

# Semington Parish Neighbourhood Plan

## Local Key Views Report

August 2022

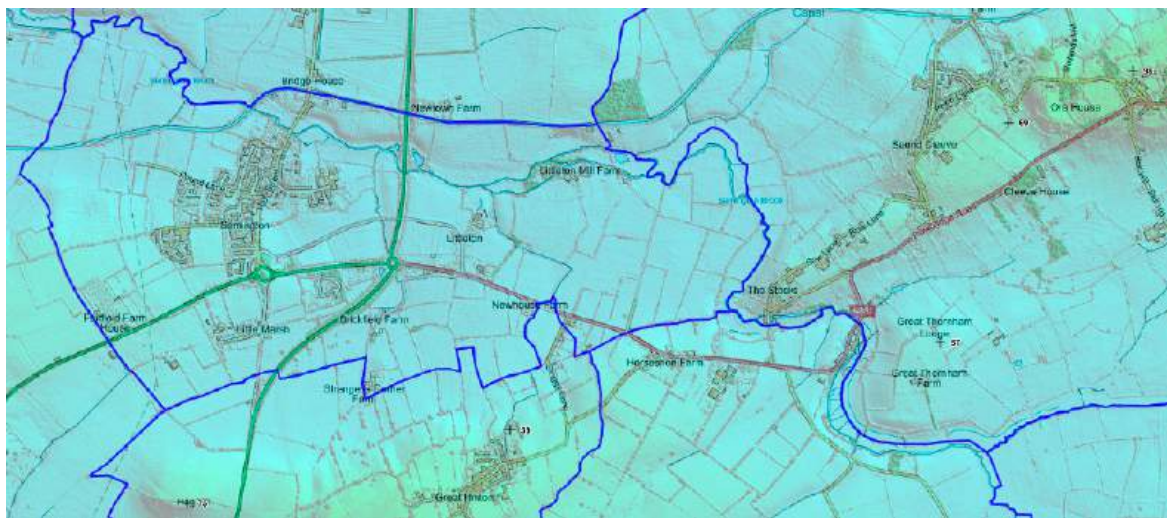
**Amended November 2024**

following recommendations in the Examination Report  
to delete all views from outwith the parish looking in,  
and views looking beyond the parish taken  
from the parish boundary

## Introduction

There are many places in the Semington Civil Parish area where beautiful views can be enjoyed. This is the case whether we look outward from Semington village or Little Marsh into the parish, within the parish itself, or into the parish from neighbouring areas where there are views of our settlements and significant landmarks. The neighbourhood planning process allows such *key views* to be recorded and given extra significance and protection through a planning policy. This document records those views and the evidence for them.

As the following map shows, unlike some neighbouring parishes, a significant part of Semington parish is relatively low-lying, sitting as it does between 5 and 20 metres above the Bristol Avon and Semington Brook flood plains. This limits the opportunities for views. Each of Semington's three settlements are surrounded by low intensity agricultural land which is mainly set to open pasture and sub-divided by mature hedges many of which contain trees.<sup>1</sup> These arboricultural features also limit many views.



Semington Parish Topography; Parish Online <sup>2</sup>

Although its low-lying nature limits the number of grand landscape panoramas, there are significant perspectives within the parish. Prominent ones lie along the Kennet & Avon canal in each direction including not only the waterway itself but also the many bridges and other canal infrastructure. Others are along the brook as it meanders its way through the parish from below Seend Head through Littleton and towards the Avon at Waddon. There are also extensive and unencumbered rural views to the east from the southern end of the High Street across the parish with the iconic Roundway Down in the background; and to the west of the village where the fields run out towards Hilperton and Staverton giving open views alongside the canal. The images on the parish council website show these features. Apart from the ravages wrought by Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s, none of these views has significantly changed for many decades despite housing and other development such as the coming of the village by-pass just after the millennium. Elevated views of the village are available from Hag Hill (elevation 73 metres) in the south and around Seend Head (elevation 60 metres) in the relatively distant east. Although these cannot be key views from the perspective of a neighbourhood plan, they do provide unique visual perspectives on the parish. Many of the views that we set out might be described as pastoral and some are valued because of

<sup>1</sup> Semington village itself has a low elevation of around 35 metres rising up to 50 metres at St George's Court. The Court, when it was built as the Melksham Union Workhouse, was deliberately situated on the highest point in the area.

<sup>2</sup> Green / yellow areas indicate higher land.

their historic landscape character.<sup>3</sup> They all provide evidence of the parish's actively rural character. Views are particularly enjoyed from our extensive footpath network. Where valued views are located on a public right of way (PRoW) its number is noted in the view description detail.<sup>4</sup>

This report sets out the evidence for those views that satisfy at least some of the following criteria:

- visible from a publicly accessible location (including public rights of way or public highways)
- selected for a specific reason i.e. overreaching far view, view to an historical or public interest building/monument
- a high quality and distinctive visual amenity
- an historic link to an important event or person
- a specific mention in literature

For clarity, a view is defined as what can be seen from a particular place. In this report both specific views (selected to demonstrate key and sometimes promoted viewpoints within the landscape or towards it) and representative views (chosen to represent views from a place or routeway) are identified. Visual amenity is the overall pleasantness of a view, its setting and value to the community.

## Methods

The value of particular views in and around (and into) Semington village has been discussed by parishioners several times over the past few years, most usually during discussions about planning applications for housing. In these, the national significance of the Kennet & Avon canal was a key factor as were heritage considerations concerning St. George's Court (originally the Melksham Union Workhouse), and various pieces of second world war infrastructure. Wiltshire Council's consultations around the routes for a proposed by-pass for Melksham also raised issues as one of the routes would have sliced the extensive Semington Brook floodplain in two in the east of the parish. Issues around views were also raised when the parish council established a new website in 2019, and discussed when the council consulted within the parish about what its priorities now ought to be in relation to the development of the village.

As such, the Neighbourhood Plan steering group was able to draw on this experience and evidence as it began to think about this issue. Inevitably, values views were discussed as part of our Character and Design work, with landscape character and extensive views being identified as key elements of the character of the parish. The members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group who worked on this report were all regular and experienced village walkers and members of a group dedicated to looking after the various rights of way in and around the parish. They drew on this experience to draw up a long list of potential views that might be included, and then walked the parish rights of way photographing the views with the criteria (above) in mind. Inevitably this led to the exclusion of some views and the inclusion of others. A final set was then identified as suitable for inclusion in this report. Photographs were taken to replicate what the naked eye can see. In this, no zoomed images have been used and cameras were held at head height.

## Structure of this report

There are four sections to the report. Section A shows extensive views across the parish, section B shows views within the parish itself, and section C shows views from the Kennet & Avon Canal. The Appendices

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<sup>3</sup> Further information can be obtained from the Historic Environment Record (H.E.R.), (Wiltshire & Swindon Historic Environment Record, 2019) included in our evidence base.

<sup>4</sup> Further information on this network can be obtained from the Green Infrastructure Report produced by the Steering Group which is included in our evidence base.





The report is now arranged in three sections and appendices.

**Section A** includes views 1 to 4 (extensive views looking out beyond the parish, from viewpoints within the parish).

**Section B** includes views 5 to 8 (views from along the Kennet & Avon Canal).

**Section C** includes views 9 to 18 (views within the parish)

**Appendices 1 & 2** show views 19 to 24.

## Section A Extensive views looking out beyond the Parish from viewpoints within the Parish

Because of the relatively low-lying nature of parts of the parish, the possibility of long-range views is limited. This is exacerbated by the extensive tree cover and high hedgerows. There are, however, a number of points where this is possible.

### View 1



View 1 emerges as Pound Lane becomes right of way SEMI8/10 on entering the fields leading to Hilperton, Staverton and Trowbridge. This is an open agricultural landscape with the Kennet & Avon canal on the right and Hill Farm on the left. On the far west horizon Claverton Down is visible above Bath. These fields are hunting grounds for owls and hawks, and attract numerous buzzards and kites in the summer when grass is cut for silage. They attract walkers of all ages and fitness.

### View 2



View 2 is an unencumbered perspective across the parish beyond Littleton to its eastern boundary with the Seend parish where the hamlets of Seend Head and The Stocks can be seen on higher ground just beyond Semington Brook. Beyond these, on the horizon, is the southern edge of the Marlborough Downs which drops precipitously onto the fertile lands of Bromham and Netherstreet. This distinctive landscape is historic Oliver's Castle and local landmark of Roundway Hill, the site of a battle in the Civil War.<sup>5</sup> There are

<sup>5</sup> Details at: [tinyurl.com/2p9ynu82](https://tinyurl.com/2p9ynu82)

clear viewing points for this view along the High Street as it approaches its junction with The Hunt Close, and this is the best view in the parish for sun and moon rise. Numerous rights of way exist in the fields in the foreground of the view. Although the A350 Semington by-pass crosses the fields north-south, it cannot be seen and is rarely heard.

### View 3

<p>The River Avon flood plain from the northern end of the Pound Lane swing bridge looking northerly towards Whaddon</p> <p>Grid ref: 389230 16085</p> <p>What3Words: probable.youth.suits</p> <p>Bearing: 350</p>	
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The field shown in View 3 lies between the Kennet & Avon canal and Semington Brook and shows high land around Gastard in the distance. There is a popular right of way (the horses are on it) that leads north-west to Whaddon, the pack horse bridge and beyond over the River Avon with rights of way to Broughton Gifford.

### View 4

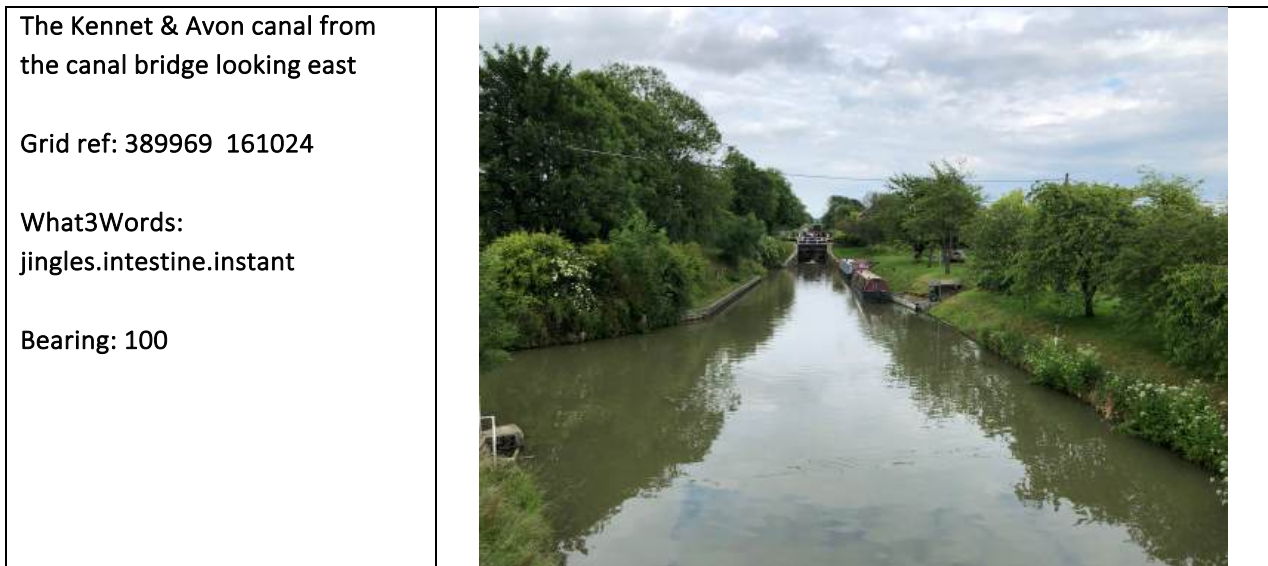
<p>The Semington Brook flood plain from the northern end of the Pound Lane swing bridge with mist over the Brook in the mid-ground</p> <p>Grid ref: 389244 160858</p> <p>What3Words: clerk.fire.welcome</p> <p>Bearing: 030</p>	
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Between the aqueduct and the boundary with Hilperton parish, the land to the north of the Kennet & Avon canal is in Semington parish and stretches north across Semington Brook to the Avon and beyond to Shaw and Whitley and Gastard.

## Section B Views from along the Kennet & Avon Canal

The Kennet & Avon canal passes through the northern part of Semington Parish for approximately 5km and is a picturesque feature attracting tourist barges and many visitors. The towpath is used extensively by walkers, hikers, dog walkers and cyclists from within the parish and visitors from elsewhere. The relative tranquillity of the canal setting encourages people to admire the views and to take photos. Old stone bridges and other features along the canal (such as the aqueduct and identified in the Character Statement and Locally Valued Heritage Assets report), provide feature points to stop and admire the views from and along the canal itself.

### View 5



View 5 is from the top of the hump back bridge over the old A350 trunk road that was by-passed in 2004. The view is of two of the Semington locks with a narrow boat travelling west between them. Hidden by the trees is Semington Dock (on the right) and the towpath (on the left). The view in the distance is the high land around Seend Cleeve. The active use of the canal is clearly seen. Not visible in the photograph is the blocked-up entrance to a disused section of the Wilts & Berks canal which ran north into Melksham prior to its closure.

### View 6



View 6 is from the top of the hump back bridge over the old A350 trunk road that was by-passed in 2004. The view shows the Wharf House caught by the rising Summer sun as the canal turns south-west before heading to Staverton. The view stretches over the canal towards the Avon at Whaddon. At a point

adjacent to the nearest boat in the picture, the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust hope to build a junction between the Kennet & Avon and the new Semington to Melksham stretch of the restored Wilts & Berks canal.

### View 7



The footbridge from where view 7 is taken lies just west of Semington Dock and can be seen in view 5 (above). The picture shows the contrast in the canal banks as the eye is drawn to the canal bridge that carried the A350 over the canal before the by-pass came. The south (left) side shows the neatly trimmed verges along the road approach to Semington Dock; the north (right) side shows the relative wildness of the vegetation between the towpath (out of sight) and the water. The white railings in the middle distance on the right are above the blocked-off entrance to the disused Wilts & Berks canal.

### View 8



View 8 is one of many such views within the parish along the Kennet & Avon canal. The setting sun pokes through the trees along the north bank of the towpath as the canal itself flows west to the lock adjacent to Semington Dock and then to the canal bridge. To the left the open ground falls away to the Semington Brook flood plain with rights of way from Semington village to Littleton and beyond.

## Section C Views within the Parish

The views set out here include those within Semington village and in the wider parish. The former focus on some of our historic buildings; the latter tend to be landscapes and show only a small range of possible images.

### View 9

<p><b>St George's Court from the Kennet &amp; Avon canal towpath west of the swing bridge</b></p> <p><b>Grid ref: 389228 160864</b></p> <p><b>What3Words:</b> <b>pays.fresh.organisms</b></p> <p><b>Bearing: 150</b></p>	
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As you walk east along the Kennet & Avon towpath from Hilperton towards Semington, glimpses are eventually had of St George's Court on high land to the south. Gradually, clear views are had of the old workhouse building and the modern development around it. At one point [View 9] just before the swing bridge that leads to Pound Lane and the village there is a view framed by trees in the middle distance where the old workhouse building can be seen between them across the fields. When the workhouse was built in 1836/38 it was deliberately situated on high land and away from the village settlement. The use of a zoom lens results in a photograph that seems to preserve this historical perspective despite the 1987 development along Pound Lane that can be seen on the left of this photograph. The historical significance nature of this view carried insufficient weight in planning terms to prevent a housing development being allowed on appeal in 2019 in the field adjacent to the building. This will change the view significantly when it is built out.

### Views 10 & 11

<p><b>Pound Close and Pound Lane looking south from the swing bridge over the Kennet &amp; Avon</b></p> <p><b>Grid ref: 389243 160836</b></p> <p><b>What3Words:</b> <b>oven.contemplate.songbirds</b></p> <p><b>Bearing: 220</b></p>	
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**Pound Close looking south-east from the swing bridge over the Kennet & Avon**

**Grid ref: 389241 160844**

**What3Words:**  
oven.contemplate.songbirds

**Bearing: 120**



As you travel from Hilperton along the Kennet & Avon, by narrowboat or along the towpath, Semington village gradually comes into view on the right. First it is St George’s Court on high ground to the south, with the houses surrounding it, and then Pound Lane, Pound Close and the Orchard appear across fields [Views 10 & 11]. As you continue towards Devizes across the aqueduct and under the canal bridge, different aspects of the village come and go. Views to the left are all of the Semington Brook flood plain and the land going down to the Avon.

**View 12**

**The northern gateway to the village**

**Grid ref: 389807 160367**

**What3Words:**  
aliens.trend.sooner

**Bearing: 210**



View 12 is taken from the point that old A350 road crosses Semington Brook looking into the village along its enclosed tree-lined northern outer gateway. Beyond the trees the strong and connected historic character of the village is revealed beyond an inner gateway of Brook Cottage and the Somerset Arms, leading to many fine buildings of various ages, styles and architectures.

## Views 13 & 14

The High Street looking north from the junction with Pound Lane

Grid ref: 389744 160530

What3Words:  
graced.lessening.doors

Bearing: 045



The High Street rising to the Semington roundabout looking south from the junction with Pound Lane

Grid ref: 389738 160514

What3Words:  
avoid.tacky.animated

Bearing: 210



The High Street runs north–south through the heart of Semington village. It has an attractive blend of old farmworkers’ cottages, grander houses and the 18<sup>th</sup> century pub. In the centre are a range of Georgian (and older) buildings. The road was previously the route of the A350 but is now a no-through road except for cyclists, buses and emergency vehicles. As such, it is now a relatively quiet street although the pub, village hall, a car showroom and housing generate traffic. Despite this, there are lovely views from along the High Street and two [Views 13 & 14] are shown here.

## View 15

The view across the parish to the village from fields south of the Kennet & Avon canal near where it crosses the A350

Grid ref: 390394 160895

What3Words:  
bridges.shuffles.indulgent

Bearing: 220



As the Kennet & Avon canal gradually gains height through the locks east of the canal bridge wider panoramas are possible. View 15 is across the fields that drop down to Semington Brook and across to the A361. In this picture, Manor Farm, houses on Church Street and the High Street are seen.

#### View 16

The view across Littleton to the south east with Salisbury Plain in the distance from the Kennet & Avon canal near where it crosses the A350

Grid ref: 390519 160858

What3Words:  
professed.stadium.retailing

Bearing: 150



As the Kennet & Avon canal gradually gains height through the locks east of the canal bridge wider panoramas are possible. View 16 is to the south-east across the fields that run across Littleton to the foot of Seend Cleeve. In this picture, clumps of beeches on Salisbury Plain can be seen.

#### Views 17 & 18

The view to the north west along Semington Brook between Seend Head and Littleton

Grid ref: 392047 160642

What3Words:  
bookshop.thinking.crispy

Bearing: 320



The view to the south west across the flood plain below Seend Head and The Stocks

Grid ref: 391980 160111

What3Words:  
fizzy.answers.deferring

Bearing: 225



Standing in the far eastern part of the parish below the heights of Seend Head provides wide views of the Semington Brook flood plain where lush walking in Summer gives way to waterlogged ground in Winter. Here, there are rights of way across to Littleton and through to Semington village. Some of these follow the Brook itself as it winds its way through the fields.

## Appendix 1 Views looking outward from the Parish boundary

### View 19



### View 20



The stone bridge in the foreground of View 20 marks the parish boundary between Seend and Semington parishes. The culvery running under the bridge is the parish boundary. Seend Head and The Stocks are on the horizon. A few metres to the south from this point, the Brook once again becomes the boundary until it gets to the area just below Seend Head mill.

## Views 21 & 22

The view from the footbridge over Semington Brook just inside the parish boundary with the Stocks hamlet glimpsed in the top left.

Grid ref: 392037 160646

What3Words:  
digests.droplet.mediate

Bearing: 155



The view to the east to Seend Cleeve from the footbridge over Semington Brook just inside the parish boundary

Grid ref: 392057 160637

What3Words:  
bookshop.thinking.crispy

Bearing: 105



The top view [21] is to the south-east along Semington Brook with Seend Cleeve, Seend Head and The Stocks on elevated ground in the distance. The bottom view [22] is more to the east with Seend Head in view in the distance. Although the Brook is the parish boundary over much of its length around here, all the land seen here immediately around the Brook is in the parish owing because the boundary has been shifted north-east suggesting that the Brook itself might have changed course over time. Rights of way leave from this point across the flood plain to Littleton, Seend Head, and The Strand.

## Appendix 2 Views looking into the Parish

There are only two places lying outwith the parish where clear views can be had of it. One is Seend Head and The Stocks in the east, and the other is Hag Hill in the south. The fact that Roundway Down can be clearly seen from parts of the village suggests that the reverse must be true, but the two are so distant from each other that it is impossible to identify any part of the village from the top of the downland.

### View 23



At around 60 metres above mean sea level, Seend Head and The Stocks constitute a relatively high vantage point to the east of Semington. This is a ridge that rises steeply out of the Semington Brook flood plain and lies just outside the parish where the Brook is the boundary. Broad and extensive views are available from the road through Seend Head and The Stocks as it curves northwards round to Seend Cleeve and Seend village itself. These views take in Melksham, Bowerhill, Berryfield, Littleton and Semington village, the highest part of which is visible in the west. At some points, the large grey factory building at Staverton is visible some four miles away.

### View 24



At 73 metres above mean sea level, Hag Hill is the highest visible point around although there is higher land between this and the neighbouring parish of Great Hinton. The A350 trunk runs to the east of Hag Hill and views can be had of the lie of Little Marsh from this as you drive down the hill towards the village.<sup>6</sup> The views from Hag Hill are extensive both in relation to distance, and to breadth where there is a 180 degree perspective. The high land of Roundway Down, Seend Head, and Bowden Hill are clearly seen as is Little Marsh in the foreground. The extensive tree cover in and around the village can be appreciated from this vantage point.

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<sup>6</sup> This is not included here as the view is from the very busy road.