

5D Cultural Heritage

Evidence

5.43 The SDNPA commissioned an Industrial Archaeology Study²⁰ from WSP to provide a comprehensive overall understanding of the heritage significance of the site and the industrial archaeology interest of its buildings and structures. Unfortunately WSP was denied access to the site by the owner. However, a collection of original engineering plans and drawings that had been salvaged from the plant in 2004 came to light that provided invaluable insights into the site. The plans have been placed with the West Sussex Records Office and are available to view on request.

5.44 Cultural heritage forms part of the first purpose of national parks. Shoreham Cement Works forms an important part of the cultural heritage of the South Downs and Policy SD56 of the Local Plan requires the redevelopment to conserve, enhance and provide opportunities for understanding the historic significance and cultural heritage of the site. The **Cement Works** was designed by cement industry leader



Buildings and infrastructure of cultural importance are retained and repurposed into a canvas for large scale artworks (Credit: Visit Victoria)

Oscar Faber, who was a keen advocate for the need to integrate aesthetics and engineering. He liked to show that practical buildings could be beautiful. His more notable works include the Menin Gate in Ypres and the Bank of England in London. During the Second World War he travelled to America to advise Sir Winston Churchill on the Mulberry Harbour project and assisted in its construction.

5.45 The history of Shoreham Cement Works dates back to at least the eighteenth century when the location was in use as a chalk quarry and contained lime kiln/s. A cement works was constructed next to the river at the end of the nineteenth century using chalk extracted from the quarry on the other side of the road. A new cement works was reconstructed immediately after the Second World War on the east side of the road, partly concealed within the existing chalk quarry. The new plant was much larger than the previous one and was provided with state-of-the-art machinery, most notably two large rotary kilns for processing the cement. After becoming fully operational in 1951, Shoreham launched into cement production quickly becoming a successful plant. By 1968 the plant employed 250 people and the innovative and modern processes at the plant became an exemplar in the industry.

5.46 In the 1960s, the prominence of the plant was reflected through its frequent reception of school children on school trips from both primary and secondary

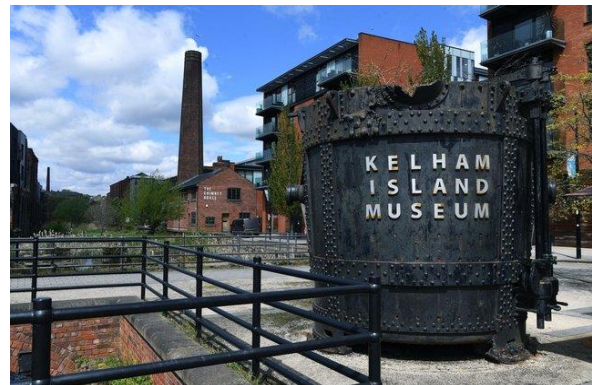
²⁰ Shoreham Cement Works: West Sussex Industrial Archaeology Study, WSP, 2022

schools across Sussex and Surrey. Coaches used to bring pupils to the plant where they would be welcomed at the visitor centre. An engineer would then chaperone them around the plant to illustrate cement production processes, the large pieces of equipment and machinery. Special attention would be paid to the wash-mills where fish were kept in the water, a showpiece to demonstrate how clean the production processes were. By the early 1970s the number of employees had increased to 315 and the plant was producing 392,000 tonnes of cement a year. The success of the state-of-the-art plant became an exemplar across Europe and numerous overseas delegations from the Commonwealth and even one from the Soviet Union were given tours.

- 5.47 The plant closed down in 1991 due to decrease in demand and competition from overseas. The site was vacated by the then owner Blue Circle Group, which left all the present buildings and machinery on the site. The majority of the buildings and structures were kept and mothballed. The main structure that was demolished was the 38-tonne conveyor bridge over Steyning Road, which was removed in May 1992.
- 5.48 The WSP study concludes that Shoreham Cement works is a site of medium significance, which has a high degree of structural survival despite lying dormant for some years and declining in condition.

Issues

- 5.49 There are a number of issues relating to the cultural heritage of Shoreham Cement Works. The WSP study explains how important the site was in terms of the scale of production, the number of people employed and the number of visitors to the state-of-the-art facilities.
- 5.50 Firstly, it needs to be considered if any of the existing buildings should be retained as part of the redevelopment. The retention of all of the historic buildings, much of which are in an extreme state of dilapidation, would increase the development costs and thus impact on viability. However, should some of the buildings most notably the chimney be retained? It is a local landmark that can be viewed from a considerable distance of the site.



Kelham Island: Retaining and re-purposing culturally important features of the cement works. (Credit: The Sheffield Star)

- 5.51 Secondly, it is the machinery and structures, such as the kilns, rather than the buildings that house them that are historically significant. The buildings can only be restored and reused by clearing them of their contents. It could be argued that it is more important to salvage some of the machinery and structures and put them on public view within the site than to restore the buildings that house them.

- 5.52 The SDNPA requires that a landscape-led approach is taken to the redevelopment of the site. It needs to be considered to what extent the design should reflect and commemorate the site's cultural heritage. This can be done in a number of ways such as the use of materials and the design of buildings.

How the Issues Affect the Five Areas

- 5.53 The **Riverside** was the site of the original cement works, but very little remains of historic interest. It is the utilitarian **Cement Works** themselves where the most of the historic interest lies and it is here where the new four arm roundabout is proposed. This would obviously require the demolition of most of the buildings. The chimney, which forms a local landmark is located here just outside the footprint of the proposed roundabout. The rest of the site forms a dramatic backdrop to the site, but is of no particular historic interest.



Parque Etxebarria, Bilbao: Retain the chimney and place it centrally in a green space on the site as a sculpture and to reference its industrial history. (Credit: Bilbao Turismo)

Options

- 5.54 There are a number of options arising from the cultural heritage evidence:
- The demolition of all the buildings would maximise the amount of land available for redevelopment whilst the retention of some of the buildings and/or artefacts they hold would help to conserve and enhance the site's cultural heritage. There is also the issue of energy that is embedded in the existing buildings and their foundations.
 - The design of the redevelopment should reflect and commemorate its cultural heritage. The question arises to what extent the design should do this.

Question 9: Should any of the buildings, such as the chimney, be retained on site?

Question 10: To what extent should the design of the redevelopment reflect the site's industrial past?