



Newhaven GBI Settlement Appraisal

Prepared for: Lewes District Council

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Introduction

The settlement appraisal is intended to provide a picture of the existing Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) in and around the settlement boundary and highlight opportunities for improvement.

It is divided into three parts:

Part 1: Local Context - which provides detail of existing local issues and relevant planning policy

Part 2: Current GBI – which examines local GBI from the perspective of the five ‘Why’ Principles of the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework

Part 3: Audit and analysis - which provides a summary of a selection of audited sites from the settlement and highlights potential opportunities for improvement.

Useful terms:

GBI – Green and Blue Infrastructure

SuDS – Sustainable Drainage Systems

PRoW – Public Rights of Way

SDNP – South Downs National Park

LGS – Local Green Space

NE – Natural England

BNG – Biodiversity Net Gain

LNRS – Local Nature Recovery Strategy

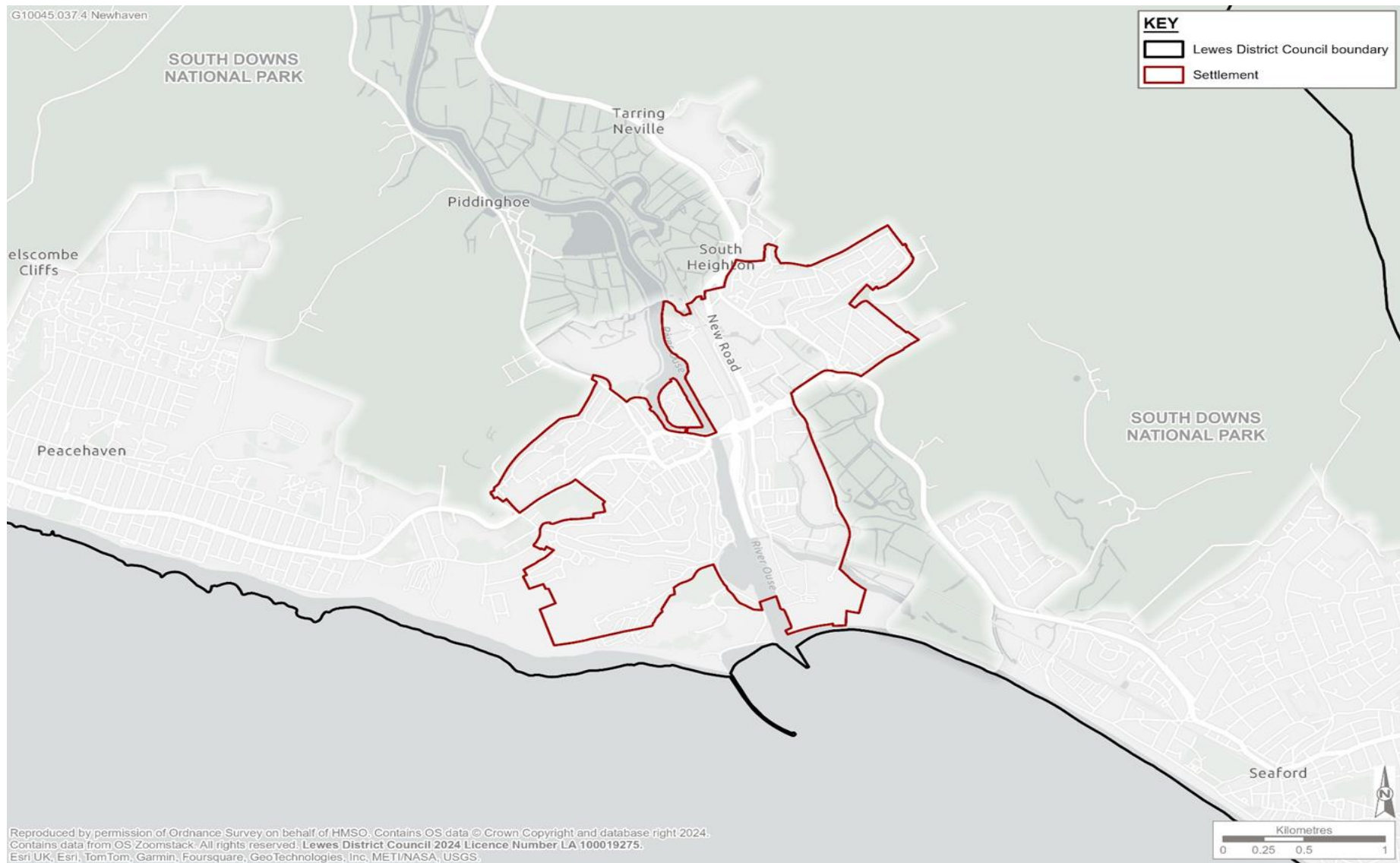


Figure 1: Newhaven settlement as defined by Lewes District Local Plan Policies Map 2020

Part 1: Local Context

1 Overview

Newhaven, shown in Figure 1 is situated on the South Coast of England, between Seaford to the east and Peacehaven to the west, and the South Downs National Park (SDNP) to the north. The River Ouse flows southwards through the settlement, into the English Channel south of the settlement. Newhaven has a total population of approximately 12,696¹ people. It is known as a port town, home to an important active fishing fleet and marina, whilst Newhaven Port provides a key cross channel connection into Dieppe, France.

Newhaven is a key industrial town in East Sussex, with the docks providing key raw materials and services to the wider area. Whilst not in the settlement boundary, the Rampion Wind Farm is serviced from Newhaven and generates green energy capable of powering around 350,000 homes².

Newhaven is located along the new England Coast Path, which offers walking and cycling accessibility to Seaford, Peacehaven and beyond. The route passes through several designated ecological sites such as Brighton to Newhaven Cliffs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Beachy Head West Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), and several Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) such as Newhaven Cliffs (part of which falls within the Brighton to Newhaven Cliffs SSSI) and Tide Mills.

Newhaven has several important accessible open spaces used by residents and visitors. Paradise Park is a Park and Garden located

within the centre of Newhaven. The Park is a themed garden with an extensive indoor and outdoor play area offering formal and informal play opportunities for all ages. Castle Hill is located to the south of Newhaven Town Centre and is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) offering views over the Ouse Estuary, of the English Channel, and the Downs.

Due to Newhaven's close proximity to the River Ouse and English Channel there is a risk of flooding within the town. In partnership, the Environment Agency and Lewes District Council, developed the Newhaven Flood Alleviation Scheme, which was subsequently completed in 2021. The scheme reduces the risk of flooding to approximately 430 homes and 390 businesses.

Newhaven Enterprise Zones (NEZ) are located across Newhaven. The Zones are made up of 8 individual sites that cover approximately 79 hectares. NEZ is a collaboration led by Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership and Lewes District Council. The aim is to facilitate sustainable regeneration of the town over the next 25 years, including providing a wide range of activities within the town centre and new facilities that will benefit business and the local community alike, shifting towards a higher value economy in Newhaven.

¹ Newhaven 2021 Census Data <https://newhaven.parish.uk/>

² Rampion Offshore Wind | Rampion Offshore Wind Farm

2 Consultation

Newhaven Neighbourhood Plan (NP) undertook a consultation in 2014. The following key themes were identified:

- Housing;
- Facilities and Services;
- Environment and Open Spaces; and
- Employment and Tourism Transport and Access.

Lewes District Council with consultants at TEP, undertook consultation in 2023 to support the Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Study. As part of the consultation an interview was undertaken with a representative from Newhaven Town Council.

The consultation found that Newhaven has some good existing walking and cycling routes along the coast, however improvements are required to the public realm within the town centre for the community and visitors. New housing development is being taken forward in an area which is congested with traffic and has air quality issues, green and blue spaces need to be suited to local needs.

The Newhaven Town Council Representative also noted Meeching Down and Riverside Park as important local spaces and stated that the five local playgrounds are well used, but there are some problems with antisocial behaviour associated with larger, denser green spaces. They also highlighted new projects underway to create a sensory garden at Denton and Egrets Way Cycle Path (details below). There is also increasing interest in gig rowing clubs which provide an opportunity for residents to stay fit and healthy on the water and may provide an opportunity to host sporting events.

The consultation provided information that there has been funding from the Environment Agency for flood bunds and that new

developments include underground car parks which can flood, stating that Denton is particularly vulnerable to severe flooding. The representative also noted that a hydrology study had been carried out on the potential to create wetland habitat at the Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve but had concluded that it would be unfeasible.

The Town Council Representative also explained the importance of the work of Greenhavens Network which represents the work of over 100 community groups and organisations working in and around green spaces in Peacehaven, Newhaven, and Seaford. Newhaven Town Council is taking on local stewardship of local spaces and emphasised the importance of funding for long term, positive stewardship of green spaces.

3 Local GBI Initiatives

There are several local initiatives in Newhaven which were identified through the consultation (see section 2), and desktop research including:

- **Newhaven Festival** – A local initiative where the local community can be involved in a series of different plays, talks and community events throughout the year. This festival celebrates coast, culture and the community.
- **Egrets Way Cycle Path** – Is an accessible 7-mile walking route which passes from Newhaven's Riverside Park to Lewes. The cycle path is part of the Ouse Valley Cycle Network, creating village connections from the countryside, Newhaven town to the channel port. The route encourages a healthy lifestyle, passing through ancient villages, SSSIs, medieval waterways and offering chances to identify a host of wildlife including the little egret.



Figure 2: Current GBI Assets

4 Current GBI Assets

GBI assets in and around Newhaven have been mapped from a desk-based assessment and are shown in Figure 2. There is good provision and connectivity of GBI around Newhaven.

There are several GBI assets within the settlement boundary including the River Ouse (see below), East Side Park, Tide Mills LWS and The Drove Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace. There is also a range of GBI outside the settlement boundary including floodplains, woodlands and waterbodies.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

The England Coast Path runs through the settlement providing walking and cycling routes for tourists and residents. There are several PRoWs within Newhaven which lead north to the SDNP and east to Seaford.

Habitats

The main priority habitats are woodland and coastal habitats and floodplain within the settlement, and the grassland, waterbody and coastal habitats and floodplains adjacent to the settlement boundaries.

Waterbodies

The River Ouse flows through the centre of Newhaven. The river is accessible in many areas, and the Egrets Cycle Path lies adjacent to the west of the river towards Lewes.

Other Open Space

There are several open spaces within Newhaven which provide multiple benefits including:

- Eastside Recreational Ground to the east of Newhaven town centre which provides football pitches for senior players, changing facilities and a Childrens Play Area;
- Huggett's Green Park and Garden;
- Hill Crest Park and Garden;
- The Drove Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace;
- There is also a network of Amenity Greenspace which provides some GBI in residential areas.

Several larger GBI assets are located outside of the settlement boundary including Meeching Down and Castle Hill LNR.

Landscape Designations

The SDNP lies adjacent to the eastern, northern and western boundaries of the settlement.

5 Planning Policy and Strategy Review

A review of existing national, regional and local planning policy, strategies and evidence bases was undertaken as part of the district wide GBI Study and relevant findings are summarised below.

Lewes District Local Plan: Part 1 Core Strategy (2016), states that by 2030, Newhaven will have undergone significant regeneration, and developed and strengthened its economic base, with the town acting as the continental gateway to the adjacent SDNP. Accessibility to the town centre, enhancement of the river, connectivity and sustainable transport are important themes for this regeneration.

“The town will have become the focus for enterprise and training within the district, with links to the two universities in Brighton. Much of the economic regeneration will have centred upon port generated activities, high tech industries and the tourism industry with the town acting as the continental gateway to the adjacent National Park. The regeneration of Newhaven will have resulted in a revitalised and more accessible town centre, with an improved public realm and a greater range of uses and activity, including those to meet local needs. The improved accessibility of the town centre will have been aided by an improved highway network, greater connectivity to the town’s railway stations and a high quality sustainable transport corridor along the A259. The natural asset of the river through the town will have been maximised through redevelopment opportunities, thereby enhancing this unique area of the town for residents and visitors alike.”

Lewes Local Plan: Part 1 Joint Core Strategy, Spatial Policy 2 – Distribution of Housing, identified that a minimum of 425 net additional units will be built in Newhaven up to 2030. The Newhaven



Figure 3: Street trees in Newhaven town centre

NP identified 12 sites within Newhaven which may be appropriate for development.

The Newhaven NP allocated two Local Green Spaces within the neighbourhood plan area. These have the same level of protection in planning policy as Green Belt and form part of the GBI network. Both Castle Hill LNR and Meeching Down are demonstrably special to the local community and offer sanctuary away from the adjacent built-up areas.

The NP objective 1 describes aspirations to green the town centre and increase active transport. Objective 2 seeks to improve accessibility, making walking and cycling routes safer, easier and more attractive. Development which enhances visitor experience including recreation and leisure use is outlined in Objective 3.

Objective 4 relates to open space, health and wellbeing and focusses on the protection of facilities and services which are important for communities including:

- the need to protect and create multifunctional green and blue spaces;
- Providing facilities which meet the needs of the community;
- The protection of allotments; and
- The protection and enhancement of existing open spaces and providing new open space.

The Lewes Open Space Strategy (2020) identified that there is 151.91ha of open space in Newhaven Parish, which equates to 11.60ha per 1,000 population. The Open Space Study identified that there is a deficiency in Allotments, Community Gardens and City Farms, Parks and Gardens and Provisions for Children and Young People within Newhaven. Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspace provides the largest proportion of open space (93.91ha) in

Newhaven which includes Newhaven Harbour, The Drove and Railway Road within the settlement boundary. Riverside Park, Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve, Castle Hill LNR, Meeching Down, Bollens Bush and Fort Road are all located outside the settlement boundary.

The council are in the process of drafting a new local plan which will set new housing requirements across the district, allocate development sites and set out up to date policies for new development.



Figure 4: Newhaven landscape

6 Other Local Policies and Guidance

East Sussex County Council, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

The main coastal urban areas (including Newhaven) are linked east to west by parallel roads of the A27 and the A259, with the National Cycle Network running along sections of these routes including the NCN2 and NCN21 and Regional Route 90.

The LCWIP aims to create a long-term approach to increasing the number of cycling and walking trips across local authorities. The LCWIP focuses on areas where there are the greatest opportunities to increase levels of cycling and walking.

Ouse Valley – South Downs Project

In October 2022 Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA) was awarded £2m from the National Lottery Community Fund aiming to make the region a national pioneer in tackling the climate change emergency.

The project area follows the River Ouse downstream from the village of Barcombe through to Lewes to the coastal towns of Seaford, Peacehaven and Newhaven.

The river valley is a fragile landscape which is experiencing the effects of climate change, including increased flooding, storm damage, coastal erosion and biodiversity loss.

The funding focuses on three key areas:

- nature recovery and climate resilience;
- people's knowledge and skills; and
- greener energy and travel.

Sussex Biodiversity Partnership – Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

The Lewes Brook and the Ouse Valley have been recognised as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) as it represents a priority area for the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets. This area includes the stretch of the River Ouse from Lewes to Newhaven. Between Lewes and Newhaven, the river is heavily embanked and is currently protecting freshwater habitats in a tidal floodplain.

The BOA report notes further landscape-scale opportunities, more details are available through the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership and Sussex Local Nature Partnership. Opportunities include coastal and wetland management (restoration and creation) floodplain restoration, education and community engagement, policy integration and volunteer opportunities, working with and attracting new businesses and improvement of ecology and water quality.

Lewes Landscape Character Assessment (May 2023)

Newhaven lies in the 'Downland Fringe' character area of undulating grassland and chalk cliffs.

The forces for change relevant to GBI in Newhaven are:

- development encroachment into open spaces, either physically or through visual encroachment;
- tourism and recreational pressure along the coastline that may reduce biodiversity;
- climate change leading to extreme weather events and coastal erosion;
- continued sea defences with potential urban influence;
- increased agricultural pressure affecting hedgerows and water quality; and
- improvements to the PRoW network by local volunteers.

As described in the district wide GBI study, the relevant GBI management guidelines identified in the LCA are:

- support the Ouse Valley climate action goals, including tree planting and wildlife habitat creation;
- manage recreational and tourism pressures, preserving and enhancing the ProW network;
- retain and improve GBI assets as a matter of policy;
- preserve the open setting of the SDNP including long views and the intervisibility between the downland fringe, the SDNP and the English Channel;
- use hedging to screen or replace metal or close board fencing; and
- reinstate historic field boundaries where previously lost to field amalgamation.

Newhaven Port Masterplan (2012)

The Newhaven Port Masterplan provides a strategic framework from which the port will develop over the next 20-30 years. The masterplan provides a framework to build upon existing port assets and capabilities to secure emerging opportunities and deliver long term economic growth. The Masterplan seeks to provide the jobs required to secure a sustainable future for Newhaven.

Shoreline Management Plan (2005)

The Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) states that defences will be replaced to protect businesses and residential properties. Flood embankments will be set back to manage long term flooding in the Tide Mills area, and cliffs between Newhaven and Peacehaven will be allowed to erode.

7 Local Priorities

Newhaven Neighbourhood Plan (NP) (2019)

Newhaven NP sets out local priorities and objectives identified below:

- To protect and enhance existing habitats and provide connected wildlife corridors in new development;
- Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the SDNP;
- Support measures to reduce air quality issues;
- Improve network of active and accessible travel routes between the town centre and nearby green spaces;
- Increase greening in the public realm in the town centre for a more attractive street scene;
- Maximise the contribution from new developments to protect and enhance existing open spaces and provide new multi-functional green space;
- Work towards a neighbourhood that is low carbon and efficient in use of resources; and
- Mitigate the impacts of climate change, specifically through GBI and SuDS measures to become more resilient to increased flood risk.

The local priorities are taken from the Newhaven NP but only include those most relevant to the GBI Study.

Part 2: Current GBI

In 2023 Natural England (NE) published a framework of Green Infrastructure (GI) Principles to guide the planning and implementation of GBI. In this section we consider the settlement in terms of the five 'Why' principles at local level.

8 Principle 1: Nature rich beautiful places

“To achieve nature rich and beautiful places at a local level, GI should:

- ***Thread biodiversity through the built environment connecting recreational, natural green and blue spaces;***
- ***Prioritise native species;***
- ***Be designed to connect people to nature; and***
- ***Contribute to site specific BNG requirements”***

There are no international or nationally designated sites within Newhaven, however there are four non-statutory locally designated sites (Tide Mills LWS and SNCI, and Newhaven Ponds LWS and SNCI). These sites provide space for recreation, and area of significant biodiversity interest.

There are a number of nationally or locally designated sites close to the settlement boundary including the SDNP to the north and Brighton to Newhaven Cliffs SSSI and Castle Hill LNR to the south. The Brighton to Newhaven SSSI also forms part of the Beachy Head West Marine Conservation Zone.

The Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve was created to conserve wildlife and provide flood management opportunities when a new business park and road were built in 2003. This Nature Reserve is now home to over 100 different bird species.

Future housing development may impact the Nature Reserve through additional footfall. The Newhaven NP states within Policy ES3 that proposals should demonstrate appropriate mitigation measure to rebalance any loss.



Figure 5: Castle Hill Local Nature Reserve, Newhaven

9 Principle 2: Active and healthy places

“To achieve active and healthy places at a local level GI should:

- ***Maximise health and wellbeing outcomes particularly in deprived areas and for disadvantaged groups;***
- ***Address issues of inequality in access to quality natural green space and routes, using the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (AGS); and***
- ***Be managed to deliver indirect benefits such as urban cooling, noise reduction, flood risk management and air quality improvements which can improve health outcomes.”***

Newhaven has high levels of deprivation compared to other towns in the district, with a particular need to provide job opportunities and support for local young people. Consultation noted that some green spaces are associated with antisocial behaviour, and that families under more financial pressure may find less leisure time to enjoy local natural resources and engage with active travel.

Newhaven is surrounded by a range of different Active Travel Routes including the Egrets Way Cycle Path, England Coast Path (Shoreham to Eastbourne) the South Downs Way and PRoW's, several of which provide access along the River Ouse. These transport routes provide residents with important links to nature and other local green spaces. Exposure to nature provides a host of benefits including improving attention, reducing illness and lowering stress.

Dog walking and cycling are popular leisure activities within the settlement. Regular repairs to the coastal cycle routes are necessary

to take advantage of existing resources. The Egrets Way cycle path is currently under construction and is being extended up to Newhaven providing green links from Newhaven up to Lewes. Furthermore, the National cycle path and cycle route connects Seaford to Newhaven.

The South East Coastal Path runs along the South coast of Newhaven providing accessibility to residents as well as tourists.

Newhaven is home to several allotment sites, including the Eastside Community Garden Action Group which is located East of Newhaven town centre. The community garden action group is very popular and is currently undergoing construction to be divided up into smaller plots to meet demand. These smaller plots aim to provide access for more residents to engage in horticulture and build social ties while engaging in physical activity, enhancing community capacity and positively affecting people's wellbeing.

The new Denton Sensory Garden will be accessible to early years SEND children attending the nearby specialist school, providing essential contact with nature in an appropriate environment.

Newhaven has been declared as an Air Quality Management Area and an Air Quality Action Plan has been prepared to address concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) which people are exposed to alongside the busy roads in the centre of Newhaven. Seven broad areas of action have been established to help deliver better air quality, with specific measures then identified for each of these Action areas.

10 Principle 3: Thriving and prosperous places

“To achieve active and healthy places at a local level GI should:

- ***Maximise health and wellbeing outcomes particularly in deprived areas and for disadvantaged groups;***
- ***Address issues of inequality in access to quality natural green space and routes, using the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (AGS); and***
- ***Be managed to deliver indirect benefits such as urban cooling, noise reduction, flood risk management and air quality improvements which can improve health outcomes.”***

Newhaven’s port provides an important gateway to Europe and characterises the town. Newhaven has suffered the effects of economic downturn like other coastal towns.

Regeneration opportunities aim to achieve positive change in Newhaven by respecting local characteristics including the port, whilst using opportunities generated by development to strengthen and enhance its image.

Newhaven is classified as a District Centre in the Settlement Hierarchy Review (2023), which means that Newhaven is an accessible settlement via private and public transport, containing a range of shops, employment opportunities and facilities. Newhaven residents require support from nearby secondary or primary centres to meet the higher level needs, such as hospital services at Eastbourne to the east, or Brighton to the west.

Newhaven Enterprise Zone (NEZ) is located in Newhaven and is made up of 8 individual sites, covering approximately 79 hectares.

NEZ is a collaboration led by Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership and Lewes District Council. The aim of NEZ is to facilitate sustainable regeneration of the town over the next 35 years, providing opportunities and activities within the town centre and new facilities which will benefit both businesses and the local community, shifting towards a high value economy in Newhaven town centre.

Newhaven is home to several community events including the Newhaven Festival in early autumn which involves a series of different plays, talks and community events. This event provides opportunities for residents to celebrate Newhaven’s coast and culture.

Local enthusiasm for gig rowing clubs provides opportunities for residents to enjoy offshore exercise and may provide a new channel for sports and leisure tourism if Newhaven hosts national or international competitions in the future.

11 Principle 4: Improved water management

“To achieve sustainable water management at a local level GI should:

- ***Provide sustainable water management including though sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);***
- ***Be adaptable to take account of the impacts of climate change;***
- ***Reduce site specific flood risks identified in flood risk assessments;***
- ***Improve water quality and help address existing sources of pollution;***
- ***Improve natural filtration where this will protect and enhance groundwater supplies;***
- ***Help connect recreational, natural green and blue spaces and provide opportunities for everyone to safely experience blue space;***
- ***Use water to enhance public open space for a variety of recreational uses, ensuring potential conflicts are managed;***
- ***Create and enhance habitats including re-naturalising river corridors and providing riparian buffer zones;***
- ***Soften estuary edges with coastal habitats that can act as buffers to coastal erosion and tidal flooding; and***
- ***Prioritise native species and ensure biosecurity principles are adhered to avoid spreading non-native invasive species and diseases.”***

Newhaven is an important port town which has an active industrial and commercial river frontage. The Ouse estuary contributes to the local character of Newhaven, as well as being a prominent landscape feature and providing habitat for a range of species.

Lewes District Council Local Plan: Part 1 Core Policy 12, states that all developments should aim to reduce the impact and extent of flooding from coastal and fluvial flooding, and surface water run-off.

The Newhaven NP supports the use of SuDS landscaping features and biodiverse green roofs through policies NE1 and D2.

The Newhaven Flood Alleviation Scheme was designed and built in response to the floods which impacted the south coast of England, where 60 properties were flooded as well as local businesses and major national infrastructure including the Lewes to Seaford railway line. In partnership, the Environment Agency and Lewes District Council developed the Newhaven Flood Alleviation Scheme, which was subsequently completed in 2021. The Scheme cost £18million and reduces the risk of flooding to approximately 430 homes and 390 businesses. The Scheme provides up to a 1-in-200-year standard of protection, and also reduces the risk of flooding to local infrastructure including the A2259 and C7, the rail line, Newhaven train station, and the port. This scheme supports the wider regeneration of Newhaven and will bring investment, jobs and homes to the area.

Shingle beaches between Newhaven and Seaford are managed in specific areas to reduce flood risk. The area has a steep shingle beach, which leads up to a footpath and low-lying areas that attenuate water. Banks of the River Ouse and the Western Am prevent the river mouth being blocked with shingle.

12 Principle 5: Resilient and climate positive places

“To achieve resilient and climate positive places at a local level GI should:

- **Be audited using local information for instance using local resilience strategies and plans to improve the climate resilience of existing GI**
- **Incorporate adaptive management to ensure GI is planned to provide multi-functional benefits and continues to do so as the climate changes”**

Newhaven’s biggest climate challenges are rising sea levels and flooding, as mentioned above in sections 10 and 11, and the town has been active in local and district-wide projects detailed in section 5.

The Newhaven NP notes that the Coastal Futures Group set out a local response to climate change as sea levels could rise by 1.5m up to 2150.

The Newhaven Flood Alleviation Scheme provides a 1-in-200 year standard of protection for the town and the port considering the effects of climate change.

GBI can provide multiple functions to mitigate the effects of climate change. The Ouse Valley Climate Action project is Lottery funded and aims to promote positive action to address the challenges created by a rising climate. In 2022 the Project was awarded £2million and focusses on three key areas of nature recovery and climate resilience, the knowledge and skills of people, and greener energy and travel. The Project states that the *“River Ouse and its valley is a*

fragile landscape that is already feeling the effects of climate change this millennia, including flooding, storm damage, coastal erosion and biodiversity loss”.

An Increase in planting interventions like street trees and green roofs in urban areas (NP objective 1 and policy NE1) will also contribute to reducing the harmful effects of rising temperatures.



Figure 6: Shoreline near Tide Mills

Part 3: Audit and Analysis

13 GBI Site Audits

Site audits were undertaken in October 2023 to provide an indication of how local green and blue spaces are performing. The exercise is not intended as a comprehensive review of all GBI in the settlement as only a limited number of sites could be audited across the district. However, the audit methodology and scoresheets can be used by an open space practitioner to evaluate other green spaces and draw up improvement plans in the future if required. GBI assets were chosen in each settlement from existing GIS mapping data to cover a range of different uses and GBI services for people and nature.

Audits assessed the current contribution of the green space to the five “Why” principles of good GBI. The audit covered “Quality and Value” using a system derived from best practice methods associated with the Green Flag Award criteria³, adapted to include additional criteria relevant to GBI.

The scores awarded in each category are classed from X to 4 outlined below:

- X - not appropriate;
- 0 - missing but needed;
- 1 - complete re-designed needed;
- 2 - major improvement needed;
- 3 - minor improvement needed; and
- 4 - no improvement needed.

³ [Green Flag Award - Green Flag Award](#)

The audit also covered criteria of multifunctionality, connectivity, variety and distinctiveness, which are relevant to the NE “What” principles of good GBI.

A total of six sites were audited in Newhaven. Three sites were assessed through remote survey and site visit information from the 2020 open space strategy, and three sites were audited through site visits.

Site Audit Map

The site audit map shown in Figure 7 shows the settlement boundary of Newhaven and the main GBI assets. Three sites were audited in person for this study, all of which are accessible to the public.

Table 1 below shows the Quality and Value scores from the site audits. Scores from site visits are based on a snapshot in time and should be considered in the context of local knowledge and other more detailed surveys where those are available.

Criteria	GI Principles	49. Valley Ponds Open Space	48. Meeching Down	50. River Side Park	6. East Side Recreation Ground	20. Tide Mills LWS	7. Castle Hill Local Nature Reserve & Fort Road
Social Criteria – Appropriately welcoming / Accessible to all	1,2,3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Social Criteria – Healthy, safe and secure	2,3	3	1	2	4	3	3
Social Criteria – Well maintained and clean	2,3	4	3	3	4	3	3
Social Criteria – Contribution to local amenity, vitality and sense of place	2,3	3	2	2	2	2	4
Environmental Criteria – Recreation, play and exercise value	2	3	3	2	4	4	3
Environmental Criteria – Diversity and Naturalness of Habitats	1	4	4	3	3	4	4
Environmental Criteria – Site Management and Habitat Diversity supports pollinators and soil invertebrate diversity	1	3	3	4	3	4	4
Environmental Criteria – Shade and Ventilation available to users	5	3	4	3	4	4	4
Environmental Criteria – Vegetation, land surface cover contributes to natural flood management	1,4,5	4	3	4	3	4	4



Environmental Criteria – SuDS or water quality management features visible and effective	4.5	4	2	4	4	4	3
Total Score	N/A	34	28	30	34	35	34
Potential Score	N/A	40	40	40	40	40	40

Table 1: Audit scores

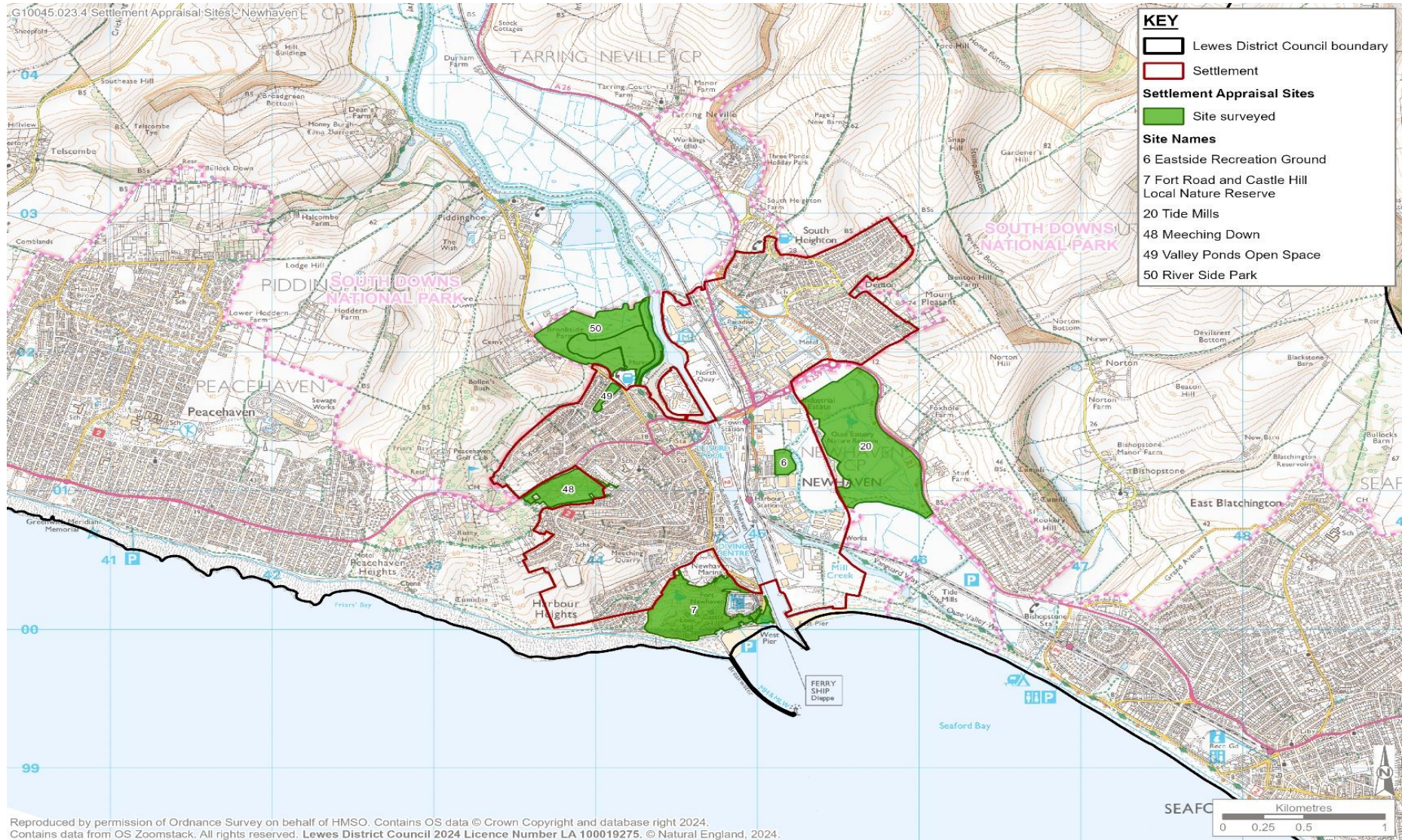


Figure 7: Site Audit Map

13.1 GBI Audit Scores

Valley Ponds Open Space – 34/40

The assessment for this site was undertaken by remote survey and analysis of open space survey data. Valley Ponds is an area of accessible green and blue space off Lewes Road in the north of Newhaven, across the road from Riverside Park. The site scores lower across several criteria as it tries to balance water management and wildlife with easy access for residents in a challenging, narrow space.



Figure 8: Valley Ponds

Meeching Down – 28/40

The assessment for this site was undertaken by remote survey and analysis of open space survey data. Meeching Down scored lower on criteria relating to safety, amenity and ease of access due to the elevation and wooded nature of the site creating limited visibility. In the context of being designated a Local Green Space it is recognised that the scoring criteria do not provide a complete picture of community value and sense of place. The low score for SuDS should also be considered in relation to the topography. A lower GBI score does not necessarily indicate the requirement for management interventions in this case.

Riverside Park - 30/40

The assessment for this site was undertaken by remote survey and analysis of open space survey data. The site provides an accessible open greenspace just to the north of the settlement boundary which borders the SDNP. The low scores for recreation, safety and amenity should be considered in the context of the adjacent recreation ground which is not within the site boundary and is more likely to be focused on providing those services for residents and visitors.

East Side Recreation Ground – 34/40

This site is to the east of the River Ouse and borders Tide Mills. It is the only site audited to achieve the top score for 'healthy safe and secure', and also has reasonably high scores in the environmental categories for a site that's main use is recreation. Its lowest score is for vitality and sense of place, and this is common to several other of the assessed sites in Newhaven.



Figure 9: East Side Recreational Ground

Tide Mills – 35/40

Tide Mills is a derelict village crossing the border between Seaford and Newhaven, which is being reclaimed by nature. The England Coastal Path passes through the site and there is a footpath/cycleway along the eastern boundary of the site from Seaford to Newhaven. This GBI asset lies within the SDNP and scored well for diversity of habitats, SuDS/water management and recreational opportunities. There was limited sense of place and only a small car park for those who cannot walk or cycle to the site.



Figure 10: Tide Mills

Castle Hill LNR & Fort Road – 34/40

The Castle Fort area just south of the settlement boundary has several adjacent types of open space. For this survey the local Nature Reserve and amenity greenspace at Fort Road were audited but the sports pitch was not included. The low accessibility score should be considered in context of the hilly topography and the more easily accessible sports and play facilities nearby.



Figure 11: Castle Hill LNR and Fort Road

13.2 Multifunctionality

Multifunctionality (delivering multiple functions from the same area of GBI) is especially important in areas where provision of GBI is poor or scarce. GBI should deliver a range of functions and benefits for people, nature and place.

The 6 audited sites were assessed for their multifunctionality:

- **Valley Ponds Open Space** - There is limited space to incorporate both amenity and wildlife functions. The site is accessible for local residents but there is more of a focus on the habitat provision. The site provides an important water management resource.
- **Meeching Down** - Provides space and shade for local wildlife and for people wanting to access nature on their doorstep. The site also provides a potential link from Newhaven to Peacehaven as an alternative cycle route.
- **Riverside Park** Provides an accessible open greenspace for visitors, with an active 'Friends of' group. There is good facility for water management and local coastal habitat.
- **East Side Recreation Ground** – The site is limited in its multifunctionality and only delivers for play and recreation within the recreational ground.
- **Tide Mills** – Provides multiple functions including recreation, coastal habitats, flood resilience, and opportunities to explore heritage.
- **Castle Hill LNR & Fort Road** – Comprise a multitude of functions including delivering for nature, wellbeing and exercise for young people. It also provides for dog walkers and tourists walking the England Coast Path.



Figure 12: Valley Ponds



Figure 13: England Coast Path, Castle Hill LNR and Fort Road

13.3 Connectivity – to SDNP, Coast and other GI Assets

GBI should function and connect with the living network for both people and nature at all scales (e.g. within sites, across regions and within a national scale). It should enhance ecological networks and support a variety of ecosystem services, connecting provision of GBI with those who need its benefits.

- **Valley Ponds Open Space** - Close to Playing fields, Riverside Park and the SDNP however the site is separated by the busy Lewes Road which could benefit from clear, safe crossing. There is also access to the PRoW network and the SDNP via Metcalf Avenue.
- **Meeching Down** - Good link into green spaces and habitats between Newhaven and Peacehaven e.g. Harbour Heights, and there are links with walking and cycling routes across. PRoW also link directly to the Coast and the National Cycle Network which passes nearby along the Highway, and is therefore a candidate for additional cycle parking.
- **Riverside Park** Adjacent to the SDNP with ProW providing cycling and walking routes to the National Park and coast via Egrets Way. Pedestrian links are provided to playing fields and bus stops for access from the town centre but signage and wayfinding around the site and between the park and neighbouring sites could be improved. The site provides habitat links and a buffer from the main town, through to the SDNP.
- **East Side Recreation Ground** – East Side Recreation Ground is linked by PRoW to the SDNP and the coast due via Tide Mills, just across McKinley Way. It could enhance habitats for Great Crested Newts, found in the nearby Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve. The site has potential to connect

with the open space and play provision provided in the new estate to the north.

- **Tide Mills** - Distinctive coastal and tidal habitats are managed by the Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve. The southern end of the site connects to the coast and links the Biodiversity opportunity area to the Ouse, the Shoreline and the rest of the SDNP to the north.
- **Castle Hill LNR & Fort Road** – The England Coast Path passes through the site and is well signposted. The cliff top area has views out to sea including Newhaven Lighthouse. In addition, there are links across to harbour heights nature reserve and the other GBI assets around Peacehaven.

13.4 Variety and Distinctiveness

GBI should include a variety of types and sizes of green and blue spaces, green routes and environmental features (as part of a network) that can provide a range of functions, benefits and solutions to address specific issues and needs.

The sites were assessed for their variety and distinctiveness:

- **Valley Ponds Open Space** - Pond features are very distinctive and provide a complementary resource to surrounding areas.
- **Meeching Down** - Some habitat variety, the site is more shaded than some of the nearby green spaces. An old orchard is featured within the woodland surrounding the open space, providing a varied canopy structure and habitats.
- **Riverside Park** – Valuable coastal floodplain and saltmarsh habitats are combined with space to walk dogs and some public art and distinctive architecture, on former waste site.

Some of the wetland areas are not accessible but provide important habitat for a range of species.

- **East Side Recreation Ground** – East Side Recreation Ground is distinctive as a playing field but also supports long grassland and shrubs around the boundaries. These could be further developed in line with local habitat plans or explained through additional signage linking with local SDNP and Nature Reserve wildlife corridors.
- **Tide Mills** – Distinctive as a coastal habitat, however further enhancements could be made to signage to highlight local species, habitat features and cultural heritage of the site.
- **Castle Hill LNR & Fort Road** – Fort Road has a range of sporting facilities, a distinct blend of natural fauna in the nature reserve and SSSI extending down the shoreline and an impressive coastline within an industrial setting.

13.5 Capacity to accommodate change

Newhaven settlement is expected to accommodate an increasing population both locally and from further afield (section 5), which will then increase demand for green space for social use. The first five audit scores indicate how well a site is performing for people, with a maximum score of 20.

All GBI assets will need to adapt to inevitable consequences of climate change and provide as many environmental services as possible (like temperature regulation and water management) to best serve local communities. The final five audit scores indicate how resilient a site is to the effects of climate change, with a maximum score of 20.

- **Valley Ponds Open Space** – This site scored 16/20 on social use criteria as there is infrastructure designed to accommodate visitors even though the deep open water and narrow paths may be off-putting for some users. That means that the site may be well placed to accommodate some extra growth depending on demographic and mobility. The 18/20 indicates high resilience to climate change, the deep water reserves are also positive in this respect.
- **Meeching Down** – A relatively low score of 12/20 for the first five criteria indicate that this site may have limited capacity to accommodate change, and the lack of clear sight lines may be a barrier to some users. Organised social walking groups may help to improve this. The score of 16/20 reflects the 'wilder' nature of the site which provides broadleaved woodland and grassland habitats, but limited scope for further SuDS given the topography. This indicates good resilience to climate change. The dense habitat areas may benefit from low footfall, and less crowded green space can be valuable for visitors needing space for quiet reflection. These factors should be considered in light of local community needs before deciding on any intervention.
- **Riverside Park** – 12/20 score for social resilience is lower than other local spaces but this is partly explained by the community facilities provided by the adjacent Lewes Recreation Ground being out of scope. The higher score 18/20 for environmental resilience is appropriate for the coastal habitat areas and indicates that it provides good buffer between the town and the SDNP.
- **East Side Recreation Ground** – This site scores 17/20 for social criteria, indicating good resilience to increased population growth if current management practices are maintained. The low score for 'sense of place' is common

across many of the audited sites in Newhaven and may warrant consideration on a wider scale, in light of aspirations to make the most of increased tourism and the views of local residents. 17/20 is a good score for resilience to climate change for a recreation ground that is designed for community use, but the site may benefit from attention to peripheral habitats to ensure best use of the space.

- **Tide Mills** – The site scored 15/20 for the social criteria. The site should continue to develop the heritage and cultural offering when funding is available but also ensure accessibility for people who cannot access via foot or cycling. The site scored 20/20 on physical environmental criteria due to a good variety of coastal habitats, SuDS and food management/water storage. Therefore, the environmental elements of the site should continue to manage water and support climate change resilience in the long term.
- **Castle Hill LNR & Fort Road** - The score of 15/20 for capacity to accommodate population change should be considered as a good score in the context of a challenging topography that may deter less confident walkers, and the play and sports facilities on Fort Road next to this site which were outside the audit scope. The site scored 19/20 for climate change resilience and is a valuable natural resource for local residents and visitors, there may be some opportunities for additional SuDS interventions around the site. Erosion control measures are focused on the harbour, so cliffs are vulnerable despite their ecological, geological and cultural value.



Figure 14: View from Castle Hill towards Newhaven lighthouse

14 Summary of GBI Opportunities for Newhaven

The evidence base, consultation and site audit results have been analysed and a summary of specific place-based opportunities is presented below following the five themes of the NE 'How' Principles which guide the delivery of GBI at a local level. A next step would be discussion with local experts and community leaders to further define and prioritise any detailed actions to take forward.

Partnership

Key stakeholders and residents should be engaged at the planning and design process. Support should be provided to existing groups such as East Side Community Garden Action Groups to maximise community resource and capacity. Coordinate GBI communications to promote Newhaven's successes.

Local businesses which may have an adverse impact on Nature Reserves should be consulted to explore GBI measures that could reduce negative impacts.

Partnership between highways planners and local GBI groups could provide good opportunities to tackle multiple issues at once, in line with infrastructure plans already highlighted in the LCWIP. For example they might highlight priorities and explore funding options for the repair of cycle paths including the Coastal Estuary cycle path to improve accessibility to green routes, while considering air quality and congestion hotspots. This would be particularly relevant at the crossing of Lewes Road between Valley Ponds and Riverside Park, where safe connections and signage could improve local access to the SDNP, and crossings of the A259 both east and west of the Ouse to encourage easy access to the coast.

Engage with local schools to determine how local natural resources could best be employed to support children's health, social activity and learning at all stages of their education.

Seek to coordinate and support local activities and projects so that grass roots initiatives can see their contribution to wider schemes across the district and take advantage of relevant funding opportunities.

Design

New housing development should make links to existing GBI and provide on-site GBI provision where possible. Developments should follow the Newhaven NP guidance and consider the Local Nature Recovery and Pollinator Strategies, Open Space deficiencies, and relevant latest guidance. For example, further provision for children and young people could be delivered through natural play, or 'play along the way' to support safe active travel routes to local schools.

Roadside planting and SuDS may also be helpful if carefully considered in the busy street scene if based on local evidence – as discussed below.

Evidence

Examine or collect any further evidence on population and tourism increase to understand any future capacity issues, especially at ecologically designated sites to ensure valuable habitat is not adversely affected. Determine where opportunities to retrofit SuDS or flood management features would provide most benefit. Measures such as street trees with connected tree pits, or rain gardens (which can also be used as traffic calming measures) may have the additional benefits of improving safety and providing better shade if they can be accommodated sensitively in the street scene.

Policy & Strategic Planning

Maximise GBI contribution through Newhaven's regeneration master planning by linking the port area with the SDNP and Tide Mills and providing safe attractive walking routes to encourage walkers along the coast path to explore town centre cafes.

Seek opportunities through S106 agreements to maximise the formal play opportunities in Newhaven itself through new developments.

Promote wildflower areas on verges and site boundaries for improved habitat connectivity in line with the emerging LNRS, looking at areas near the SDNP, Meeching Down, Fort Road and Tide Mills.

Connectivity

Develop projects to connect communities to the SDNP, nature reserves and Meeching Down such as:

- Improved wayfinding and active travel between the East Side Recreation Ground to the SDNP and Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve;
- Linked Amenity Greenspace areas such as green routes, verges and pathways for walkers through the port area and signpost to Newhaven for cafes and shops to encourage residents and visitors into Newhaven;
- Guided community walks to encourage usage of more natural spaces like Meeching Down and Riverside Park to less confident or mobile residents; and
- Navigation and signposting within and between Riverside Park, nearby green spaces and the SDNP PRow.

Management

Ensure habitat management at Tide Mills is optimised and promote knowledge sharing with neighbouring settlements, local authorities and stakeholders.

Continue to manage water through improving understanding of the effects of climate change on flooding in Newhaven. Promote opportunities to incorporate natural flood management measures and target issues identified in the EA Catchment Flood Management Plan.

Work with local landowners to promote land management for flood resilience and maintain the existing flood defences and structures implemented by the Newhaven Flood Alleviation Scheme.



Figure 15: Newhaven town centre

Summary list of opportunities:

- Work in partnership with landowners, businesses and local initiatives to improve flood resilience and explore improvements for biodiversity connectivity;
- Increase accessibility to GBI assets where appropriate to encourage use;
- Ensure GBI/open space provision is provided on new developments where feasible to address open space deficiencies;
- Use planned active travel improvements as an opportunity to employ multi-functional green spaces to improve water management, air quality, habitat connectivity and safety;
- Engage children of all ages with the natural resources and green spaces on their doorstep;
- Use local evidence to target optimum locations for SuDS measures;
- Use wildflower verges where possible to connect PRow and town centre green spaces with local facilities and the SDNP;
- Review signage across the town to direct visitors to local businesses and green spaces;
- Enhance local identity and amenity of green spaces in collaboration with community groups; and
- Consider preservation of wild, restful places for

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