

5K Landscape

Evidence

- 5.143 The SDNPA commissioned a Landscape Study⁴⁹ from Land Use Consultants (LUC) to begin to understand the characteristics and sensitivities of Shoreham Cement Works and its wider context. The study breaks landscape down into its elements to make it easier to understand and easier to guide positive future change. The Authority has a comprehensive evidence base on landscape, which supported the preparation of the Local Plan most notably the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment⁵⁰ and Viewshed Analysis⁵¹.
- 5.144 The study found that Shoreham Cement Works is a highly sensitive site in both landscape and visual terms; these are mostly physical and natural, visual, perceptual and cultural sensitivities. The site itself is highly visible from the west and together its chimney and cliffs form a well-known local landmark. When considered alongside the other specialist studies we begin to understand the complexities of this site in landscape terms.
- 5.145 Generally, the site becomes more sensitive towards the east. Close to the A283 and the river Adur the previously developed character of these areas remains. Whilst still sensitive, particularly in visual, heritage and drainage terms much of these sensitivities can be accounted for with careful design. Significant areas of hardstanding and characterful but poor quality built form provide significant opportunities for enhancement in these areas. Further east, experiences of these areas are characterised more strongly by a sense of nature ‘taking back’ and strong perceptual qualities such as tranquillity. No hardstanding or previously developed land exists here and so opportunities for enhancement are scarce, meaning that development is likely to generate negative effects upon landscape and views.

Issues

- 5.146 Landscape is the place where people live out their lives. People are at its heart both in shaping it and experiencing it. Landscapes hold different memories and values for different people, so understanding what’s important can be difficult. They are also influenced and changed by many things, from economics, to climate change.
- 5.147 Each element has a pattern and history which when understood together tell us what makes a place distinctive – they produce its character. Character is experienced by people, it can be called sense of place. Character is not simply aesthetics. Usually experiencing character makes you feel something and this is why landscapes and people are so closely linked. It is this distinctive character the Authority are charged with conserving and enhancing. Landscape elements also perform many functions

⁴⁹ Landscape Study of Shoreham Cement Works, Land Use Consultants, 2022

⁵⁰ South Downs Landscape Character Assessment, LUC, 2020

⁵¹ South Downs National Park: View Characterisation and Analysis, LUC, 2015

which society values, which we call ecosystem services and seek to maximise them through development.

- 5.148 The site's relative isolation is a significant issue we cannot directly affect. Any new development is likely to generate fairly widespread direct and indirect effect on the landscape including views, ecology, perceptual qualities for, for example increased traffic.
- 5.149 The issues and tensions are greatest in the central areas of the site where there is the most over-lap between constraints and opportunities. Much of these tensions affect viability to one degree or another. In the central areas heritage, land contamination, ecology and perhaps less obvious constraints such as micro-climate all combine to reduce opportunities to deliver development.
- 5.150 Further east the site is characterised more strongly by its perceptual qualities and ecological significance suggestive of little or no development. Further west the areas offer more opportunity to receive development, as in these areas negative effects can largely be avoided and mitigated for and then enhanced through design. However developing in these areas is likely to generate a need for significant increases in infrastructure which in turn will negatively affect landscape character, views and experiences.
- 5.151 The lack of topsoil across much of the site and the potentially harsh climate expected within it, particularly during prolonged hot and dry spells, will significantly constrain any opportunities for 'designed' soft landscaping and certainly the ability to support a verdant landscape sustainably is unlikely.
- 5.152 The desire to encourage visitors to the site to experience the unique wildlife, character and geology is likely to bring with it a need for infrastructure and facilities – which in turn can negatively affect the important characteristics of this part of the site.

How the Issues Affect the Five Areas

- 5.153 Reference should be made to the opportunities and constraints plans in chapter 2 of this document.
- 5.154 **The Riverside** is an uncharacteristic location for housing, being located on the floodplain of the river Adur. The evidence tells us that settlements are characteristically located on the valley sides, on slightly higher ground above the floodplain. However, the site has been previously developed and land has been raised which helps, to some extent, reduce the flood risk. This area is considered most suitable for a residential use and this is the most viable land use. Much of the **Riverside's** industrial heritage value has been lost including the original cement works and more recently the over-road conveyor belt system. The **Riverside** is the most visually exposed part of the site. It relies upon existing conifer trees, which are an uncharacteristic species and Ash trees, which are susceptible to Ash Die Back for screening. Neither should be retained in the long-term making the site's exposure in

views is likely to become even more apparent. It remains the least sensitive ecologically. The viability of this site may be affected by the need for significant infrastructure here to provide vehicular access to both sides of the site; would reduce the availability of land for housing and constrain to a degree the site's design.

- 5.155 The **Cement Works** is influenced by its surrounding cliffs to the north, south and wrapping around the site's eastern edge, which reduce the area available for development. The **Cement Works** area will also be affected by the potential need for significant infrastructure to provide vehicular access to both sides of the site. Again, this will reduce the availability of land for housing and constrain to a degree the site's design. Visually the current buildings recede into their surrounding context making them less obvious in medium to long-distance views and blocking views further into the site where existing industrial workings take place. It is also experienced by the most people passing by on the Steyning Road. Employment uses here are likely to be most viable, whilst this area can take large buildings from a landscape and visual point of view, their design still needs to be highly sensitive.
- 5.156 The **Bowl** is currently mostly hidden as it sits behind the **Cement Works** and the **Clifflands**. It includes large areas of contaminated land and is highly sensitive ecologically. It may be suitable for lightweight commercial buildings, but due to contamination it is unlikely to be suitable for residential development. This area is heavily constrained and acts as a transition between the road and existing development and the highly ecological tranquil area at the back of the site.
- 5.157 The **Moonscape** is highly sensitive visually and ecologically. It has strong perceptual qualities, affording long and impressive views across the valley; it feels deeply secluded and with high levels of tranquillity. Whilst the **Moonscape** supports significant ecological value, it is also the least contaminated part of the site, making it from this point of view the cheapest to develop. However, this cost saving is likely to come with hidden costs to landscape and views, and in particular ecology.
- 5.158 The **Clifflands** play an important huge part in characterising the site. It is impossible to under estimate the site's history of extraction when stood within it or nearby. Chalk is a relatively friable material and the cliffs, due to their steep sides have the potential to fall. This fact impacts many of the other areas as development can only occur a safe distance from the foot of the cliffs. Netting the cliffs will negatively affect the views and the unique wildlife that they support. The rear cliff face is the most visible, particularly in the longest distance views from the west. Not only do they support significant wildlife, the cliffs also hold regional/national geological value.

Options

- 5.159 All the options set out in this document have different impacts on the landscape. The first purpose of the Authority is to conserve and enhance its scenic beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.