

RAMSGATE SEAFRONT PLACEMAKING PROJECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ramsgate's Historic Seafront is a free, public place recognised predominantly for its communal value. Many cherish the clear sea views, open and green spaces, shared memories, and opportunities to meet and socialise with friends and family.

The Seafront has a long tradition of simple happiness; leisure, activity and fun, surrounded by stylish architecture, breathtaking views, and familiar faces. It has been developed over centuries through large-scale investment, civic pride and a succession of cultural tastes and motivations. For the people of Ramsgate, it is a jewel in their town, a space they cherish for its communal properties, past connections and pleasant ambience: A series of spaces to meet friends and family and make memories, with the ever present backdrop of the sea and a historical context that connects them to people, events and moments of the past. Although the infrastructure of individual cultural heritage assets and spaces has become more fragmented, the meaning the community derives from it and the quality of engagement with the natural heritage still holds.

Many in the community are passionate about the Seafront's history. They feel strongly that understanding its origin and development, and the people and events connected to it, is vital to making sense of the space today and building appropriate behaviours for its maintenance and improvement. The built history evidences how people have used and responded to the natural landscape and illustrate past cultural fashions and ambitions. The sea, open spaces and greenery

provide room to be at peace, improve wellness and appreciate nature. This shared appreciation for a communal space provides the basis for communal memories, experienced individually.

A Statement of Significance assesses what is important about a building, monument, conservation area or landscape, how important it is and why. It is a snapshot in time about a particular asset. It can be used to strengthen funding applications to leverage funding and will guide and shape decisions on future material change and management.

This Statement of Significance maps Historic England's heritage values: Historical, Evidential, Aesthetic and Communal onto a back-mid-foreground concept, where the Seafront is considered in three parts. Giving depth and perception in the background are the historical and evidential, holding space and giving context in the mid-ground is the aesthetic; and most prominent, in the foreground, is the communal value. All interweave and connect within the community's minds and across time for this historic and significant area.



Historical

Evidential

ARCHITECTURE
LEISURE SEASIDE
RESORT PUGIN TOWNLEY
QUEEN VICTORIA
ROYALTY SOCIETY
REGENCY
HERITAGE
LARGE-SCALE INVESTMENT
CIVIC PRIDE

ARCHAEOLOGY
LANDSCAPE CLIFFS
CHANEL VIEWS CHALK
SAND SETTLEMENT

HORIZON
MEDIEVAL
MILITARY

VIEWS
HORIZON
LANDSCAPE
GRAND ARCHITECTURE
CULTURAL &
URBAN PEACEFUL
WELLBEING PULHAMITE
OPEN GREEN
WATERFALLS

FAMILY
SOCIAL FUN
GRANDPARENTS
MEMORY
ACTIVITY
TOGETHER PRIDE
SUSTAINABILITY
RESPONSIBILITY

Aesthetic

Communal



INTRODUCTION

This Statement of Significance draws on extensive research carried out as part of the Heritage Action Zone project, including historical, landscape, archaeological and consultative, to outline the implicit and explicit values associated with Ramsgate's Historic Seafront.

Consultative research revealed a space imbued with social and communal value for current residents, many of whom associate the Seafront with childhood memories and consider it an important space for generational, social and leisure activities. Aesthetic value is found in people's emotional response to the setting created by both the natural landscape and built environment as well as how they influence one another across time and space, at times becoming indistinguishable. Evidential value of the time depth of the landscape lies in the particular geology of the Seafront, perched atop chalk cliffs on the Isle of Thanet with ample sands and clear views across the channel and in the built environment that has sprung up to take advantage of this fortuitous location. Over time the character of the Seafront has changed and evolved in response to cultural movements, and it has attracted the patronage, interest and creativity of many notable individuals, instilling it with both illustrative and associative historical value.

Stretching across four miles of coastline from the West Cliff Chine up to the East Cliff Chine, the Seafront includes the landscape framework spaces created by Prince Edward Promenade, the West Cliff Promenade, Royal Parade, Madeira Walk and Albion Place Gardens, Wellington Crescent and Victoria Parade.

To the West, the Royal Esplanade public pleasure gardens and promenade, Cliff lift and Pulhamite Chine form a designed 'active' leisure landscape commissioned by Ramsgate Borough Council, and opened by the Prince of Wales in 1926.

Natural landscapes, civic infrastructure, stylish and thoughtful design and shared memories all combine to create a space rich in evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value.



HERITAGE VALUES

Historic England has outlined four Heritage Values for determining significance. They are:

Historical Value

The ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected to a place through the present. Historic value tends to be illustrative or associative.

Illustrative refers to the perception of a place as a link between past and present. Historical buildings and their distribution illustrates past intentions of their creators and how they responded to the needs and fashions of the time, the character of regions and provides evidence of social organisation. Associative values are links with notable families, people, events, movements. Association can support and intensify understanding by linking historical moments with where they happened.

Evidential Value

The potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity - these can be physical remains or genetic lines. Archaeological finds, geology, landforms species and habitats can also offer valuable sources of information.

Aesthetic Value

The ways people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place. This value can result from conscious design of a place: the architecture, design or civic planning. It is held within the aesthetic quality of a building or landscape structure. It can also result from fortuitous outcomes which have evolved over time. For instance the action of nature on human works (e.g moss), overlying conscious design.

Communal Value

The meaning of a place for the people who relate to it or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. This contains commemorative and symbolic value, reflecting the meaning of a place for those who draw part of their identity from it - memorial spaces, community created spaces. Social value is associated with places that people perceive as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence. Some may be comparatively modest, acquiring communal significance through time as a result of the collective memory of stories linked to them.

VIEWING RAMSGATE'S SEAFRONT



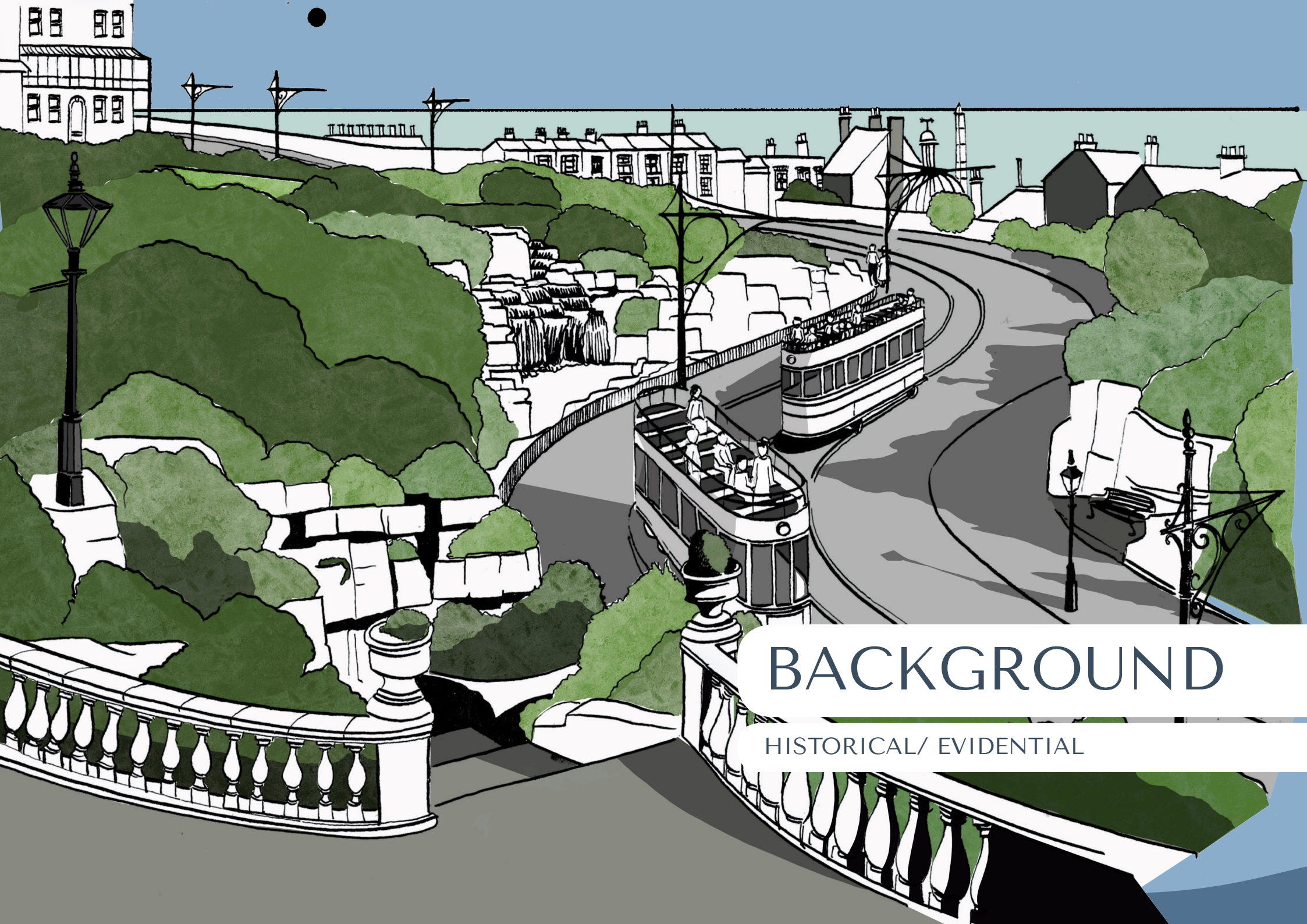
Ramsgate seafront is a historic urban landscape that is the result of the multiple layering and intertwining of cultural and natural values over time. The spatial creation of the seafront was designed to make the most of the horizon and view, so we are considering the Heritage Values as a landscape painting; with a background, middle-ground and foreground. If one of these elements is lost or concealed, the view, and the Seafront become less meaningful.

The background of the painting creates the shape of the object in focus, providing depth, atmosphere and perspective. It gives the subject roots, time, and place and grounds the elements within the composition. Though it might not be immediately the most obvious, it is crucial to the whole and cannot be ignored or forgotten. The mid-ground of a painting creates interest and intrigue; it holds the viewer's attention and enhances any emotional response. It is where they search for perspective and place. The foreground acts as an introduction to the painting and draws the viewer in. It is the part of the composition closest to the viewer, sets the depth of the field and creates the stage for the painting as a whole.

Through consultation work with the community, it became apparent that the evidential and historical values of the Seafront - the people who lived and visited here and the built up environment - form the background.

The aesthetic value - the natural and cultural beauty of the Seafront and resulting emotional response - forms the mid-ground.

And the most prominent value in the collective consciousness for the Seafront is communal, and so it is ascribed to the foreground.



BACKGROUND

HISTORICAL/ EVIDENTIAL

Key words: buildings, architecture, tourism, leisure, design

Historical and evidential values act as the background for the contemporary experience of Ramsgate Seafront. Research into the Seafront revealed a varied history of people, design, activity and community. Key themes which emerge are those of investment and civic pride and a succession of cultural movements and tastes which over time combine to create this layered landscape. It is largely in the built environment where the evidential and historical values now lie.

Early Ramsgate

The location and geology of the Seafront are rich in evidential value. The elevation of Ramsgate, straddling chalk cliffs and sands, and the south-west facing position, with clear views across the channel, make Ramsgate an appealing settlement for a myriad of reasons, be they commercial, military or pleasure-seeking. Its position has shaped its development, with the cliffs attracting elite members of society wanting a house with a good view, and the militia looking for good vantage points from which to launch.

While settlement of the area stretches back to the prehistoric, there is little manifested in the present landscape and character of the Seafront before the second half of the 18th century, when the medicinal benefits of the sea were recognised and exploited. Evidential values can be found in the general layout, which harks to the mediaeval period when the natural harbour at the only break in the cliff line between Pegwell Bay and Dumpton Gap provided access to fishing, travel, arrival and

refuge. The small village of Ramsgate in the parish of St Lawrence exploited this location, growing steadily until the mid 18th century.

1750-1850

In the 1750s Ramsgate emerged as a strong candidate for a haven of refuge along the South East coast, owing to its size and its role during “The Great Storm” of 1748 when it successfully sheltered several vessels driven from the Downs.

This spurred the first phase of large-scale investment into the harbour. Over the next 100 years new harbour walls, breakwaters, inner and outer basins and lighthouses were designed and built by key historical figures of civil and marine engineering, including John Smeaton, Samuel Wyatt, John Rennie and Sir John Rennie. Their influence on the Seafront and emotional depictions by artists like Turner, imbued it with illustrative and associative value and the development they contributed to led to Ramsgate becoming a key port in the 19th century. As seaside resorts became popular among the elite, the easy access from London and the large sandy foreshore made it an appealing prospect.

This Regency period was the Seafront’s Golden Age: Aristocrats and gentry flocked there, hoping to “see and be seen”. Royal patronage boosted the town’s fashionable reputation and encouraged the next phase of large-scale investment and development which contributes to the Seafront’s character

today. Resort facilities and wealthy visitors are recorded as early as 1760. While the bathhouses built at the time no longer exist, evidential value is found today in the townhouses, directly fronting onto the Seafront, put in place to accommodate the influx of people. They are laid out in crescents and elevated on the East and West Cliffs, in order to provide clear views of the sea. The design drew on fashionable resort architecture of the time seen in Cheltenham, Bath and Georgian London, making extensive use of restrained, classically influenced styles and stucco or brick frontages overlooking open gardens like Albion Place, now a Grade II registered park and garden. Illustrative value is found in this design, reflecting fashions and tastes of the time and intended to attract elite society members to holiday or reside there.

Later in the 18th century and early 19th century some country-style houses were built at a distance from the Seafront with large gardens and boundary walls, for those who wanted more seclusion. Townley House, designed by Ramsgate resident Mary Townley, the UK's first female architect, in the 1790s is a notable example. Today it comprises modern flats, but illustrative and aesthetic value remains in the Georgian design, such as the sash windows and doors, and Welsh slate butterfly roofs, as well as its association with Mary Townley and her family. Eastcliff Lodge, a Gothic Style villa, was designed and built by Charles Boncy at the border with Broadstairs for politician Benjamin Bond Hopkins, where he resided until his death in 1794. It was purchased by Sir Moses Montefiore, a sephardic jew, in 1831 who developed and expanded the estate. It included service buildings and kitchen gardens, meant to mimic the large country house being built by the aristocracy of the time. Montefiore also built a private synagogue, designed by his cousin architect David Alfred Mocatta in

1833, near the home which survives today and is maintained by the Montefiore estate. EastCliff lodge was demolished in the 1950s but the grounds were converted into the King George VI Memorial Gardens, providing valuable green space. Evidential and historic value comes through in the size of the gardens, illustrating the investment into the lodge and its reflection of aristocratic country houses of the time. A surviving grade II listed Italianate glasshouse in the grounds gains its name from a fountain Sir Moses Montefiore has imported from Italy, illustrating the interest in classical design at the time.

Military movements - most notably the Napoleonic wars - also influenced the Seafront at this time. The military made use of the clear views from the East and West cliff tops and built batteries there. Though 19th century development removed traces of these, the association with this crucial and defining period of history remains, as does the already cited evidential value of the cliffs and the vantage point they provided. Street names in housing developments on the East Cliff commemorate this military purpose of the Seafront, with particular regard to the famous Battle of Waterloo: Plains of Waterloo, Wellington Crescent, Nelson Crescent, La Belle Alliance Square, a clear and accessible example of historical value.

1850 - 1914

Towards the end of the 19th century and leading up to the First World War, the Seafront saw another period of large-scale investments through the passing of Improvement Acts. Holidays became more

common among the workforce and the advent of fast and cheap modes of transport, widened access to middle- and working-class visitors. Two stations were built for the town, including Ramsgate Harbour station, which allowed passengers to alight right on the Seafront and head straight to the beach. While neither station survives today, their impact is felt in the resulting development they enabled.

The growing population and visitor numbers needed infrastructure and amenities. In the 1890s the council looked to address access from the harbour to housing developments by cutting roadways from the clifftop. Two landscaped carriageways changed the face of the town from both the land and sea, integrating engineering, architectural and sculptural Pulhamite, and planting, providing an integrated public realm design for graded access to the East and West Cliffs. Royal Parade's diminishing arcaded appearance, and Madeira Walk's ornamental and structural Pulhamite gardens demonstrate the architectural potential of the extensive range of Pulhamite products that had been developed. Their design value is reinforced by the bold design framework and Pulham's innovative incorporation of water features, planting, and the repeated use of arches and balustrades, providing both storage and access to adjacent dwellings, combined with decorative brickwork and ceramics. These large architectural and structural set pieces illustrate the outstanding design value of the access infrastructure. New tourist facilities to serve the flourishing resort are also saturated with illustrative value, including promenade venues, large seafront hotels (The Saint Cloud and The Granville), a seaside pavilion and concert halls, enhanced by their association with prominent civic and landscape designers such as the Pulhams and Stanley Davenport Adshead. The early layout

and character of the promenades was altered by early 20th-century promenade improvements and while there is little evidence of the formal landscape features including the lines of trees that were on some sections of the promenade, some of the Victorian shelters survive on the section by Victoria Parade at East Cliff.

The Granville Hotel, designed by EW Pugin in 1867, boasted 26 spas and baths, a marble skating rink, a theatre and a ballroom, and hosted a veritable who's who of the late 19th and early 20th century. Today a Grade II listed building, its historic value is found not only through its illustration of a grand resort establishment and the tastes and whims of society's holidaying elite but as one of the few examples of the architect Pugin working in the commercial sphere. The Granville's owner maximised appeal by commissioning a short-lived private pleasure garden, Victoria Gardens, on the promenade adjacent and by increasing access to the beach by undertaking extensive engineering works to the cliffs directly below the hotel, installing a road and the Granville Marina which included housing, shops and tearooms. Ramsgate's pleasure pier, Marina Pier, was built adjacent to the Granville Marina in the 1870 and became an important seafront attraction before closing in 1914 amidst safety fears. Evidence of its prestige has been diminished by the loss of most of these assets in the 20th century, including the garden.

The Royal Victoria Pavilion concert hall, designed by Stanley Davenport Adshead was opened as a major seafront attraction in 1906 and derived design inspiration from the Little Theatre at Versailles. It has since been used as a nightclub and casino, before closing in 2008 and today is the local

Wetherspools. The historical value in the Grade II listed building lies predominantly in its scale and as a striking example of seaside architecture. Along with other resort facilities it illustrates a long and enduring tradition of investment in seaside leisure and tourism at the Seafront.

This period of Ramsgate's history is also notable for its association with several key historical figures boasting architecture, building and manufacturing skills, many of whom left physical marks on the Seafront. The architect A.W.N. Pugin designed and built a villa - the Grange - lying immediately inland of the West Cliff promenade. An eccentric designer within a minority faith community, he designed and self-financed the church of St Augustine of England nearby. Its high spiritual and design value is reinforced by being Pugin's most personal building containing show work by his usual collaborators, George Myers, John Hardman and Herbert Minton, with further work by his sons. The complex of Pugin buildings around the Grange, survive and, as well as evidencing Ramsgate's attraction for minority faith communities, are one of the key groupings of Gothic revival buildings in the country. Since his death The Grange and church have become the Shrine of St Augustine & The National Pugin Centre, staffed by volunteers, as part of the wider religious heritage of the town. The international and national revival of pilgrimage and the creation of a new St Augustine's pilgrimage route to the Shrine from Canterbury should ensure it acquires more widespread spiritual and symbolic value over time.

Although the seafront spaces themselves have seen later periods of change after this vigour, many of the places associated with notable people or events still retain some semblance of their appearance

at the time. AWN Pugin's son, the architect EW Pugin already mentioned, who went on to have a successful career including designing the interior of the Palace of Westminster, is responsible for the design of many other buildings in Ramsgate. Mary Townley, the UK's first female architect, lived and worked in Ramsgate where she designed several buildings including Townley House in 1792, a prominent late Georgian building, whose design was praised by Sir Joshua Reynolds, the noted painter. There Townley entertained several notable guests including King William IV. The Duchess of Kent and her daughter- the future Queen Victoria also stayed there for several months in 1823. Townley also hosted Victoria at Albion Place, another of her architectural endeavours, near the East Cliff in 1830. Albion Place consisted of 7 properties designed and built between 1790 and 1800 as part of the development of the town during the late Georgian period by MR Simmons, a Canterbury Alderman. Jane Austen also stayed there and referenced the gardens in her novel Mansfield Park. Charles Dickens, and the painters William Frith and Vincent Van Gogh, were also visitors to the Seafront, referencing its character and beauty in their work. Treading the same spaces, taking in the same views and smells, connects today's people to them and the spirit of place arising with the present day connections to these influential figures of the past is felt strongly.

1914-1945

Ramsgate was one of the few places bombed by Zeppelin raids during the First World War, and suffered significant damage to the pier, later demolished in 1929. The wartime damage led to fewer visitors and a subsequent increase in Borough investment in order to improve facilities and promote

tourism. Chief amongst these were the comprehensive improvements to the East and West Cliff promenades undertaken in the 1920s which entailed extension of the promenades and gardens all the way along the clifftop, including an extensive new park, Royal Esplanade Gardens with numerous leisure facilities, and Winterstoke Gardens with its rockwork, pools and central sunshelter. They also included the creation of cliff walkways taking visitors down from the level of the promenade to the seafront. Much of the historical value of this 1920s work is in the ornamental Pulhamite rockeries and stairs installed in the walkways or cladding the cliffs themselves, and the surviving group of sports and recreation buildings in the garden compartments of Royal Esplanade and Winterstoke Gardens by Sir John Burnet and partners now all Grade II Listed Buildings. These features resulted in distinctive landscapes within and adjacent to the promenade, effectively 'bookending' the town at the East and West Cliffs. The loss of much of the associated landscape framework has unfortunately diminished the historical value.

Ramsgate continued to develop its promenade attractions and features and the West Cliff Concert hall opened in 1914 and hosted everything from wartime dances to an early Rolling Stones concert. The Eastcliff bandstand including its attached dance floor and steps was inserted as the new centrepiece to the oval lawn in front of Wellington Crescent in 1939. The council also funded the creation of an extensive lido and boating complex on the seafront below East Cliff in the 1930s. Lidos were very popular at this time with many examples opened around the country in both inland and coastal locations. The loss of a landmark of such scale and as focus for bathing and boating diminishes the wider evidence of Ramsgate's 20th century investment in outdoor leisure and health activities

through large scale, structural and innovative developments that integrated with the topography of the cliffs.

During World War II, Ramsgate again reflected the times and responded to the hostilities. The port is associated with the symbolic national story of Dunkirk, playing an active role in the seminal national story with nearly a tenth of the 'little ships' deployed for the evacuation operating from it. The importance of the port and large beaches, potentially attractive to an enemy looking for somewhere to land, resulted in heavy fortifications during 1940s homefront Britain. Ramsgate was bombed during the war and many of the Georgian properties, including those on Albion place were severely damaged losing many of their traditional historic features. In 1948 Albion Place passed to the council who made further renovations. The gardens were replanted in 1984 to celebrate the centenary of the granting of the Charter of Incorporation of Ramsgate by Queen Victoria in 1884.

Though the fortifications no longer exist, the Seafront's association with this globally defining period of history was significant, and this value is evidenced through the absence of historical features that would otherwise have been there.

1945 - Present

As with many British seaside towns with a resort function, Ramsgate suffered from the decline in visitors brought about by the increase in foreign holidays towards the end of the 20th century. The

restoration and re-use of some of the large buildings have come about through mainly commercial routes although the use of others such as West Cliff Hall has continued to be the focus of the social value they hold for local groups or the community. The strength of spiritual value and spirit of place seemingly continues to grow.

Many of the community members consulted expressed an awareness and passion for the historical and evidential value of the Seafront.

“We are very much water people and love Ramsgate. It’s very historic”

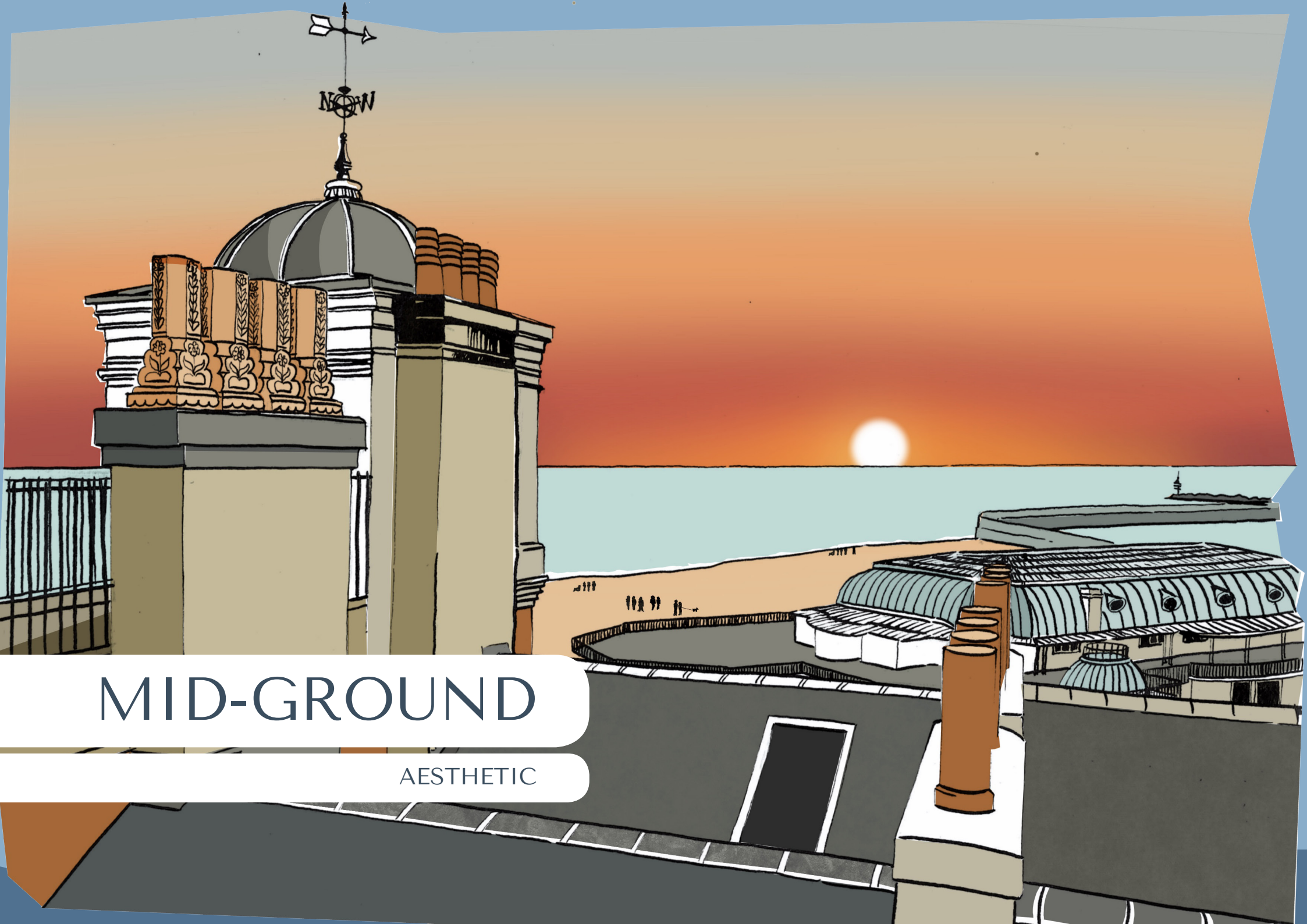
“We are sitting on a heritage goldmine”

“Ramsgate is a really exciting place to be and the Heritage is a really important part of that.”

Today associative heritage values are less prominent for Ramsgate’s community as a whole, with only 16% of participants mentioning a particular person, family, event or movement. Those most frequently mentioned were Pugin, St Augustine’s, the Christmas Lights, smugglers, Tracey Emin, Queen Victoria, Vincent Van Gogh, smack boys, Dunkirk, architecture, Hidden LGBTQ+ histories, Dickens, George IV, World War 2, Elizabeth Fry, Brenda Blethyn, John Smeaton.

Ramsgate's exceptionally strong links with the traditional British Seafront, which continues to this day along with a historical context of pleasure and leisure mean the other stories of Ramsgate's heritage are more distant for many in the community, particularly younger individuals. This does not diminish their significance, but provides opportunities to highlight and enhance them for contemporary residents and visitors, to better understand and appreciate the spaces they already cherish.





MID-GROUND

AESTHETIC

Key words: open, natural, urban, scenic, beauty, calm

For Ramsgate Seafront the aesthetic value holds the mid-ground - it is key to the whole experience, provides richness, delights the senses, calms the mind and provokes emotional responses. Aesthetic value is found in both the natural and urban features of the Seafront as well as how they work together, at times by design and at others, fortuitously.

Natural and Urban Landscapes

The levels of the Seafront provide layers to the aesthetic experience. From atop the cliffs, the view out to sea is expansive and has inspired architects, engineers, painters and poets throughout history. Indeed the view of the sea from the the top of cliffs is the most cited aesthetic feature of the Seafront from the consultation. As the viewer moves inwards and downwards, there are more connections to the town as roads, buildings and interventions draw the focus. This contrast between the natural open sea and the man-made enclosed town, bridged by the Seafront with its open, but constructed spaces is where much of the aesthetic value - both design and fortuitous- lies.

The Seafront's natural and urban landscapes, viewed from different vantage points have inspired multiple creative works including Charles Dickens's 'The Tuggs's at Ramsgate' (1836) and William Frith's painting Ramsgate Sands (1851-5) and a thriving creative community today continues to draw inspiration from there.

“If I was an artist, the perfect view of the horizon would inspire me”

A common theme in the consultation across all groups was the importance of the open and green spaces, with the designed urban landscapes of the town - Winterstoke gardens, Albion Place Gardens and the Pulhamite rock gardens featuring strongly in survey responses. Although design value of much of the promenade, and therefore the aesthetic value it once generated is very altered as the seafront landscape is now almost entirely dominated by short mown lawns and tarmac, the conscious design value of the gardens and promenades within the urban landscape, reinforces this bridging of the gap between the natural and the built environment. Madeira Walk waterfall is an example where the dramatic form of landscape design and our concept of nature has developed fortuitously over time: the repeated use of rockwork and planting with waterfalls, and arches inserted into the cliff face over a hundred years ago, are today indistinguishable by many from naturally occurring features. Though imbued with evidential and historic value, for the community its aesthetic value is most important.

The Christmas lights on the boats were another example of the relationship between the natural and the built as part of a cultural celebration, referenced in particular by younger participants and those with young families. The rainbow steps inspired by the work of Huseyin Cetinel are a recent example of embracing an existing feature with conscious design value, the artificial colours contrasting with the natural grey cliff.

“The colours of the rainbow steps are good against the grey of the cliff”

Calm, Wellbeing and Sustainability

Aesthetic value comes through strongly in the Seafront's proximity to the ever changing sea and the access it grants to open, peaceful and natural spaces. The value of the peaceful 'vibe' of the Seafront was particularly strong for members of the creative community. They enjoyed the opportunity to be close to nature, to be quiet and spend time in contemplative or mindful activities. As Vincent Van Gogh wrote, 'At Ramsgate you see the sea in everything'. This emotional response to the seafront was a motivator for many to live in Ramsgate.

“I wouldn't live anywhere else as I wouldn't want to live away from the sea”.

Because of the strong value placed in the natural quality of the Seafront, there was a lot of concern over maintaining the serenity and the openness.

“I'm concerned about what's going to change, for better or worse, and want the peaceful vibe to remain”.

This idea of sustaining its environmental qualities through appropriate stewardship was also reflected in the consultation with schoolchildren and sea scouts, though their focus was on environmental sustainability; reducing pollution, preserving green spaces, and wildlife habitats.

The valued ambience and nature also prompted opinions over “proper” behaviour on the seafront. Loud activities such as motorbikes, drones and drinking, along with graffiti and littering were all cited as poor behaviours which affected the environment. A perception of lack of maintenance or policing of anti-social behaviours detracts from the aesthetic value of the seafront for some.

A place to do things

Contrasting with the ambition to keep a peaceful and calm ambience, several value the opportunity to take part in traditional outdoor recreational and health activities for which the seafront developed: walking, swimming, running, riding. The expansive space which permits this movement at different spatial and temporal scales is crucial. Moving through the architecture of the town supports the experience of the promenades as wide, open spaces which draw people to the sea. This contrast is important to the feeling of the Seafront as a place of leisure and activity - unlike the town it is open, outward looking and widely connected with ample space to roam.

Though apparently at odds with one another, the underlying theme of those who value the calm and those who value activity is how the seafront contributes to wellness, both mental and physical.

The claustrophobic streets
All meet.
The sound
Of people
At the
Beach.

Seagulls swooping
All your sweets.

The golden
San
The glistening
Sea.

Those
Are the best
Things about
The beach.

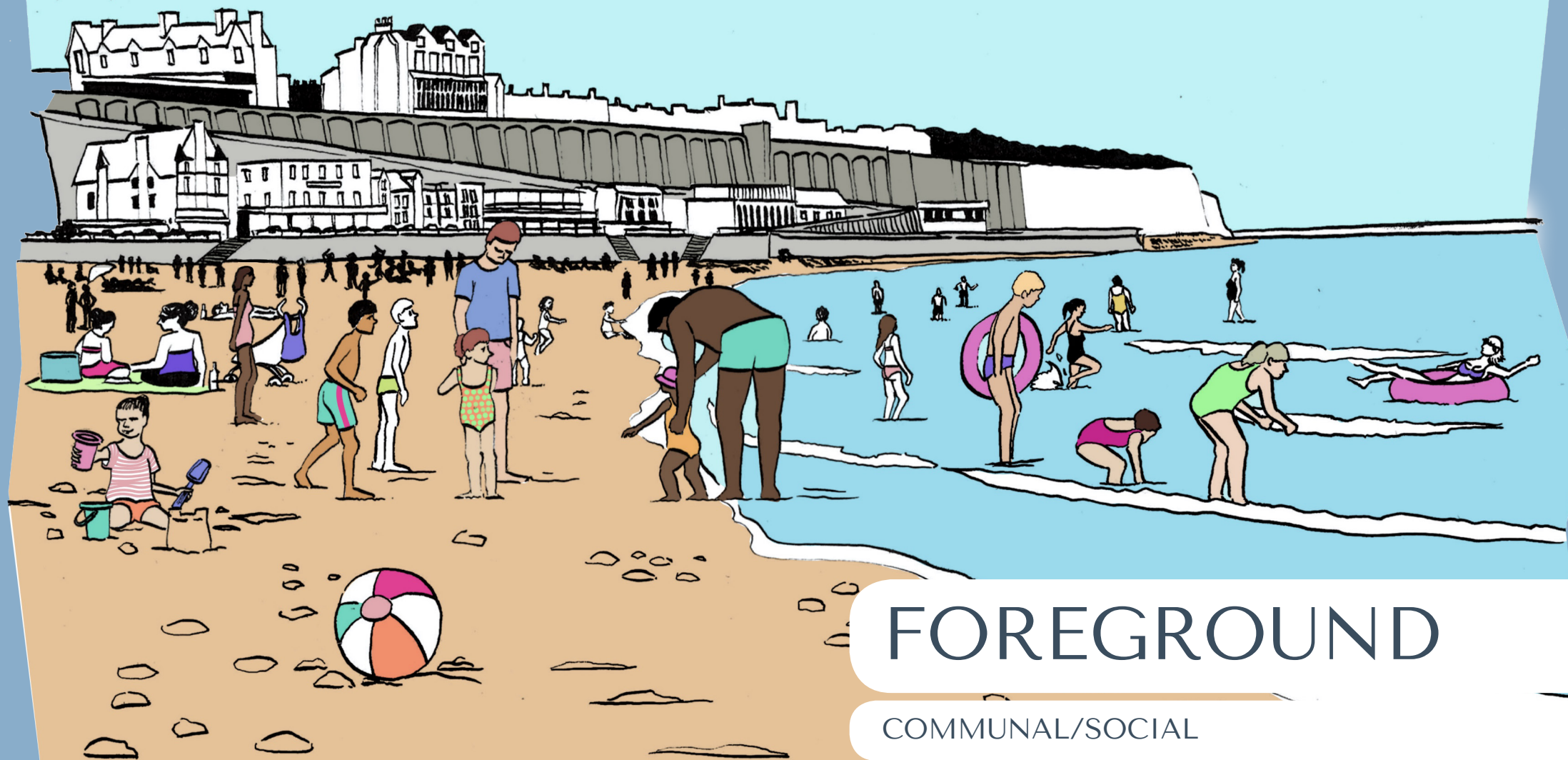


“As I walked through the narrow pavement

The narrow pavements caught me off guard.

As we got to the bandstand the sky was still as blue as ever.

The sapphire sea was still blue”



FOREGROUND

COMMUNAL/SOCIAL

Keywords: collective identity, intergenerational space, nostalgia, shared experiences, community.

For Ramsgate's Seafront, the communal value sits in the foreground. As it was designed to be it is a shared space for the communities of Ramsgate; a place for collective experiences, to spend leisure time and have fun with friends and family over multiple generations. Community, memory, and enjoyment were the strongest themes which came through from the consultation.

Family Memories

“Walking down to the beach with my family”

The Seafront represents an intergenerational space. The older participants in the consultation experience the seafront today through their grandchildren. Their own childhood experiences play out as a collective memory of stories through this new generation, generating nostalgia and reminiscence. Many remember Pleasurama, the lido, arcades, boating pool and donkey rides with great fondness. Though these features have historical links with past events and people, the core value for them is of communal value and collective memory. The shared memories people have of these spaces contribute to a collective identity for Ramsgate's residents, where it seems the character of

the place tells most of the story. The children we worked with through consultation also experience the Seafront through their familial relationships with many associating the space with grandparents.

“The amusement arcades making all the sounds, the sweet smell from the popcorn and sweet stands, the noise of the waves and birds. A lovely memory”.

“Playing mini golf with my grandparents and also celebrating my great grandad’s 100th birthday there”

“I remember making sand castles with my Nan and grandad”

“Fishing on the pier with my grandad”

“Walking along the East Cliff with my mum and dad”.

Fun, Free and Accessible

The Seafront is a space for fun, enjoyment and delight. Many referred to distinctive pastimes and leisure activities they associate with the space: kite-surfing, sea-swimming, arcades and dancing were a few, all of which point to the community attitude the seafront has acquired for the present generation. The open spaces, the fact it is free, making the space accessible to anyone and easy to congregate on are highly valued, and may have also acquired more social value during the Covid pandemic. There is a collective sense of identity with the Seafront as a space anyone can go to enjoy themselves.

“Skiving off school with my friend Melanie, going to the arcade/ rides”

“Looking at the boats with my mum while waiting for the bus”

“The harbour, pleasurama and the outdoor pool”

Activity and memory

This enjoyment is an active one on a large scale. The strongest connection all groups made with the Seafront is that of active participation: walking, dog-walking, cycling, racing, running, swimming and making. The built environment, and its associated values, features less strongly in the memories of the community than the natural heritage values of the landscape itself, or activities they've participated in, but where it does it is largely in the context of doing, of active engagement and often with others.

Buildings which enabled active participation were therefore the most celebrated and remembered: Pleasurama, the arcades, fishing off the pier, mini-golf and the boating pool. More 'traditional' heritage sites, with little or no offer of participative engagement - St Augustine's, museum spaces, Albion House are less referenced.

Favourite memories of the Seafront:

"Leaning over the railings with family"

"Walking through King IV Park and seeing the sea through the trees."

"Pleasurama and the model village"

"Playing pitch and putt on the greens and the westcliff"

Communal Responsibility

Connected to this idea of a space of shared memory and active participation is also a sense of shared responsibility. Strong feelings within the community of the social values of this as a space for everyone to enjoy emerged when thinking about if it changed in the future, underlining the communal value with which the space is imbued. These feelings motivate many to care for the Seafront and encourage others to as well, through clear behaviour guidelines and activities that are affordable.

“It’s not a place for partying or zooming up and down on a jet ski”

“It can’t just be trendy cafes charging £3.50 for an oat latte”

Ramsgate’s Seafront is imbued with communal value. People draw a collective identity of enjoyment and fun from the space and memories of childhood and time spent with family are important for all. This communal value stems from the other three values - the historic and evidential value give the space depth and connects it to traditions and activities of the past including commemoration of shared communal endeavours. The layers of urban and natural landscapes give it aesthetic value and make it a pleasant space to be with friends and family. Fundamentally though - memories, identity and community are what people associate with the historic seafront.

CONCLUSION

Ramsgate Seafront exemplifies all four heritage values laid out by Historic England, although people's experience of the values tends to be enhanced by specific use and knowledge of the space. Once an island, the seascape, its climate and connections across the horizon from its elevated viewpoints are all pervasive here, lending the wider urban landscape great natural beauty and engagement with the natural environment. Over the past few centuries people, social movements, trends and fashion have arrived and left their mark on the specialist landscape of the Seafront. Some no longer have a physical presence, but there are shared themes within these movements: a desire to see and be seen near the sea, investment in fashionable and quality designed landscape, re-fashioning with accessible and highly communal public realm and enduring architectural design principles, and civic pride and spiritual beliefs expressed through a myriad of personal, communal and institutional investments in the space associated with many notable people and movements. The illustrative aspects of the Seafront are written in the structure of the architecture and its relationship to the climate, the framework and surviving infrastructure of its designed landscape settings and varied pleasure gardens, the horizontal and linear spacing of its many levels, and the wide open promenades and green spaces which still impact and create the communities relationship to the sea beyond. The value of the civic commissioning of a group of large scale pulhamite ornamental rockwork and architectural materials as key set pieces in the townscape is of exceptional significance and nationally important.

The importance of the communal values, in particular the social value, in terms of the exceptional social, communal and experiential character of Ramsgate must be considered in the foreground of placemaking conversations. A great time depth of outdoor or communal leisure, pleasure and wellbeing are essential to the historical context of Ramsgate to co-creating a future vision of the Seafront with the local community. Any future change on the Seafront could understand and make use of the aesthetic values embodied within both sensory and intellectual responses in mediation between the townscape and seascape, and tensions that potentially occur by altering the relationships between the fore and backgrounds. The historical, evidential and social values have the potential to be better integrated with the experience of the Seafront.

The recent Covid pandemic and the entwined climate change, energy and biodiversity crises points to the seafront acquiring even more value over time, particularly communal, social, commemorative and spiritual values, with these themes of large-scale investment, civic pride and connection to the sea as vital to maintain and enhance the value and significance of Ramsgate's seafront design, evidential and historical values.

Fundamentally though, it must be rooted within Ramsgate and its community.

