

## Planning Committee Report

<b>App.No:</b> 141210	<b>Decision Due Date:</b> 13 November 2014	<b>Ward:</b> Devonshire
<b>Officer:</b> Mr Leigh Palmer	<b>Site visit date:</b>	<b>Type:</b> Planning Permission
<b>Site Notice(s) Expiry date:</b> 23 October 2014 <b>Neighbour Con Expiry:</b> 23 October 2014 <b>Weekly list Expiry:</b> 7 October 2014 <b>Press Notice(s):</b> 30 October 2014		
<b>Over 8/13 week reason:</b> Within Time		
<b>Location:</b> Street Record, Sea Houses Square, Eastbourne		
<b>Proposal:</b> Enhancement works to Sea Houses Square, including new surface treatments, street furniture, lighting and the introduction of street trees.		
<b>Applicant:</b> Mr Martin Jones		
<b>Recommendation:</b> Grant Planning Permission Subject to Conditions		

### Executive Summary:

Planning permission and advertisement consent is sought for some enhancement works to Sea Houses Square. These enhancements are making a material improvement to the public realm at and within the vicinity of the square and should create better connections between Seaside and The Promenade and as a result create a focus for increased dwell time and footfall for existing business in the area.

There will be new street furniture/lighting and landscaping all of which should add to the quality of the space, enable the potential for afternoon/evening use by existing traders and also facilitate the potential for events to be held in this public space.

Some concerns have been raised in relation to the increased street furniture may have a negative impact upon existing traders as the views from The Promenade would be reduce/impaired. To some extent this is true, however it is perceived that the lack of direct views through the square would not be materially different from that which currently exists and also given the

improvements to the public realm as taken as a whole package would be very likely to increase footfall/dwell time at and within the vicinity; this should be of benefit to all local traders.

Application is recommended for approval.

### **Planning Status:**

#### **Relevant Planning Policies:**

##### National Planning Policy Framework 2012

1. Building a strong, competitive economy
2. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
3. Supporting a prosperous rural economy
8. Promoting healthy communities
12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

##### Core Strategy Local Plan 2013 Policies

B2 Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods  
C3 Seaside Neighbourhood Policy  
D2 Economy  
D3 Tourism and Culture  
D10 Historic Environment  
D10a Design

##### Eastbourne Borough Plan Saved Policies 2007

UHT1 Design of New Development  
UHT4 Visual Amenity  
UHT6 Tree Planting  
UHT10 Design of Public Areas  
UHT12 Advertisements  
UHT13 External Floodlighting  
UHT15 Protection of Conservation Areas

### **Site Description:**

The application site relates to Sea Houses Square.

Sea Houses Square is broadly a rectangular parcel of land linking the Seaside with Marine Road/Marine Parade and ultimately The Promenade.

Sea Houses Square was formerly a highway and was pedestrianized in the late 1990's. The area is fully hard-surfaced in red brick pavements and whilst the area is generally level it does rise from Seaside towards the Promenade.

The square is bounded by a number of buildings that are of various heights and architectural styles; these buildings are in separate ownership and also

provide a range of uses. The existing uses are shops/cafes and holiday accommodation.

Located on the western edge of the square (closest to The Promenade) is bounded by ornamental railings and 'The Curling Drinking Fountain'.

**Relevant Planning History:**

There is limited directly relevant planning history for the application site, however the most relevant applications have been listed below under the Sea Houses Square heading and the rest have been reported for completeness.

**Seahouses Square**

000828 Fusciardi Marine Parade Provision of outside seating area with ten tables, 40 chairs and parasols surrounded with flower boxes. Planning Permission Approved conditionally 26/04/2000

990810 Restoration and relocation of existing drinking fountain from the corner of Seaside and Langney Road to Sea Houses Square. Listed Building Consent Approved unconditionally 09/11/1999

**Marine Parade**

A number of applications relating to the creation/retention of 'Holiday Let' accommodation at the site

**1-5 Seaside**

040906 1-5 Seaside Demolition of a single-storey detached building and erection of a two-storey extension at the side. Planning Permission Approved conditionally 16/02/2004

040907 1-5 Seaside Demolition of a single-storey detached building. Conservation Area Consent Approved conditionally 16/02/2004

140357 1-5 Seaside Conversion of existing maisonnette above take away restaurant to three self-contained one bedroom flats with the ground to remain commercial in the form of a retail unit; with a single storey side extension to the ground floor providing additional space for the retail unit. Planning Permission Approved conditionally 20/05/2014

140889 1-5 Seaside Discharge of condition 3 of permission 140357 for the conversion of existing maisonnette above takeaway restaurant to three self-contained one bedroom flats with the ground floor to remain commercial in the form of a retail unit, together with a single storey side extension to the ground floor providing additional space for the retail unit. Approval of Condition Discharged 18/07/2014

**Proposed development:**

Planning permission and advertisement consent is sought for a number of enhancement works to Sea Houses Square:-

**New surface treatments:-** Stone setts and flagstones are to be re-laid to assist in the delineation of the zones within the square. The zones within the square highlight the active and passive areas; the passive areas are to be used for café seating and public seating and the active area will be used as the transitional zone between the Seaside and the Promenade.

**Street Furniture:-** There are two elements to this; the first being the external café seating area which are to be separated from the active areas by fixed cast iron planters, the second area relates to new public seating, these are located on the opposite side of the square adjacent to the holiday lets in Marine Parade.

The new public seating will be formed from monolith stone seat with timber backing with arm spacing's to prevent street sleeping.

**Lighting:-** Six columns (three pairs) are proposed to be sited along each side of the square; these columns support a wire with a central hanging lantern, three lanterns in total. These lanterns are to be the sole source of external illumination within the square.

**Shop canopies:-** Three shops/cafes provide an element of active frontage to the square. New shop canopies are proposed these are to be simple in form and fabric in covering

**Street Trees:-** The scheme also proposes to introduce three street trees to be located in/around the proposed public seating areas

**Consultations:****Internal:**

Councillor Wallis:- Supports the application; Following the closure of four banks and a post office in this area of Seaside, the neighbourhood has suffered a downturn in its fortunes over the recent years. However, following successful financial bids and the determination of many local residents and community groups there is a real momentum building to enhance the Devonshire ward.

The Seahouses Square planning application forms part of that enhancement and I feel it will improve the area, thus attracting new visitors and potentially new businesses. This can only be good news for both Devonshire and Eastbourne generally.

The planned improvements to the paved area, with new lighting, trees and street furniture will boost the tourism to Seaside as Seahouses Square is just metres from the promenade.

Conservation Area Advisory Committee :- The Group very much welcomed enhancements to this area, but there were elements which should be reconsidered. Of particular concern was the proposed lighting, and lower lights more in keeping with the Victorian area were recommended. Trees should not be of a species which have berries, and would be better placed in the middle, not to the side where they would affect the windows of the adjacent building. Stone seating was considered unsuitable both in visual terms and practicality (uncomfortable and cold to sit on), and timber seating of traditional organic curved shape was preferred

Tourism Manager: No response received

Specialist Advisor (Arboriculture): Trees with berries should be substituted and also given its marine location there may be issues with the viability of trees in this location. Recommend that palms should be substituted. Tree pit design needs to be carefully considered given the lack of likely growing medium.

Specialist Advisor (Conservation)

The proposed enhancement work is encouraging, as it would result in a welcoming public space. However the use of York stone is considered uncharacteristic, while the contemporary lighting due to its inherent design, introduces a feature which may undermine the flexibility of the space when considering future uses.

Recommend Approval subject to reconsideration of the type of feature stone used and style of lighting.

Specialist Advisor (Planning Policy) it is considered that the public realm improvements to Seahouses Square help to promote the Vision for the Seaside neighbourhood, and are consistent with Core Strategy Policy C3: Seaside Neighbourhood Policy, and Borough Plan Policy UHT10: Design of Public Areas. Therefore, this application is supported from a planning policy perspective.

External:

Environment Agency No comments to make given the low risk nature of the development.

Eastbourne Hotels' Association: No response received

Highways ESCC Have confirmed that they fully endorse the principle of this refurbishment project.

### **Neighbour Representations:**

The occupier of Thayer's Ice cream parlour has objected to the proposals and the main points are listed below: -

- Adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the Council have the obligation to preserve and enhance conservation areas
- Adversely impact upon the character of the historic fountain
- Out of keeping with the area
- Would introduce unnatural features
- Spoil the natural contours of the site
- Impacting upon public rights of way
- Poor relationship with adjoining buildings
- Inconvenience for pedestrians
- Losing historic street patterns
- Adverse effect on economy or business
- Public space should not be for the benefit of private businesses
- Previous consent not being complied with

Save for the above no other comments have been received.

### **Appraisal:**

#### Principle of development:

It is clear that the Council have held a long standing ambition for the whole of the seafront area which relates wherever possible to create greater integration between the seafront and the surrounding streets. It is considered that if this could be achieved it would be beneficial as it would assist in increasing footfall and dwell time for residents of Eastbourne and also tourists.

This desire for greater integration is evident with the first pedestrianisation scheme for the Sea Houses Square area dating from the late 1990's.

Given that the area has been a long standing pedestrianised zone then there is no objection to the principle of refreshing the appearance and character of the area.

In addition it is considered that the scheme seeks to improve the quality of place which is at the heart of the Driving Devonshire Forward initiative document and as such there is no objections to the principle of the proposed development

#### Impact of proposed development on amenity of adjoining occupiers and surrounding area:

It is considered that there are two elements of the scheme that may have impacts upon the occupiers of adjacent residential properties, these relate to:-

- the increase in activity and footfall as a result of the enhanced work and
- the new street trees and lighting may impact upon views to/from the Promenade and the seafront and also the lighting may give rise to a material loss of amenity through light pollution

Whilst not being explicit the enhanced area may give rise to increase footfall and or new street events (markets etc.) it is considered that this would add to the vitality and vibrancy of the area and as the public realm already exists a refusal based on this issue could not be substantiated.

Some concerns have been raised in relation to the increased street furniture may have a negative impact upon existing traders as the views to/from The Promenade would be reduced/impaired. To some extent this is true, however it is perceived that the lack of direct views through the square would not be materially different from that which currently exists and also given the improvements to the public realm as taken as a whole package would be very likely to increase footfall/dwell time at and within the vicinity; this should be of benefit to all local traders. The increase in dwell time that is likely to result from the proposal is considered to be the overriding material consideration in the determination of this application and would outweigh the perceived harm that would ensue from increased street furniture.

In terms of the impacts of the street trees and the new lighting then these would be controlled via planning conditions and as such the proposal are unlikely to result in any material loss of amenity sufficient to substantiate a refusal of planning permission.

#### Design issues:

The introduction of a contrasting material (stone) to the drainage system encourages way finding and legibility, whilst the flagstone central piece, introduces further interest within the hard surfacing. It is considered that the proposed external materials and the unification of street furniture and shop awnings would enhance the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

It is accepted that there are concerns raised by both the Councils conservation officers and the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (see consultee responses above), however these concerns relate to specific matters of detail and are to be controlled via planning condition.

The external area of Sea Houses Square currently does not have any external illumination and it is considered that the introduction of a degree of external

illumination would materially improve the quality of the public realm. This enhanced public realm would reduce/mitigate the hostility of the area and increase the trading potential for the units that abut/face onto the square. This increased footfall would provide an attractive and animated space as it could be used in the winter afternoons and also during the evenings.

The proposed alterations to the square will go some way to reducing the width of the space and thereby increasing the potential/likelihood for the area to find viable additional uses for this area of public realm.

The scheme proposes to utilize high quality materials that would not only enhance this local environment but would also enhance the sites setting within the wider Town centre and Seafront Conservation Area. As commented elsewhere in this report the precise detailing of the new external materials would be controlled via appropriate planning conditions.

#### Other matters:

In addition the proposed enhanced space would deliver one of the key target sites with the Driving Devonshire Forward and as such once implemented would provide a key visual marker that there is a desire to intervene in and create a new sense of place. This enhanced sense of place would support the town's cultural and tourist assets.

#### **Human Rights Implications:**

The impacts of the proposal have been assessed as part of the application process. Consultation with the community has been undertaken and the impact on local people is set out above. The human rights considerations have been taken into account fully in balancing the planning issues; and furthermore the proposals will not result in any breach of the Equalities Act 2010.

#### **Recommendation:**

##### **Grant Planning Permission**

##### **Conditions:**

- 1/Time Limit**
- 2/ Approved Plans**
- 3/ materials used in the hard-surface areas**
- 4/ Details of planters/benches**
- 5/ Details of external illumination including degree of illumination.**
- 6/ Tree Pit design**
- 7/ Species selection of trees**
- 8/ Standard Advert Conditions**