

## Seaford Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal



**Date of Designation: 1969**

**Extended: 1976 and 1988**

**Reviewed: 2005**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 What is a Conservation Area?**

A Conservation Area is designated under the provisions of Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) and is defined as 'an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. The quality and interest of the area as a whole, rather than individual buildings, is the main consideration when designating such areas.

Section 71 of the Act requires the local planning authority to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation & enhancement of Conservation Areas within the district. Section 72 requires that in considering applications for development in a Conservation Area, attention shall be paid to the desirability of conserving or enhancing the character of that area.

### **1.2 The Purpose of this Conservation Area Appraisal**

Conservation Area Appraisals are considered by English Heritage to be vital to the conservation of these special areas. The content of this statement is based on the preferred approach set out in English Heritage's publication *Understanding Place: Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals (2005)*.

The Council has a duty to pay special attention to preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Areas in exercising its planning powers. This statement will therefore provide a consistent and sound basis upon which to determine planning applications. It will also help in defending appeals against refusals of planning applications, which could have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area. This statement also identifies features which contribute towards the character of the area and those features that detract from it. This provides a useful base upon which to develop proposals for preservation and enhancement through development if the opportunity should arise through the planning system.

The preparation of the statement also enables local residents to participate in the identification of features which are important to the special character of the area in which they live. Visitors to the area also may find this statement provides interesting information about special and interesting local features.

## **2. ASSESSMENT OF SPECIAL INTEREST**

### **2.1 Location & Setting**

Seaford is located on the South Coast, about 12 miles east of Brighton and to the south of the Brighton to Eastbourne Road (A259). Seaford Town Centre is situated on gently undulating land at the foot of the South Downs and a few minutes walk from the seafront. The town centre enjoys glimpses of the sea and of Seaford Head, an imposing chalk cliff which dominates the coastline, but is separated from the sea, originally by a shingle bank, the remains of the historic river bed, and now by the heavily built up reclaimed land and blocks of flats that dominate the esplanade, distancing the town centre further from the sea. The area around the town centre is heavily developed with mostly residential buildings, flats and hotels.

The old town centre of Seaford has a distinct character and, despite the encroachments of mostly bland modern development and unsympathetic alterations, it retains an attractive and interesting eclecticism. It has a balance of commercial premises and residential properties and the area has a range of land uses including the Parish Church, pubs and restaurants, shops, hotels, car parks and a former school. The town centre is a thriving business area as well as one of the most historic parts of Seaford.

### **2.2 Origins and Historic Development of the Area**

There has been a settlement on the site of Seaford town since ancient times and the present town itself has a substantial and varied history. Originally sited at the mouth of the River Ouse, which until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century entered the sea at the foot of Seaford Head, the town was blessed with a natural harbour and an unrivalled position on the south coast. Consequently the town and its inhabitants flourished here after the Norman invasion.

In medieval times Seaford was a thriving exporter of Sussex wool and became a limb of the prestigious Cinque Ports system during the thirteenth century. The street pattern of the Conservation Area, particularly around Steyne Road, reflects the Old Town's layout and former status as a riverside town.

In the closing years of the sixteenth century the river became choked up with shingle and, following an immense storm diverted its course to its new outlet at Newhaven. This dramatically altered the topography of Seaford; the river became silted up and the town was left with no viable harbour, bringing an end to a period of exceptional prosperity. Seaford remained as a borough and a market town, as well as making what profit it could from less honest means, such as smuggling and looting from shipwrecks.

The town languished after the loss of the sea trade and by 1592 had become "the decay'd haven of Seaford" (Seaford Past & Present, 1890). Its fortunes revived a little in the later 18<sup>th</sup> Century when a mill was built at Tidemills (now demolished) providing employment and income for the townsfolk. Seaford enjoyed a second period of moderate prosperity in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when it became fashionable as a seaside town and the new London, Brighton South Coast railway brought visitors to the town.

Over the centuries the town has grown and adapted to changing topographic, economic and social conditions and the needs of its residents. Most of Seaford's listed buildings are found here, along with later developments, reflecting the numerous phases of the town's development.

### **2.3 Archaeological Significance**

The Conservation Area lies within a larger Archaeological Trigger Site, due to its Iron Age origins and later Stone Age and Roman settlements. This is a non-statutory designation identified by East Sussex County Council; should the site be affected by a development proposal, a watching brief will be set up and rescue archaeology will be implemented in order to record details of the site. Significant Ancient Monuments in the vicinity are The Martello Tower on the Esplanade, The Medieval Crypt on Church Street and Seaford Head Camp, an Iron Age Hill Fort and Bowl Barrow.

## **3. SPATIAL ANALYSIS**

### **3.1 Character and Interrelationship of Spaces**

The buildings in the Conservation Area are built closely together in a dense pattern, with mostly narrow streets and lanes, although wider streets characterise the later areas towards the top of the town. There is little relief from the intense development on all sides which crowds the historic core, however a few remaining public spaces help to break up the density of the town, which used to be surrounded by open Downland on three sides, and coastline to the south.



The open space of St. Leonard's Churchyard makes an important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The spacious grounds provide the setting for the most important and prominent listed building in the Conservation Area and the spacious churchyard provides a welcome contrast and relief to the denser urban grain of the town centre. The grassy space and clusters of small trees and bushes along the boundaries introduce greenery into a town that is otherwise rather lacking in natural vegetation.

The churchyard is surrounded by flint boundary walls and is slightly elevated, giving pleasant views out into the surrounding town. The important enclosure of the churchyard wall is listed Grade II in its own right.

The eastern boundary of the churchyard is at the edge of the Conservation Area (which excludes Broad Street). Unfortunately, views eastward from the churchyard are into car parking and service yards and the rear elevations of commercial premises which front onto Broad Street. Many of these buildings are of a modern, utilitarian appearance and form an unsympathetic contrast to the Conservation Area. Conversely,

the painted terrace of cottages along Church Lane to the south encloses the churchyard space, creating an overall ambience of tranquillity within the otherwise bustling town centre.

The “Millennium Garden”, a small triangular area of green on Steyne Road at the southern edge of the Conservation Area also makes a contribution to the character of the area, providing a foreground setting for an attractive grouping of listed terraced cottages. These terraced cottages contain this space to the north and west; however development outside of the Conservation Area to the south is ordinary in form and less dense in layout, losing the sense of enclosure which is a characteristic of the old town.

A small informal open space located at the junction of East Street and Crooked Lane where several smaller roads converge. Several trees and a walled garden area in front of Martello Cottage contribute to this open area. There are attractive views to the south over lower land to the Martello Tower and the sea and towards Seaford Head to the south east.

The Crouch Gardens provide a pleasant open relief on the eastern edge of the Conservation Area. The flint walls provide a complete sense of enclosure and mature trees and flowerbeds contribute to the established and tranquil surroundings.



The town contains a number of car parks. These are often dead spaces and make little contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. These spaces could be improved with planting.

There are no significant private gardens that contribute to the character of the area.

### **3.2 Important Views**

The town centre is located on a slight incline away 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 is from the top of the churchyard or Place Lane where a heartening glimpse of the cliffs at Seaford Head can 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.

## **4. CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Summary of features which contribute to the special architectural and historic interest:**

- The old town's historic street pattern of narrow lanes leading off the High Street and Church Street down towards the coast
- The predominance of St Leonard's Parish Church and churchyard, set in spacious grounds in a eminent position above the dense grain of the old town
- The architectural and historic interest of the individual buildings in the town centre, 39 of which are listed
- The predominance of flint walling of which six sections are listed
- The association with the Cinque Ports system
- The vestigial atmosphere of a 'working' riverside town, now bereft of river and harbour, with evidence of past industry in areas off the high street such as Pelham Yard and Phoenix Yard, emphasised by the significant number of historic taverns and hostelrys
- The tranquil green spaces of Crouch Gardens and the churchyard
- Glimpses of Seaford Head and the sea from vantage points throughout the town
- The terraces of brightly painted & stuccoed cottages
- The small groups of Edwardian buildings
- Distinctive local streetscape features such as traditional red paviers, and decorative lamp-posts and street furniture along Broad Street and the High Street
- The eclectic mix of buildings from different eras with no single dominant style

### **4.2 Identification of character areas**

Seaford Town Centre does not easily divide into 'character areas'. There is a gradual shift in character from the oldest parts to the newer areas as the town expanded in all directions. In addition, constant development has given the town an eclectic feel, so that many different styles and periods sit side by side and the character is thus not easily categorized into historical zones. There are however general differences of character in some areas, identified by the contemporary prevailing fashions and the gradual emphasis over the years to residential and retail usage.

#### **High Street and roads leading off including Saxon Lane and Crouch Lane and Church Street**

The oldest part of the town, this area has the best of the historic buildings and an uncontrived charm in their irregular arrangement and diversity. The buildings are small in scale (except for some ill proportioned modern impositions) and though struggling to cope under the onslaught of modernisation, advertising and inappropriate alterations and development, they largely retain their historic character and have many associations with past residents and events.

The Church and cottages on Church Lane and the lower part of Church Street are a remnant of residential Seaford in its early days, domestic in scale and unpretentious. The cheerfully painted stucco of the cottages establishes the sea-side vernacular of the area and the narrow streets and lanes, now somewhat cluttered with parking, street signs and road markings, follow the historic layout of the area. It is unfortunate that traditional street paving has been lost.



### **Marine Terrace/Stejne Road**

This street marks the old boundary of the town, first circumscribed by the river, then the shingle bank which took its place. The reclaimed land is now fully developed, but the sweep of the road indicates the route of the river and the large, elegant houses along this street are testament to its original desirable location, facing out to fine views of the sea. This consequently has a much more open feel to it, compared to the narrow, crowded streets around the High Street, and retains its air of understated gentility. The houses are larger and more imposing, in distinct contrast to the modest cottages that occupy the adjacent lanes.



### **Pelham Road, top of Dane Road, Clinton Road**

These 'newer' areas of town are a vestige of Seaford's brief but significant flourishing as a fashionable seaside resort in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The Italianate stuccoed townhouses have a slightly pretentious feel to them, as the town attempted to emulate its neighbours Brighton and Eastbourne in seaside refinement. These buildings and those on Clinton Place, are built in the same style as Seaford Station, which is listed, and were clearly intended to create a prestigious and attractive initial impression of Seaford, being the first buildings that visitors to the town on the newly opened railway would have seen. The character of these areas has been eroded by unsympathetic modern alterations but could be improved to recapture the genteel, Regency-esque character of the area. The composition of repeated details such as curved headed windows, pediments, shell motifs, scrolls and decorative finials is locally distinctive and give the buildings increased group value. Some buildings, such as Lloyds Bank, serve as examples of how this area used to and potentially could look like. Oddly, this building is currently excluded from the Conservation Area.



### **East Street and Croft Lane area**

This quiet area has a distinctly residential feel to it, quite different from Broad Street and the rest of Seaford town centre which is largely mixed use. The modest cottages are reasonably well preserved, despite many having modern windows and some dormers. This area's special interest lies in its neat rows of traditional stuccoed cottages, with repeated details such as decorative window surrounds, mouldings and small, neat front gardens. This repetition confers group value on individually unremarkable buildings, but is threatened by unsympathetic alterations.



#### **4.3 Architectural and historic qualities of the buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the area.**

The town centre has a significant number of buildings on the statutory list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest. The main cluster of listed buildings is around the South Street, Steyne Road and Church Street area, which is the original nucleus of the town (as shown on historic maps). In addition to those buildings on the statutory list, there are many other buildings, which although not listed make a significant positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Area covers the entire area of the town as shown on the OS map of 1875, although many buildings have been lost or replaced since then, and all but a few green spaces in-filled with development. This appraisal is not intended to be comprehensive, and omission of any particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

Due to the range of the age of buildings and the variety of uses there is a wide diversity of building styles and materials with no single historic style dominating. The buildings range from the medieval Crypt in Church Street (a scheduled ancient monument located beneath the modern building of the Crypt Gallery), and St. Leonard's Church (twelfth and fifteenth centuries) to the later buildings of the eighteenth Century in the High Street and Steyne Road such as The Old House, dated 1712, residence of Thomas Tufton (Bailiff of the Town & Cinque Port), genteel nineteenth century buildings such as those of Marine Terrace, through to the later Edwardian development around Sutton Road, East Street and Croft Lane. In addition to these buildings is a diverse mix of buildings that form the main bulk of the street grain and have group value in the character of this lively Conservation Area. The variety of styles, including the best of those from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, is a characteristic of the town centre and this should be borne in mind when considering the appropriate conservation of the area.

The triangular shaped area contained by Church Street, South Street and Steyne Road, and bisected by the south-western end of High Street is the historic core of the town and contains the highest concentration of listed buildings. This area is denser and less regular in grain, with narrow roads and lanes and predominantly two-storey, steep pitched roof buildings. It also contains a great deal of historic flint walling, some listed in its own right. These characteristics lend a distinct quality to this part of the town which is not present elsewhere.

#### **Area to West of Broad St**

The charming Parish Church of St. Leonard, the heart of worship in Seaford for nine centuries, is a well preserved and beautifully detailed Early English and later medieval building which remains the focal point of the Conservation Area. The Church is listed Grade I and the oldest part dates from around 1090; it was restored in 1862 but its Norman origins are still evident. Its characteristic scale, form and open setting make it an important landmark in views up and down Church Street and the tower can be glimpsed from various vantage points in the town. When viewed from the north the fifteenth century tower forms a familiar pointer in the orientation of the town centre. It is built largely of flint with a red tile roof.

Above the church is a row of mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century terraced houses originally built in a similar style to those on Clinton Place, although these are much altered, all having lost their decorative window surrounds, replaced with box dormers and uPVC windows. This is a commercial area of Seaford and is occupied by various businesses. Modern illuminated shop-fronts are dominant and this area has lost its restrained Victorian appeal. Plastic windows predominate and there is no definable character. Stricter controls on signage, lighting, and alterations could help make this area more worthy of inclusion in the Conservation Area. At present its inclusion seems for completeness only, on account of its being directly adjacent to the most important historic building in Seaford. Immediately opposite the church is a flint and brick Victorian building, originally a school, now converted to a nursery and doctors' surgery, but there are no further buildings of merit on the west side of the street until the cottages at the lower end. The intervening space is occupied by the post office and police station, both bland modern brick buildings with no interesting features.



*Street signage, road markings and clutter detract from the simple charm of this historic street (junction of Church Street and South Street)*

### **Church Lane**

Running along the southernmost boundary of the churchyard is Church Lane; a quiet, narrow lane which retains its peaceful, almost secretive character. The buildings are small, cheerfully painted, stuccoed cottages, six out of ten of which retain their timber sash windows. Apart from the loss of windows, these cottages are mostly unadulterated, a small corner of Seaford town centre which retains its vernacular charm. All the buildings along this lane and from the church to the bottom of Church Street are of merit in the overall townscape and should be retained.

### **Church Street & South Street**

Nos. 1-21 Church Street is a row of bright painted cottages, modest in scale and contrasting with the grander buildings on Steyne Road. This row has suffered from some unfortunate replacement of traditional windows, but nevertheless provides a remnant of old Seaford which has sadly been lost further up Church St. The view from the bottom of Church Street up to St Leonards is important and should be protected. Phoenix Corner House, a stuccoed Grade II listed building on the corner of Church Street and South Street, is prominent in views down Church Street. The same building continues along Church Street as Alma House. The adjacent building to the east, the Old Town Hall, was the administrative centre of the town from Tudor

times and is listed Grade II. The Old Town Hall is still used and has retained its community role. Alma House, Phoenix Corner House and the Old Town Hall form a group

### **Pelham Road**

Pelham Road marks the western boundary of the old town and the current limit of the Conservation Area. At the very bottom, West House, listed Grade II, is a very old building, possibly dating from 1700, with earlier foundations. The two adjacent buildings are later, but form an attractive group, distinct in character to the tall, elegant balconied townhouses along the rest of the street. Opposite (outside the CA) Nos. 18-26 are well proportioned stuccoed town houses, though many have lost their original windows, these may be worth including in the Conservation Area, forming suitable boundary and complementing the tall stuccoed buildings along the rest of the street. The Bay Hotel, completed in 1874, is an attractive, dignified Victorian building, despite its modern signage, and is built in the same style as the Pelham Road townhouses. The complementary nature of the detailing, which is replicated with variations along this street, is important to the character and the loss of architectural details, original windows and changes to roof covering should be resisted.



Welbeck Court, deliberately omitted from the Conservation Area due to its featureless modernity, replaced Victorian stuccoed townhouses which once formed a continuous row completed by the building on the corner (now Lloyd's Bank). These were destroyed in a bombing raid in 1942. Nos. 1-8 still form a uniform and attractive terrace. The Lloyd's Bank building (*left*) forms an important part of this group and should be included in the Conservation Area boundary.

### **Steyne Road, Southern edge of CA**

A run of listed buildings forms the edge of the Conservation Area along the northern side of Steyne Road between Pelham Road and South Street. Nos. 5, 5a, 7 & 9 are early 19th century terraced cottages with a



white painted pebbledashed ground floor, tile-hung first floor and red tile roof. This pleasant terrace is domestic in scale and set back slightly behind a low flint wall.

On Steyne Road, east of Church Street, are Nos. 1 to 4 Marine Terrace. This is a particularly prominent building which forms a visual stop to views from the south along the

Causeway, standing in isolation between two narrow streets. Built in the early to mid-nineteenth century it has three storeys with a painted stucco elevation and a hipped slate roof. The building has an ornate cast iron veranda to the first floor supported on columns with french doors giving access from the first floor. This feature lends the front elevation an elegant, almost colonial, feel compatible with the seaside character of this part of the town and the high status of this row of dwellings. The cobbled garden wall in front is separately listed Grade II.

The Wellington Public House, Steyne House and the adjacent Causeway House form a group of traditional stuccoed buildings in a style that continues along Steyne road, intersected by the junction with South Street, where a small green public space provides a break between buildings and opens up the street scene. Opposite, Steyne Hall and the Methodist Chapel are late Victorian gothic style buildings, attractive enough to warrant inclusion in the Conservation Area and marking the transition between the old town and the new developments that have since swallowed up the area up to the coast.

Nos. 1 & 3 South Street (Honeysuckle Cottage and Saxon Cottage respectively) face south on to the triangular "green" formed by the acute angled junction of South Street and Steyne Road. Built in the nineteenth century, the stuccoed cottages have been added to in this century but still retain original features.

Aberdeen House (No. 41 Steyne Road), listed Grade II, is set back behind a low flint wall fronting onto the triangular "green". It is a two storey, stuccoed house with a tile roof and end brick chimney stacks. The remaining houses along this street are in a complementary style, well established and the whole combines to create an open, attractive street scene.

### **Saxon Lane**

Turning northwards into Saxon Lane, the intimate and contained character of this narrow street flanked by high flint walls is immediately apparent. Saxon Lane was previously called Dark Lane, and is thought to have been the route used to lead to the public gallows. Pear Tree Cottage and Saxon Lodge, both flint and brick buildings and the flint boundary walls to the south and north are listed Grade II.

Saxon Lane retains its shaded and enclosed feel as it leads up to meet the High Street, with minimal commercial presence. The ambience is created by the high flanking walls and high trees and foliage, unusual for this coastal part of Seaford. It joins the High Street opposite the southern end of Broad Street. There are views from the upper end of the lane all the way up Broad Street to the former United Reformed Church at the top.

### **Crouch Lane**

This has always been a genteel corner of Seaford, and despite modern infill development, retains its rather upmarket feel, with several large houses enjoying fine views to the sea and Seaford Head from their elevated position, notably Stone House, Crouch House and Martello Cottage. The modern Seaford House is the third building of this name to stand on the site, the previous Seaford House being built in 1879 and demolished in the 1970's. The flint walled car park at the lower end of Crouch Lane was once gardens to Seaford House,

now sadly concreted over. In the wall at the corner is a cannon, taken from the roof of the original Hurdis House. It now protects the corner from car damage. Stone House, an elegant stuccoed Georgian building, halfway up Crouch Lane, dates from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century and was built by Robert Stone, Bailiff of Seaford in 1762. The northern end of Crouch Lane, where it joins the High Street, has a picturesque group of cottages with traditional details which contribute to the charm of the area,

The sixteenth century archway into Crouch Gardens is listed Grade II. It is constructed in stone with chamfered jambs and dripstone. Originally part of the Courthouse or Town Hall in South Street when Seaford was associated with the Cinque Ports it was brought to this site and reconstructed in 1931, as a tablet beside the arch explains.

### **The High Street**

The High Street is the oldest shopping thoroughfare in the town, and was the scene of the Oxford Militia mutineers' looting of butchers and bakers shops in 1795. Several of the buildings along this older part of the High Street are protected by listing, but many others have been rather spoilt by insensitive modernisation. There is a marked difference in character between the lower end of the High Street which has retained its historic buildings and intimate feel, and the stretch which runs to either side of the junction with Broad Street, where poor quality modern infill buildings predominate.

A small number of buildings retain historic shop fronts, such as 41-43 High Street, Self (No. 48), and Pamalle restaurant (No. 42), which has a fine moulded, polished timber shop front.

Many of the old buildings in this historic street have been lost, but towards the upper end of the High Street there are some more traditional buildings and a sense of place is recaptured with a terrace of late Victorian (1881) stuccoed houses and a cluster of attractive vernacular buildings on the junction of The High Street



and Crouch Lane. This group comprises Nos. 44, 46, 48 & 50 High Street and Nos. 1, 2 & 3 Crouch Lane. Dating from the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century and re-fronted in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the High Street buildings were formerly one house, now subdivided. The three cottages fronting Crouch Lane were built in around 1820 and have original features such as decorative hopper heads, panelled doors and lozenge patterned detail. All are two storey faced with either render or pebbledash with clay tile or slate roofs. On

the whole the High Street contains a large number of buildings from various periods in the town's development and the majority are of merit. Unfortunately the modern infill buildings and unsympathetic shopfront details have a dominant effect. The character of this historic street could be greatly enhanced by

tighter control of development and encouraging a more sympathetic approach to signage in line with published guidance.

On the corner with Saxon Lane in a prominent position is No. 30 and 30a; a fine squared knapped flint fronted building, dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century and once a high status dwelling. It has been sadly spoilt by modern shops built in the garden at the front, but nevertheless is an important building in the street scene and in views down Broad Street.

Regency House (No. 20) is a three-storey building fronted with red mathematical tiles. It has a modern shopfront and a doorway with pilasters and pediment. The Old House (Nos. 15 & 17), almost opposite, is an eighteenth century Grade II Listed three-storey stuccoed house with modern shop windows. An inscription on the building says the house was the residence of Thomas Tufton, bailiff of the town and Cinque Port of Seaford in 1712. On the south-eastern side again, Nos. 12 to 16 (even numbers) are also listed Grade II. They form a nineteenth century block of three 3-storey houses now re-fronted with roughcast and with modern shopfronts to Nos. 12 and 14. Further towards Steyne Road, on the north western side Nos. 5 to 9 (odd) are three-storey stuccoed with two first floor bays and projecting shopfronts. South of the junction with South Street, Albion House (No. 2) is a two storey stuccoed nineteenth century building with a Grade II listed garden wall.

The area around Pelham Yard is in the very core of the Old Town. Though presently rather run down, it contains a cluster of humble buildings remaining from the period when this area was the main hive of activity in the town. Several buildings in this area have recently been renovated, and further careful conservation and redevelopment of this area could maximise its historic assets. A traditional building currently used as an antique shop would benefit from conservation work.

#### **Area to East Side of Broad Street (Croft Lane, Sutton Road, East Street)**

Broad Street has several buildings of local interest, including Hurdis House, site of one of the oldest buildings on Broad Street and home to Seaford Town Council. Cameron's Pharmacy has a well preserved historic shopfront of copper letters, dated 1855 with a decorative red orb gas light to the front. This is one of the few surviving original shopfronts in Seaford and should be protected.

The Conservation Area presently extends along East Street including the bland modern brick houses between Croft Lane and the High Street. The rest of this street made up of attractive terrace cottages, although the majority now have uPVC windows, which greatly detracts from the overall character of the street. The top of East Street terminates in a car park.

Sutton Road is a potentially attractive street but rather spoilt by gaudy shop fronts. The row of semi-detached Edwardian style houses on the north side indicate the beginning of later development in the town and are a smart and well proportioned row. This street retains several mature trees, a reminder of how much of Seaford, including Broad Street and Clinton Place, both originally tree-lined, would once have looked.

There are several car parks in this area, which are utilitarian spaces contributing nothing to the character of the area.

Croft Lane is a quiet, inviting street, lined on one side with cheerfully painted terraced cottages, of the style typically seen elsewhere in Seaford. Again, the charm of these is been marred by replacement uPVC windows. Fitzgerald House is the only listed building in this area, 19<sup>th</sup> Century gothic style flint and brick former almshouses, now flats.

#### **4.4 Building Materials and Local Details**

Whilst the predominant building surface treatment is painted stucco, Seaford town centre is constructed from a wide variety of other building materials including flint, brick and even some mathematical tiling, which is used on No. 20 High Street, Regency Restaurant, and No 10 High Street. No. 30 High Street is of fine knapped flint, an expensive product that denotes a building of some status. At the southern end of Church Street, the stuccoed buildings are painted in a variety of colours, which creates a lively street scene. Roof materials vary between tiles and slate with some modern concrete tile replacements.

The buildings on the southern edge of the Conservation Area are domestic in scale and there is more use of flint. Flint walls are a very common feature of enclosure in the area particularly around the churchyard and in Saxon Lane.

Overall, the windows are a mixture of casement and sash and many still have their original glazing bars intact, although uPVC replacement windows have begun to erode the character of the buildings particularly in the residential areas on the north eastern edge of the Conservation Area.

Existing traditional paving should be retained in the following locations:

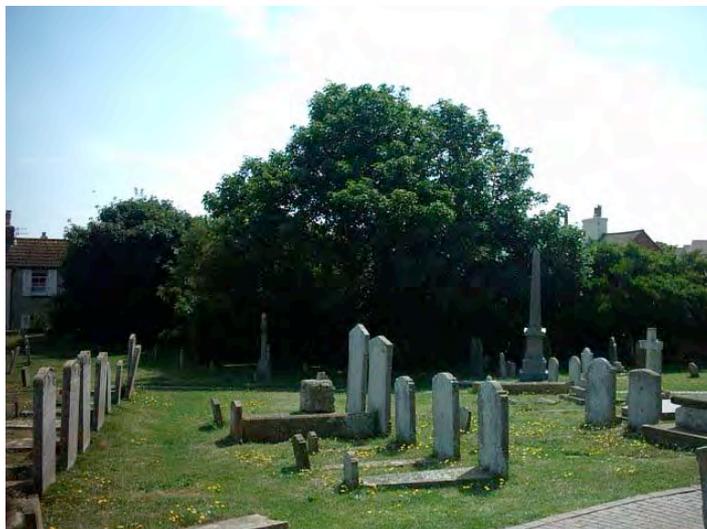
- High Street (both sides),
- Church Street (both sides) between Dane Road and Place Lane,
- Crouch Lane (western side) between High Street and Crooked Lane.

#### **4.5 Historic Shopfronts and Advertising**

The front of Harvey's in the High Street, now a dentists, Pamalle Restaurant, and No 48 High Street (Self) have good quality traditional shopfronts which should be retained, as does Cameron's Chemist in Broad Street, and Sedici Boutique on the corner of Church St and Church Lane.

#### 4.6 Contribution of Green Spaces, Trees, Hedges and other Natural or Cultivated Elements

The town lacks obvious natural features; its character is largely formed of closely-knit built development formed on the gentle swell of land from the Downs towards the coast. There is a scarcity of green spaces, and sadly the trees which used to line Broad Street and Clinton Place have been lost. Those that are present are especially valued, particularly the large mature trees in Crouch Gardens and the randomly scattered trees and flora in St. Leonard's Churchyard (*below*).



Two large trees, a Monterey Cypress and a Leyland Cypress sit in front of Martello Cottage, and frame a distant view out toward Seaford Head. A notable Wych Elm in the garden of Saxon Lodge is a rare survival. In addition to these individual specimens, the Sycamores in Saxon Lane and along the edge of the far end of Broad Street (to the north of the United Reformed Church) make a significant contribution to the character of the area, emphasising the contained and intimate character of the narrow lanes.

The Gardens in East Street are the only formal public gardens in the area and make an invaluable contribution to the character of the area as well as providing a rare space to escape the bustle and traffic of the town centre.

#### 5. POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT

There are a number of buildings in Seaford which are derelict and have a very negative effect on the surrounding area, for example No 18 South Street and the buildings in Phoenix yard, and one or two buildings on South Street. Renovation of these buildings will significantly improve the streetscape and ambience of the area. There are also some areas where bland and poor quality modern development detracts from the character of the area and creates a 'soul-less' feel. This is particularly prevalent in the area where the High Street joins Broad Street. The erosion of the character of the areas can be seen plainly in these two photographs below, taken on the High Street, the first showing the view down the road towards

South Street, which retains its historic character, the second showing the view up the high street, practically unrecognisable as a historic street so much has the character been eroded by modern development.



*Lower end of High Street*



*Looking up towards junction with Broad Street*

## **5.1 Summary of Negative Features**

The key aspects having a negative impact are:

- The dominance of inappropriate, poor quality plastic shop fascias and illuminated signs. A change from these to traditional materials and designs could transform the appearance of the area.
- Replacement of original with modern features, specifically timber windows with uPVC, greatly damage the integrity of individual buildings and the Conservation Area as a whole. The Council has no powers to prevent this at present.
- Unsympathetic modern development: there are several modern infill developments, particularly at the lower end of Broad Street and the High Street, which seriously impair the character of the area, having no relationship in style, materials or scale to the adjacent traditional buildings.
- Street parking: as with so many towns, street parking has a serious impact on the character of the area, despite Seaford being well served with car parking. Broad Street and the High Street are the worst affected.
- Street Clutter: There are areas where a proliferation of traffic signage, street furniture and general clutter detracts from the street scene. An audit of street clutter and removal of unnecessary items in line with recent guidance from English Heritage (Streets for All, 2005) would improve the area.



*Shop fronts in inappropriate materials and designs can have a detrimental impact on the area, especially if illuminated (Sutton Road and Church Street)*



*Inappropriate and mismatching uPVC windows detract from the uniform character of these traditional cottages in Croft Lane*

## **6. SUGGESTED BOUNDARY REVISIONS**

### **6.1 Broad Street**

Up until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Broad Street was a pleasant, wide, tree lined, mostly residential Avenue with a variety of buildings from different periods. This is the central part of Seaford town, leading up from the High Street towards Clinton Place. Currently only a section of the east side is included in the Conservation Area.

Modern shop front development and some unsympathetic infill has resulted in a loss of character to the street scene. However behind the mostly modern shopfronts, many buildings of townscape merit remain and are worthy of enhancement and protection. To the south of the street there are some featureless modern flats which detract from the heterogeneous nature of the street front. Car parking on both sides of the street dominates the street and has a negative impact on the street scene. Implementation of the Council's



published guidance for shopfronts and advertisements in Seaford could help return this street to its former elegance.

The corner building at north end of Broad Street (now Barclays bank) is a fine flint and stone fronted building, occupying a prominent position at the top of the street. The United Reformed Church opposite is a flint building in the Victorian Gothic style built in 1887, largely unspoilt and worthy of preservation, it is very visible on the approach up Broad Street and



occupies a prominent corner location. A key building in this phase of later development in the town, it adds to the eclectic mix of established building styles.

It is proposed to add the 1930's former Caffyns building which has a strong character contributing to the Conservation Area and the adjacent Bank, which are located together on the opposite corner of the street.

## 6.2 Clinton Place



Clinton Place is one of the earliest terrace developments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Seaford, built when the London Brighton & South Coast railway line extended to Seaford in 1864. It was originally a neat, tree-lined street of stuccoed houses and shops. The Italianate style of the buildings is similar to that of the Station and is replicated in the surrounding areas, at the top of Dane Road and Church Street. It is locally distinctive, lending an air of understated seaside elegance to Seaford in contrast to the

grandeur of the nearby more fashionable towns of Brighton and Eastbourne. Now largely converted to modern shops, the houses have lost their decorative balconies and many have had windows replaced in modern materials. However, despite these disfigurements, they mark an important period in the town's historic development, and in conjunction with Seaford Station, which is Grade II listed, form a snapshot of this corner of the town in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Careful control of development resulting from inclusion in the Conservation Area boundary, along with appropriate restoration, could go some way to returning this street to its former elegance.

### **6.3 North End of Broad Street, Clinton Lane and Top end of Blatchington Road,**

Currently an Area of Established Character, this leafy area has a quiet, suburban feel to it, and the rows of cheerfully painted cottages are better preserved than some within the Conservation Area. An attractive traditional shop front at No. 65 (Raymond Austen Photography) adds to the quality and interest of the area.



Included in this area at the top of Blatchington Road are Twyn Cottage and Twyn House (Nos. 3 and 5). These Grade II listed, white stuccoed cottages date from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and were formerly a workhouse before being converted to residential use in c.1810. The cottages stand on the site of the medieval leper hospital of St James. These historic buildings and their associations add to the character and significance of the area.

This small area of the town marks a transition from the bustling, commercial centre of Seaford, to the quieter suburban area, the density gradually reducing as Blatchington Road continues, culminating in the spacious, leafy development of East Blatchington Conservation Area.

Development outside this area is generally larger, semi detached houses, while this cluster of terraced cottages is more in keeping with the predominant style in the existing Conservation Area (Croft Lane, Church St, Church Lane etc). It is therefore felt that it is appropriate to include this area in the Town Centre Conservation Area.

The trees and hedges which line the road contribute substantially to the character of the area and would benefit from the protection that Conservation Area status would afford.

### **6.4 Summary of Boundary Revisions (see attached map)**

- Include Clinton Place and the top of Broad Street to Place Lane, the United Reformed Church, the former Caffyns Garage, Old Market Cottages and the Drill Hall.

- Include North end of Broad Street up to junction with Blatchington Road, and section of Blatchington Road, currently areas of established character.
- Bring CA boundary up Broad Street on the west side to include up to 17 Broad Street
- Include the bank on the corner of Dane Road and Pelham Road
- Include row of town houses/ apartments at lower end of Pelham Road on west side.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT ACTION

Without a more stringent method of control in place the character of Seaford will inevitably be eroded by further unsympathetic development, plastic windows and doors and inappropriate roof coverings, shop fronts and signage. The following action is therefore recommended:

- An Article 4 Direction to cover replacement windows and alterations to front of buildings.
- A shopfront improvement scheme (in association with the Town Council)
- Re-publication and distribution of LDC's 'Shopfronts and Advertisements in Seaford' guidance note.
- An Audit of Street Clutter and removal of unnecessary items, in line with English Heritage's 'Streets for All' campaign and ESCC Public Realm Initiative.

## 8. THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The **Adopted East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Structure Plan** [1991] contains broad policies which require the impact of proposed development on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings to be given due consideration. This plan can be viewed at:

County Hall,  
St Anne's Crescent  
Lewes.  
Switchboard number: (01273) 481000.  
Website: [www.eastsussexcc.gov.uk](http://www.eastsussexcc.gov.uk)

These policies are reflected in more specific detail in the **Adopted Lewes District Local Plan** [2003]. Chapter Eight of the plan specifically covers 'The Historic Environment' and these planning policies clearly outline the criteria that will be applied to development in, or affecting, a Conservation Area and the approval or refusal of any planning or Conservation Area application will be determined against them.

Anyone thinking of applying for consent within a Conservation Area is therefore strongly advised to consider these policies first. The Local Plan can be viewed at the District Council offices in Lewes or on the website at [www.lewes.gov.uk/coun/planning/index.html](http://www.lewes.gov.uk/coun/planning/index.html). Pre-application advice can also be obtained from Development Control Officers or the Conservation Officers.

The existing policies are currently being reviewed as part of the new planning system, the **Local Development Framework**. Consultation will be taking place to determine where policy changes need to be made to improve the protection and enhancement of the district's heritage. As part of the new planning system Structure Plans will be phased out and the Regional Spatial Strategy (South East Plan) and the LDF will take their place. Over time the two adopted plans which you should presently refer to for conservation policies will be replaced by these two documents.

## **9. USEFUL INFORMATION & CONTACT DETAILS**

### **For further information on this leaflet, please contact:**

Design & Conservation Team  
Planning and Environmental Services  
Lewes District Council  
Southover House  
Southover Road  
Lewes  
BN7 1AB  
(01273) 471600

This is one of a series of leaflets about the 35 Conservation Areas in the Lewes District. A full list can be obtained by contacting the above officers, or by visiting the Council's web site ([www.lewes.gov.uk/environment](http://www.lewes.gov.uk/environment)), or from Lewes Tourist Information Centre.

- Visitors can find out about Walks and facilities in the area from Lewes Tourist Information Centre.
- Historic maps and records can be consulted at the East Sussex Record Office in Lewes.
- The Seaford Museum at the Martello Tower in Seaford has extensive records on the history and development of the area.

## 10. FURTHER READING

### **Conservation Area Appraisals –**

*Defining the Special Architecture or Historic Interest of Conservation Areas.* English Heritage, 1997

*Understanding Place: Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals,* English Heritage, 2005

*Conservation Area Practice: English Heritage Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas,* English Heritage, 1995

*Shopfronts and Advertisements in Seaford,* Lewes District Council

*Street Improvements in Historic Areas.* English Heritage, 1993

*Seaford Past and Present,* Patricia Berry, 1993

*Then & Now in Seaford,* Seaford Museum of Local History, 1988