

App.No: 160534, 160542, 160544, 160563, 160566	Decision Due Date: 15 July 2016	Ward: Devonshire
Officer: Neil Holdsworth	Site visit date: Various	Type: Planning Permission
Site Notice(s) Expiry date: 12 June 2016		
Neighbour Con Expiry: 4 June 2016		
Press Notice(s): 17 June 2016		
Over 8/13 week reason: N/A		
Location: Land adjacent to Marine Parade and Royal Parade, Eastbourne.		
Proposal: Erection of five beach huts on the eastern seafront promenade.		
Applicant: Housing and Economic Development Partnership.		
Recommendation: Approve conditionally		

Executive Summary:

Five applications are reported here and they relate to the erection of five new beach huts along the seafront to the east of the pier. The applications follow an architectural competition held by Eastbourne Borough Council over the winter of 2015 – 2016.

The beach huts represent a modern interpretation of a traditional concept that has been long associated with the English Seaside Town. Whilst the materials used and designs proposed are unconventional and challenging, it is considered that the design concepts are strong and well-articulated, and the proposals represent a very high standard of design.

The project will help regenerate the Devonshire area and draw visitors to the eastern seafront. In doing so the proposals will preserve and enhance the Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area and help secure its long term viability. The applications are therefore recommended for conditional approval.

Planning Status:

The application sites are all located on the Eastern Seafront promenade which is an established public open space.

Conservation Area

Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area

Eastbourne Core Strategy Policy

B1: Spatial Development Strategy and Distribution

C1: Town Centre Neighbourhood Policy

D10: Historic Environment

D10: Conservation Area

Borough Plan Policies

UHT15: Conservation Area

HO20: Protecting Residential Amenity.

Site Description: The applications relate to five distinctive locations along the eastern seafront that have been identified by the Council as being appropriate for the erection of beach huts and seafront facilities. The first three locations fall on the seafront promenade outside Marine Parade between the Queens Hotel and Metropole Court. The latter two are located further along the seafront on relatively open ground beyond the Redoubt.

Relevant Planning History:

There is no relevant planning history in respect of the sites in question.

Proposed development:

Five new contemporary beach huts are proposed for the identified locations along the eastern seafront.

Consultations:

Internal:

Councillor Steve Wallis: Support planning application. The Beach huts initiative is part of the wider Devonshire regeneration programme which includes house building, creating employment opportunities and refurbishing vacant retail units.

Tourism and Leisure: Are in full support of the scheme/proposals.

Specialist Advisor (Engineering):

- Site is located in Flood Zone 3 however the risk of the site from flooding is low and acceptable given nature of use proposed.
- No Drainage plans submitted. Sites must be connected to mains sewer and not use soakaway.
- Existing data suggests low risk of sites comprising vegetated shingle.

- Comments received relating to detailed design of individual hardstandings.

External:

Eastbourne Hospitality Association: No response received.

Conservation Area Advisory Committee:- welcoming the principle of contemporary design within the conservation area, the group expressed concerns about the longevity of the structures to be created and their potential to act as a focus for anti-social behaviour

Neighbour Representations:

Five objections have been received specifically in respect of proposal 160534. The issues raised include:

- Proposed Beach hut is out of character with Victorian Seafront.
- Proposed beach hut is too tall and will impede views from surrounding properties.
- Proposed Beach hut will result in additional vandalism, graffiti and other types of anti-social behaviour.
- Proposed Beach hut will attract pigeons and Seagulls.
- Proposed Beach hut will result in additional noise.
- Proposed Beach hut will result in additional rubbish.
- Proposals will increase parking demand. - Concern that proposed beach hut will result in loss of interest from film makers using this part of the seafront.

Any further consultation responses will be reported in the addendum to the planning committee report.

Appraisal:

This report relates to five separate planning applications for the construction of beach huts on the eastern seafront promenade. A brief description and analysis of the five sites, together with the proposed beach hut, is provided below:

Site 1 – This is an area of land adjacent to the Queens Hotel known as the 'Old Wishing Well' site. The beach hut is to be built on a new hardstanding either entirely on the shingle, or partially on the promenade and partially on the shingle. The new building comprises a steel framed beach hut known as the 'Re-bourne', which is to be formed by steel gabions filled with empty recycled bottles. Designed by Calderpeel architects, the aspiration is for the structure to be visible and illuminated in the evenings, and to host occasional events (i.e. musical events) in addition to being a concession outlet. (planning application reference 160542).

Site 2 - The second site comprises an unused decked area adjacent to the intersection between Marine Parade and Marine Road. The proposed design by JAK studio Architects involves the construction of a traditional beach hut in the form a 'spyglass'. Taking on the appearance of a telescope, the hut will be constructed on a recessed turntable enabling it to be orientated in different directions. Internally the hut will have the traditional amenities and facilities of a beach hut. (planning application reference 160544).

Site 3 - The third site is further along Royal Parade directly adjacent to Metropole Court. It is currently occupied by a redundant wooden kiosk. The proposed development, designed by Dublin based architects Stephen Foley Architects involves the construction of a framed 'tooth' style hut constructed from translucent Corian panels creating a flexible, multipurpose space. (planning application reference 160534).

Site 4 - The fourth site comprises an existing slabbed area outside the Treasure Island car park, beyond the redoubt monument. This site was designated for a community arts project. The hut proposed for this location was designed by local artist Sheila Hay and students from Sussex Downs college with a proposed 'ceramics hut', to be used as a concession outlet. (Planning application reference 160566).

Site 5 - The final site is located further along the seafront adjacent to a series of new traditional beach huts recently built by Eastbourne Borough Council. Entitled 'the stargazer' the proposal comprises a new café/concession outlet to be located directly on the beach. Its black metal façade is to be laser cut with thousands of small holes reflecting the star constellations of the night sky, and internally illuminated with LED lights. (Planning application reference 160563).

Principle of development:

Each of the sites to which these applications relate are located on or directly adjacent to the beach and pedestrian promenade, on open space that is currently publically accessible and will continue to be following the construction of the beach huts in question.

In 2015 the Council identified an opportunity to utilise the land to the east of the pier to construct a series of beach huts. At present there are 87 huts and 69 Brick built chalets at six locations which are all located to the west of the pier. The Council have recently constructed 20 traditional huts opposite Princes Park.

The construction of high quality, innovative, architecturally designed beach huts to the east of the pier is connected to broader regeneration objectives relating to Devonshire Ward area. The beach huts themselves are conceived as iconic structures with the potential to become landmark buildings along the seafront in their own right, and it is envisaged that the huts will become

an attraction on the coastal arts trail linking the Towner Gallery with the De La Warr pavilion in Bexhill and the Jerwood Gallery in Hastings.

Of the five beach huts, three are designed as traditional concession outlets with the other two being hired out on an hourly or daily rate for recreational use by visitors and local residents. The concession stands will be on a small scale, and cater primarily for the needs of beach users. They therefore fulfil an established need and should help attract and retain visitors to the eastern part of the seafront. The presence of such small scale commercial activity is not considered to raise land use issues.

Overall it is considered that the proposed beach huts will make a positive contribution towards the regeneration of the eastern seafront, improving perceptions of this area and promoting tourism. It will therefore help achieve the objectives of the Town Centre and Seaside Neighbourhood Policies as set out in policies C1 and C3 of the Core Strategy.

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

The proposed beach huts are located a significant distance from residential properties and would not have any material impact on residential amenity. In the case of sites 1, 2 and 3 the proposed structures will be visible from residential properties which face out on to the seafront along Marine Parade.

The applicant has submitted elevations showing that the maximum height of the proposed beach hut from the promenade is 2.7 metres, in this regard it is considered that the structures would not block views of the sea or have any significant impact on the outlook from these properties. As such, the application is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity. Sites four and five are not located within the vicinity of any residential properties.

Design issues and impact on conservation area:

Sites one to four are located within the Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area. The applications were reported to the Conservation Area advisory group on 24th May 2016. Whilst welcoming the principle of contemporary design within the conservation area, the group expressed concerns about the longevity of the structures to be created and their potential to act as a focus for anti-social behaviour. The latter points are also reflected in two objections received from members of the public specifically received in relation to site three.

Sites one to three can be considered to be within the wider setting of the pier, which is a grade 2* listed building. Given their modest scale, they are not considered to have any significant impact on views of the pier from the beach or seafront promenade.

The beach hut is a long established feature common to many English seaside towns and seafront promenades. Each proposal represents a contemporary interpretation of this traditional concept reflecting the needs of modern visitors and lifestyles. In each case there is a developed and well-articulated vision behind the proposed building that aims to challenge conventional notions about the seaside beach hut. As an example the spyglass (site 2) provides a standard of accommodation beyond what would ordinarily be provided within a beach hut; its large glass wall and comfortable facilities would appeal to users outside of the summer season. Similarly, the 're-bourne', 'what unearthed' and the stargazer (site 1,3 and 5) all explore the concept of the beach hut at night time where it would normally be closed down and unused.

The process of the architectural competition has established many possibilities and possible uses for beach huts, and the construction of the huts will help establish Eastbourne – and specifically Devonshire Ward - as a pioneering location for experimental architecture. In this case it is considered that the deviation from the use of traditional materials within the conservation area and in the setting of the surrounding listed buildings is justified on the grounds that an exceptionally high standard of design has been achieved with broader benefits for the regeneration of the area.

Turning to the concerns about the longevity of the structures, the client brief requires the beach huts to be constructed with a 20 year design life. Once the huts are built, they will be owned and maintained by Eastbourne Council in the same way as other structures along the seafront. Each of the designers involved has a considerable professional stake in the success of this high profile project. In the event that the structures fail in the future the Council as landowner would be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings and can take action accordingly. In this context, it is not considered that fears relating to the longevity of the structures should deter the project from going ahead.

Other issues

Any noise generated by users of the proposed beach huts are considered acceptable in principle, given that the huts are located in an urban town centre location in close proximity to other noise generating uses.

The possible loss of the beachfront for film making purposes as a result of the proposed beach huts is not considered to be a material consideration in this decision.

Finally, whilst it is acknowledged that new buildings on the seafront may attract crime and anti-social behaviour, this risk is considered to be no different than that posed by any other new building, and not a sustainable ground to withhold planning permission.

Impacts on trees:

No trees in the vicinity of the site.

Impacts on highway network or access:

Whilst the proposal may attract additional trips to the seafront, the town centre location is considered to be well located for means of access other than the private car. As such the additional travel demand should be absorbed in to the existing highway and public transport networks.

Planning obligations:

Not relevant on a scheme of this size.

Other matters:

Flood Risk

The proposals are located within flood zone three and due their locations are at risk from tidal flooding. Given that the proposed development is of a low intensity and does not involve permanent residential or commercial use, and that to some extent the buildings/structures are sacrificial it is considered that the risk of harm from tidal flooding is manageable and not a sustainable ground to withhold planning permission.

Vegetated shingle

The Council acknowledge that certain parts of the seafront have developed high value ecological habitats, however the application sites themselves have no vegetated shingle and as such this is not considered to be a barrier to supporting these applications.

Drainage

The Specialist Advisor (Engineering) has requested that the proposed buildings do not use soakaways and a waste water mains connection is established. The applicant has confirmed that this is proposed. A condition on each decision requires adequate drainage to existing drainage network to be operational prior to the beneficial use of any of the beach huts.

Seagulls

It is acknowledged that the proposed huts may attract seagulls and pigeons, however this would be no different to any other seafront structure and does not comprise a sustainable ground to withhold planning permission.

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.

Conclusion: The application is considered to be acceptable in Land use, amenity, conservation , design and all other respects.

Recommendation: Approve all five proposals conditionally.

Conditions:

- 1) Development within three years
- 2) Development in accordance with approved plans
- 3) Drainage & Utility connections shall be operational prior to the first beneficial occupation of the beach huts.

Informatives:**Appeal:**

Should the applicant appeal the decision the appropriate course of action to be followed, taking into account the criteria set by the Planning Inspectorate, is considered to be **written representations**.