the Environment and Countryside Focus Group’s Report for a full analysis issue. This is a very strong policy backdrop and an area where, in our view, no additional policy recommendations are required

We understand this s90% of respondents to our survey were in favour of enhancing, extending and preserving space for recreation, sport and play. Given that there is a known shortage in the Town we are not surprised by this at all. Existing amenity space is very well used. As an example, the Projects and Facilities Manager at Seaford Town Council advised that the Martello Fields and Salts is very well used. In 2016, 27 specific events were held, 171 sports pitch bookings taken, 16 car-boot sales as well as the area being actively used by hundreds of dog walkers.

**Policy Recommendation 9:** That LDC policies RE1 (covering sport, recreation, play and open spaces) continue to be given full weight and consideration as part of the planning process.

**Provision of services for the young**

Whilst 70% of responses to our Focus Group’s Survey said they were in favour of exploring the need for a Youth Centre, discussions with the Seaford Community Partnership’s Youth Task Group, which includes young people, indicated that a café style facility that stayed open into the evening, with wifi and games facilities would be welcome instead. In addition, making sure that existing recreation space was enhanced and maintained – e.g. an athletics track and an additional BMX track would also be welcome. We are aware that Seaford Town Council’s plans for a skateboard park in the Salts are at an advanced stage. Our discussions have shown this will be popular.

**Provision of a community centre**

Although 68% of respondents in the Survey were in favour of exploring the benefits of a Community Centre, no clear evidence, rather than a generalised aspiration, has come forward to the Focus Group. No organisation has made representations for such a centre.

**Policing**

The Focus Group is not an expert in this area, but we recognise that an increased population may require more police. Seaford recognises that it is fortunate to be a low crime area, which may account for the lower than average police presence in the Town. However, the Focus Group believes that this issue should be monitored going forward to ensure that as the population increases the policing of the Town is reviewed to ensure it remains adequate.

**Recycling**

The Focus Group recognises that recycling facilities are essential if the population is to grow. 25% is the current re-cycling rate for Lewes District, below the 35% average. [[7]](#footnote-7) Whilst we have a number of recycling centres throughout the town, the largest (Cradle Hill) is not open every day and a number of the “self-service” sites do not accept a full array of items – most noticeably cardboard

We understand from LDC that they have nearly completed a new Waste Strategy which aims to improve recycling rates and there is the possibility of new small sites being added. We understand that space may be freed up to create more cardboard recycling facilities by putting all glass into one bin rather than having to separate it by colour. This would be very welcome because this Focus Group has identified that only Cradle Hill recycling centre can accommodate cardboard that is too large for kerbside collection, but is only open Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

We have also identified that, with the exception of Cradle Hill, we cannot locate any recycling facilities north of the A259. Potential locations for further consultation could be:

* Princess Drive
* Area where Blatchington Rd meets Avondale Rd;
* Walmer Road
* Micklefield Way

**Policy Recommendation 10:** To advise LDC of the need for additional recycling facilities for cardboard, and the lack of services in the North of the Town and for this to inform their approach to waste management and recycling. LDC should continue to consult with the community.

**FOCUS GROUP’S RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Priorities**

The two main “Community Recommendations” that we wish to especially highlight are:

1. Health and care provision will need significant focus if we are to deliver sustainable development alongside maintaining patient care and adequate services; and
2. LDC, SDNPA, ESCC and STC should give a very high priority to encouraging tourism given the significant difference it can make to our economy.

**List of policy recommendations**

**1:** We fully support upholding the approach to infrastructure set out in LDC’s existing policy framework.

**2:** That the existing policy framework regarding the economy, retail and town centres is given full weight when considering future development in Seaford as this will support the Town maintaining its commercial, retail and leisure services. Building residential dwellings above non-residential premises should be actively encouraged.

**3**: As the housing group looks at future development of the Town, active consideration should be given to the viability of a Seaford Enterprise Centre, working within the same principles set out in Policy Recommendation 2 above.

**4:** The existing policy framework supporting the visitor economy is sufficient. However, we would ask the Housing Focus Group to give due regard to the needs of visitor accommodation provision, and to enhance, encourage and preserve it

**5:** The existing policy framework to enhance and preserve the unspoilt character should be robustly enforced. The “free parking” policy on the Seafront is key to encouraging tourism, with a dedicated coach bay (with drop off point in the town centre) being beneficial).

**6:** To suggest Seaford Town Council and the SDNPA work closely together to deliver a joint approach to better signage to the National Park from the Town, and possibly associated tree planting and landscaping if deemed appropriate.

**7:** That as sustainable development in the Town is achieved, any funds that become available should be considered to support a clearer “Gateway” between the Town Centre and the Seafront. In addition, the Local Authorities should work collaboratively to see what can be achieved from existing funding.

**8:** Ensuring that any future development in the Town does not negatively impact patient care, must be a core priority of all Authorities and be a key planning consideration

**9:** That LDC policies RE1 (covering sport, recreation, play and open spaces) continue to be given full weight and consideration as part of the planning process

**10:** To advise LDC of the need for additional recycling facilities for cardboard, and the lack of services in the North of the Town and for this to inform their approach to waste management and recycling. LDC should continue to consult with the community.

**THANK YOU**

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our work.

**The Local Economy & Facilities Focus Group**

Fran Crisp (Chair)

Trevor Chrisp

Mark Brown

Fiona House

Keith Blackburn

**Annex A: List of Key Evidence Used (Surveys, workshops, public events, existing information, census, etc.)**

1. The National Planning Policy Framework[[8]](#footnote-8);
2. Lewes District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy[[9]](#footnote-9);
3. Specific policies that Lewes District Council already have[[10]](#footnote-10)
4. Responses to the Neighbourhood Plan Survey circulated to households in the Town;
5. Input from the Workshops held regarding the Neighbourhood Plan;
6. The input of the Focus Group and the Steering Group;
7. Seaford Community Partnership’s work to establish the public’s views on the Seafront;
8. Annex’s D (Tourist Office information) and E(Accommodation Survey) attached to this report.
9. Annex F, which sets out the responses to our questionnaire issued on the 30th November 2016.

**Annex B: List of key stakeholders**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Who** | **Why** |
| 1 | Lewes District Council | The main LA |
| 2 | East Sussex County Council | Statutory Consultee |
| 3 | Seaford Town Council | Statutory Consultee |
| 4 | Newhaven Town Council | Adjoining Parish |
| 5 | Wealden District Council | Adjoining Parish |
| 6 | Alfriston Parish Council | Adjoining Parish |
| 7 | Cuckmere Valley Parish Council | Adjoining Parish |
| 8 | Natural England | Statutory Consultee |
| 9 | Environment Agency | Statutory Consultee |
| 10 | Historic England (English Heritage) | Statutory Consultee |
| 11 | South Downs National Park Authority | Statutory Consultee |
| 12 | Highways Agency | Statutory Consultee |
| 13 | Chamber of Commerce\* | Stakeholder |
| 14 | Providers of Healthcare (including dentists) \* | Stakeholder |
| 15 | State Education Providers\* | Stakeholder |
| 16 | Seaford Youth Partnership\* | Stakeholder |
| 17 | Seaford and Newhaven Access Committee\* | Stakeholder |
| 18 | Seaford Seniors | Stakeholder |
| 19 | Seaford Residents Voice (SRV) | Stakeholder |
| 20 | The Police | Stakeholder |
| 21 | Accommodation providers\*\* | Stakeholder |
| 22 | Providers of recycling facilities\* | Stakeholder |
| 23 | Tourist Information\*\*\* | Stakeholder |
| 24 | Managers of theatres, museums and attractions contacted:   * The Musuem\*; * The Leisure Centre\*; * Little Theatre\*; * Barn Theatre\*; * The Golf Clubs\*; * The Sailing Club\* | Stakeholder |
| 25 | Providers of utilities | Stakeholder |
| 26 | Newhaven Enterprise Centre\*\*\*\* | Stakeholder |

*\* discussions have been undertaken*

*\*\*please see Annex E for additional evidence/ feedback*

*\*\*\*please see Annex D for additional evidence/ feedback*

*\*\*\*\* will be contacted at Draft Plan Stage*

Note: The Statutory Consultees, Adjoining Parish’s and Lewes District Council, will be formally engaged as part of the consultation on the Strategic Appraisal Scoping Study (see NP Website) and the overall Plan (when drafted)

**Annex C – Existing Policy**

There are 3 major policies for us to be aware of:

1. The National Planning Policy Framework[[11]](#footnote-11);
2. Lewes District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy[[12]](#footnote-12); and
3. Specific policies that Lewes District Council already have[[13]](#footnote-13) – for us the key ones are:
   1. ST1 [replaced byCP7] - Infrastructure Provision
   2. ST2 – General Infrastructure
   3. ST5 & ST6 [now covered by other regulations]- Access for People with Limited Mobility
   4. ST20 & ST21 – Recycling and Re-use of Materials
   5. RES 20 [CP7]– Provision of Educational Facilities
   6. E1 – Planning for Employment
   7. E3, E4 & E5 [CP6]- Town and Local Centres and Retail Development
   8. E6 – New Retail Development on the Edge of Town Centres
   9. E7 – Out of Centre Retail Development
   10. E8 – Neighbourhood Shops/ Public Houses
   11. E9 – Re-Use of Rural Buildings
   12. E10[ CP5] – Tourism General Strategy
   13. E11, E12 & E13 [CP5} – Hotels, Gust Houses and other Services Accommodation
   14. E14 – Bunk House Accommodation
   15. E15 – Existing Camping/ Touring Caravan Sites
   16. E16 & E18 [CP5]– New Camping/ Touring Caravan Sites
   17. E19 [covered by other regulations]- Static Holiday Caravan Sites
   18. SF10 – Car Parking
   19. SF14 – SF16: The Seafront

**Annex D – Tourist Information Office response to initial questionnaire**

**Q1 – How many tourists use the facility per month – average?**

* **2014-2015:** 22, 853 (1904)
* **2015-2016:** 19, 465 (1622)
* **2016-Sept 2016:** 8, 999 (1499)

**Q2 – How many enquire about accommodation?**

3 or 4 per day on average.

**Q3 – Do you know where most tourists come from and how they got here?**

* UK – train/car/bike
* Various:
  + Australia
  + Canada
  + Germany
  + Japan
  + USA
  + Holland

**Q4 – Why did they come to Seaford?**

* Beach
* Events
* National Trust
* To see the Seven Sisters – SDNP
* To visit friends/ relatives
* Walking/ cycling (South Downs Way)

*Survey initiated by Focus Group Member Mark Brown*

**Annex E – Tourist Accommodation Survey Undertaken by Some Members of This Focus Group – key findings and insights**

* A number of Focus Group members visited eight properties ranging from a single room B&B to a large caravan park.
* Between these eight properties they accommodated about **10,700** guests in the first 10 months of this year.
* The guests came from all over the world – primarily from:
  + Canada
  + China
  + Europe
  + India
  + Japan
  + UK
* The visitors stayed anything between one night and many months.
* The reasons for staying were:
  + Business (salesmen for 1 night to beach-workers and builders for up to 4 months, coach drivers)
  + Relaxation on beach
  + Walking
  + Sightseeing – especially the Seven Sisters
  + Visiting relations
  + Parties, funerals
  + Travelling through from/to the ferry
* Reasons for choosing Seaford included:
  + Unspoilt seafront
  + Buses and trains to access other sights/attractions nearby
  + Good range of pubs/restaurants and cafes
* Drawbacks include
  + Lack of evening dining (especially along the front)
  + Fear of it becoming a retirement town only
  + The need for more cycle paths

**Points to note:**

* [www.seaford.uk](http://www.seaford.uk) is currently out of date. Ownership needs to be ascertained to ensure site is updated and/ or removed.

**The Neighbourhood Plan should look to include:**

* Enhance and preserve the current unspoilt nature of the Seafront.
* Promotion of Seaford as a holiday destination – showing web address – for example
  + On buses
  + Posters at railway stations
  + Leaflet on the ferry, posters?
  + Magazines e.g. Exclusively British, Motorhome and Camping etc.
* Getting a regular seafront bus service (deviate the #12?)
* Getting much more information on the website for accommodation, restaurants and local attractions
* Developing the promenade beneath Bonningsted Parade, for example:
  + Beach huts to hire?
  + Children’s play area including, for example, sand pit, trampolines, monster draughts board?
  + A cafe/restaurant that does breakfasts, lunches, tea and coffee, dinner with transparent wind sheltering panels around an outside area?
* Need for an enhanced footpath and lighting along the A259 between Hill House on the edge of town to the Seven Sisters Country Park for walkers’ safety.
* Need for more cycle paths.
* Improved path to Tide Mills and signage.

**Annex F: Overview of responses to our questionnaire launched on 30th November 2016**

Over 300 Seaford Residents’ attended the major consultation event on 30th November 2016. The table below sets out the responses from the 63 responses collected.[[14]](#footnote-14)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Proposal** | **Percentage in favour** | **Percentage**  **against** | **Percentage**  **unsure** |
| To explore capacity levels of education and health care | 92 | 2 | 2 |
| To enhance the seafront while maintaining its unspoilt character | 90 | 3 | 2 |
| To maintain and extend space for recreation, sport and play | 90 | 0 | 5 |
| To plan for homes above shops | 89 | 0 | 6 |
| For any development to include all necessary infrastructure and easy access | 87 | 0 | 2 |
| To make the town a gateway to the SDNP and to promote attractions | 86 | 6 | 3 |
| To plan for the town centre to remain retail/commerce | 83 | 3 | 8 |
| To explore policing and recycling | 81 | 5 | 10 |
| To erect better signage for attractions and town centre | 76 | 10 | 10 |
| To plan for a Youth Centre | 70 | 5 | 21 |
| To plan for a low hire cost Community Centre | 68 | 5 | 19 |
| To plan for a small business incubator unit | 67 | 5 | 22 |
| That a vibrant economy will attract visitors | 63 | 8 | 22 |

Comments made by the public are summarised below:

Regarding Facilities:

* Great concern was voiced regarding the adequate provision of health care
* There is also concern regarding schools capacity
* Maintaining free car parking on the seafront was seen as key to the Town
* A pedestrianised area should be considered in Place Lane and up to the Church in Church Street
* Impose a 20 MPH speed limit along the seafront and have more pedestrian crossings
* Have a properly segregated cycle lane along the seafront
* Make more use of Seaford Head School out of hours – adult classes etc

Regarding Visitors:

* Signage was considered important with various suggestions including that it should not clutter and be all of the same style.
* Points of interest to be signed should include:
  + the Barn as a viewpoint for the Seven Sisters,
  + The View,
  + Seaford Head,
  + the Cuckmere,
  + the sailing club.
  + a Seven Sisters/ Beachy Head Heritage Trail should be considered
  + the seafront should be signed on the A259.
* Advertising would bring in more visitors, making clear the range of facilities Seaford has to offer.
* More visitor accommodation would be beneficial
* There should be more eating places on the seafront, but not to impact on the current de-commercialised feel of the Seafront

Regarding Businesses:

* In addition to retail being encouraged, other small businesses in, for example, the high-tech, media and design industires should be encouraged
* Small specialist shops should be encouraged alongside larger stores to keep the town both varied and vibrant.

**Annex G: Health and Education Providers – key responses**

Education:

The County Council was contacted on 25 January pointing out the expected shortfall and it replied:

*“The County Council’s pupil forecasting model for Seaford takes into account the proposed housing developments in the town to 2030.*

*We believe that the current enlargement of Cradle Hill Community Primary School, which will create an additional 210 primary places from September 2017, will provide sufficient capacity in the town for the medium to long term.*

*At this stage we have no plans to add any further primary school places in Seaford, but we regularly review our pupil forecasts to take account of factors such as birth rate, migration and new housing development, and any changes will be reflected in subsequent editions of the Education Commissioning Plan, the next version of which is due to be published in early 2018.*

*In terms of secondary school places, we are working with Seaford Head School to ensure there is sufficient capacity available to meet the predicted demand for places in the future.”*

Health Providers:

***The Old School Surgery, Church Street – received Jan 2017 from Practice Business Manager***

*“All rooms in our practice are in full use at all times and we have had to make costly adaptations to the inside of our premises in order to accommodate much needed clinical staff. We are up to capacity in relation to premises and still currently have Portakabins at the rear of the premises housing three clinical rooms which is far from ideal.  My GP’s, hold large patient lists.*

*We do not have the premises nor clinical resource to cater for the increase [in population] however we would still accept new patients but more registered patients will increase demand and in turn will increase the length of time a patient would be waiting to access [the service] .”*

***The Seaford Health Centre, Dane Road – received Jan 2017 from Practice Business Manager***

*“The GP and nurse consulting rooms for Seaford Medical Practice at the Seaford Health Centre are fully utilised Monday - Friday 8.00am - 6.30pm. On any day a GP or nurse is not in, the room is used by another clinician. It is the same situation at Old School Surgery, the other GP Practice in Seaford.*

*Our GPs have approx 2000 patients to care for (per full time GP). This is generally regarded as the upper end of the scale to maintain safe patient care. It is currently difficult to recruit GPs given the local and national shortage of GPs.”*

*We also thank the Dental Surgeries who responded to our requests for information.*

1. The original report can be viewed at: http://www.seafordnp.uk/images/SNPLAN/7-FinalReport-EconomyandFacilities.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/plan\_Adopted\_JCS\_with\_front\_cover.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.lewes.gov.uk/coun/planning/lewes\_local\_plan/contents\_written.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Paragraph 7: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Work undertaken by the Seaford Community Partnership [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Action in Rural Sussex, Rural community profile for Seaford. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/plan\_Adopted\_JCS\_with\_front\_cover.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. http://www.lewes.gov.uk/coun/planning/lewes\_local\_plan/contents\_written.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/plan\_Adopted\_JCS\_with\_front\_cover.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. http://www.lewes.gov.uk/coun/planning/lewes\_local\_plan/contents\_written.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The original questionnaire can be viewed at: http://www.seafordnp.uk/images/SNPLAN/8-30thNovInfraFinal.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-14)