

Mr. R N Parry c/o Ms Barbara Bay,
The Planning Inspectorate,
South Downs National Park Inquiry Secretariat,
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Temple Quay,
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BS1 6PN.

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My ref 615/mew

Your ref

Date 14th January, 2008.

Dear Sir,

Land south of Chyngton Way, Seaford

In accordance with the advice you gave at the Pre-Inquiry meeting on 11 December, I am writing on behalf of Seaford Town Council to request that you reconsider your proposal to delete this land from the proposed boundary of the South Downs National Park. As suggested, I am emailing this letter and those enclosures which I am able to send electronically. However, I shall also submit four hard copies together with a number of photographs which you may find helpful in coming to a decision. The panoramic view referred to does not, unfortunately, fit your specified format but I think it still worth submitting.

I regret that Seaford Town Council did not appear previously at the Inquiry: the Council was not aware that an objection to the land's inclusion had been lodged and since it was content with the proposed boundaries of the National Park as they affected Seaford it consequently saw no reason to appear at the hearings. However, the Council was shocked to discover that this field had been deleted from the National Park without its knowledge and without you having had the opportunity to hear the arguments for its inclusion.

Planning History of the Site

The land to the south of Chyngton Way has, from the time of the Seaford Local Plan of 1990, never been included within the planning boundary of the town of Seaford; it was also excluded from the boundary of the AONB, although the land immediately to the south and east, in particular, were included, including the iconic and beautiful area of Seaford Head with views of the Seven Sisters and the Cuckmere Valley. At this point I would refer you to the panoramic view of the area showing how the area is located within the landscape of the AONB and the transition between the development boundary of Seaford and the AONB countryside. This photo is numbered 615/1/3 and accompanies the hard copy of this letter, together with the booklet entitled Seaford Head Local Nature Reserve (615/1/15). 615/1/13, a plan of the Town Council's land holding at Seaford Head, is also attached. From this latter document it can readily be seen that land within the Town Council's ownership is immediately adjacent to the field in question. To the west of the site and the

intervening houses lies the Seaford Head Golf Course (plan attached at 615/1/14) which is also within the Town Council's ownership.

In 1995 a planning application was submitted on the site for change of use from agricultural to horse grazing/riding and the erection of four stables on this land (LW/95/0552F). The application was refused by Lewes District Council as the local planning authority and the applicant's appeal was subsequently dismissed. I would refer you to appeal reference T/APP/P1425/A/95/256275/P2 and the inspector's decision dated 16th January 1996, in particular to paras 3, 4 and 5 (615/1/16 attached). You will note that at the time the inspector found that any development on this site would constitute an 'unacceptable built encroachment into the open countryside' and that there was 'a clear distinction between town and country at this point'. Since the time of that appeal the horses have been removed from the field and consequently it has become somewhat overgrown but in the Town Council's view there is nothing about the site which the reinstatement of a grazing regime could not readily repair.

In 2002, Lewes District Council published the draft Lewes District Local Plan and appeals were submitted to the proposed use of the area for informal public recreation (Modifications 14048 and 14049 – Objections SF/0173/0361, SF/0227/0675, SF/0228/0677 and SF/0231/0681 see footnote (*)). I would refer you to the Inspector's report (615/1/17 attached), pages 44-46 inclusive and in particular para 2.3.17. Additionally, as I am sure you are aware, it was not within the Inspector's remit to comment on the non-designation of the land as AONB or on possible alternative uses for it. I have been informed by Lewes District Council Planning Department that there has been no educational use proposed for the site in the life of the District Council, i.e. since 1974, although in the Seaford Local Plan Written Statement 1990 the site was evaluated as a potential candidate for development and rejected because of its interrelationship of the site with the Seaford Head area to the south of the site. The proposed 2002 modifications were however deleted by the Inspector from the draft Local Plan and the land therefore remains at present designated for agricultural use.

You should however be aware that on 9th July 2007 a story was reported in the local press that an agent, presumably acting for the owner, was seeking to submit a planning application to build around 100 houses on this land (see 615/1/18, attached). To date, no application has been submitted but it is clear from this story, which is well documented, that the owner is still seeking to develop the land for uses other than for agricultural purposes. The Town Council will of course comment on such an application if and when it is submitted, as will owners of property in the area and others who are concerned about the future of the land.

The inclusion of the land to the south of Chyngton Way within the boundary of the proposed South Downs National Park is supported by both Seaford Town Council and Lewes District Council. In addition to being adjacent to the most important vehicular access to Seaford Head with its views of the Seven Sisters and the Cuckmere Valley, it is also adjacent to the land owned by Seaford Town Council and the National Trust which is used both by local people for recreational purposes and by visitors wishing to access the Cuckmere and the Seven Sisters. It can be seen from the photograph submitted at 615/1/3 how prominent any residential

development in the field would be in views from the proposed National Park and the Seaford Head Local Nature Reserve.

Until now, although the area has been excluded from the AONB, it has nonetheless enjoyed the protection granted it by virtue of its designation as agricultural land. If the field is excluded from the National Park, residents fear that it will immediately become the target of developers.

I am therefore formally requesting, on behalf of the Town Council, that you reconsider your decision to exclude the land in question from the boundary of the National Park. If you are minded to include verbal submissions as part of the reconvened Inquiry, or to have a round-the-table discussion with the Friends of Seaford Head (FOSH) on 20th February or any other time you may indicate, I should be grateful if you would notify the Town Council at the following address: 37 Church Street, Seaford, BN25 1HD so that the Town Council can be represented.

Yours truly,

(Cllr) Rosemary Collict
Chairman, Planning & Highways Committee
Seaford Town Council

Footnote *:

Mod 14048: Include new policy as follows:

Land south of Chyngton Way (2.75h), as defined on Inset Map No 4, is allocated for informal recreational use.

Reason: To help meet the shortfall in outdoor sports and recreation facilities in the town.

Mod 14049 Include new paras as follows:

There is a shortfall of outdoor sports and recreation facilities within the town (see Topic Paper entitled 'Outdoor Playing Space in the Lewes District'). Therefore, there is a need to allocate additional land in Seaford for outdoor sports and recreation facilities.

.....

The land south of Chyngton Way is allocated for low key informal recreational use to provide a firm edge to the built-up area and to increase provision of recreational land in south east Seaford. However, as the site is in proximity to the AONB, the recreational use will need to be kept informal, without the addition of floodlighting or any significant buildings.

Enclosures:

- 615/1/3: Panoramic photo showing field to the south of Chyngton Way in context. Individual photos also enclosed. (to be submitted by post).
- 615/1/15: Seaford Head Local Nature Reserve booklet (to be submitted by post)
- 615/1/13: Seaford Town Council's land holding at Seaford Head (deed packet 274)
- 615/1/14: Seaford Town Council's land holding at Seaford Head Golf Course deed packet 33).
- 615/1/16: Inspector's decision on appeal T/APP/P1425/A/95/256275/P2
- 615/1/17: Inspector's report on Modifications 14048 and 14049 to the draft Lewes District Plan 2002 – Objections SF/0173/0361, SF/0227/0675, SF/0228/0677 and SF/0231/0681).
- 615/1/18: Extract from Sussex Express dated 9th July 2007