App.No: 161155	Decision Due Date: 14 December 2016	Ward: Devonshire
Officer: Neil Holdsworth	Site visit date: Various	Type: Planning Permission

Site Notice(s) Expiry date: 25 November 2016

Neighbour Con Expiry: 25 October (first consultation), 14th January (second

consultation)

Press Notice(s): 25 November 2016

Over 8/13 week reason: To enable further consultation to take place on amended plans and to report application to planning committee.

Location: Beach Adjacent To Bowling Green in Royal Parade, Royal Parade,

Eastbourne

Proposal: construction of 3 no. beach volley ball courts

Applicant: (Eastbourne Borough Council)

Recommendation: Grant conditional planning permission (five year temporary approval to keep impacts of the proposal under review).

Executive Summary:

This application is reported to Planning Committee at the discretion of the Senior Specialist Advisor (planning) given the Borough wide implications of the proposal and the volume of representations received

This application is bought forward by the Council's Tourism and Leisure department

Planning permission is sought for the construction of three volleyball courts and associated boundary treatment on an area of beach immediately adjacent to the promenade close to 'the Natural Fitness Centre, The Redoubt Fortress and bowls club.

The objections principally fall into two categories:-

- 1.reflecting concern about the proximity of the development to heritage assets including the Redoubt and the Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area.
- 2. The impacts of the proposal upon the established character of the area, and local tourist accommodation and existing business in the area.

The applicant has sought to address these concerns through changes to the

detailed design of the proposal, however the view of Historic England and the specialist advisors on heritage matters is that the proposals must demonstrate public benefits that mitigate any less than substantial harm that falls from the proposal.

In light of this it is recommended that temporary planning permission is granted for a period of five years to enable the applicant to test the public benefits of the proposal. The grant of temporary permission will also ensure that the long term future of the area surrounding the redoubt monument is kept under review.

Planning Status:

Beach/public open space

Relevant Planning Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

- 1. Building a stong, competitive economy
- 4. Promoting sustainable transport.
- 7. Requiring good design
- 10. Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 11. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Core Strategy Local Plan 2013 Policies

B1: Spatial Development Strategy and Distribution

B2: Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods

C3: Seaside Neighbourhood Policy

D1: Sustainable Development

D3: Tourism and Culture

D7: Community, Sport and Health

D10: Historic Environment

D10A: Design

Eastbourne Borough Plan Saved Policies 2007

LCF8: Small Scale Sport and Recreation Facilities

UHT1: Design of New Development

UHT15: Protection of Conservation Areas.

UHT20: Archaeological Sites and Scheduled Monuments.

Relevant Planning History:

No relevant planning history in respect of this section of the beach

Site Description/ Proposed development:

The site is located at Splash Point, close to The Redoubt and opposite the redoubt bowling green which is separated by the beachfront promenade and associated landscaped area. In the space between the Redoubt and the site there are two post war buildings, a former sailing centre now in use as a 'natural fitness centre', and a former café building/kiosk (Spinnakers) which has now fallen in to disuse.

The proposed development involves the enclosure of an area of beach for the purposes of the construction of three beach volleyball courts. The courts would be formed with/by fine grain natural sand, and are to be enclosed by a timber footed wall facing the main beachfront promenade (1.2m in height and 0.6m on other parts of the structure) siting on a foundation, with demountable netting and poles surrounding the courts to a maximum height of 2.6 metres.

Further afield along Royal Parade there are a number of guesthouses which benefit from views of The Redoubt and the sea beyond, these are connected to the seafront via established paths leading through the landscaped bowling greens. Towards the west the open promenade hosts a number of tourism related uses towards Sovereign Harbour, including the Treasure Island children's play area, beachfront cafés, and a beach harbour. The site is located within the Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area.

The application was amended in the course of its consideration to address feedback from Historic England, as such two periods of public consultation were carried out in November 2016 and January 2017 all responses to the consultation are reported in this report.

Consultations:

Internal:

Conservation Area Advisory Group: Support the proposal

Considered at meeting on 10th January 2017 with the minute reading:-

The group were supportive of the proposal and noted the modifications made to mitigate the effect of the volleyball courts on the historic setting. The group also invited the applicant to consider options for the structure during close season.

The following consultee responses are summaries of the representations received their full responses are available for inspection on the electronic case file/website.

Specialist Advisor (Conservation): Acknowledges that the harm is less than substantial.

"...It is clear that, notwithstanding the differences in tone and inflection between the various submissions, there is substantial consensus in terms of a respect for the Redoubt's high heritage value and the distinctiveness of the overall setting. Both the applicant's heritage statement and Historic England acknowledge the likelihood of harm from the siting of volley courts in this location, and both commend actions to address this concern. A number of modifications have now been made, specifically addressing concerns around the bulk, impact and design of the courts, though the location remains unchanged, with a sense that any manoeuvrability with regard to exact location is limited due to proximate sewage piping.

Recognising the likelihood of some degree of harm, and the difficulty moving the courts further along the seafront, it is necessary to make a judgement about the acceptability of that level of harm, assessing whether any mitigation arising from public benefit gain might outweigh the risks... In my opinion, the attempt by the applicant to generate new footfall, interest and excitement in a visible and prestigious setting that includes an important national monument and demonstrates such strong significance is ambitious and worthy of commendation. Specifically, it offers the prospect of substantially enhanced public exposure to the Redoubt and its unspoilt setting in a renewed and revived seafront location, with all the virtuous social, economic and heritage effects that might arise from this. Under this account, the new courts will generate higher levels of public awareness leading to an enhanced visitor footfall, growing enjoyment and use of the setting and specific heritage assets amongst audiences not currently enjoying high visibility in heritage circles, notably young adults and lower income groups.

It is also worth noting that the proposed courts development forms part of a broader ambition for the area, which includes an internal reorganisation at the Redoubt designed to enhance the appeal and 'reach' of its curatorial offer, the showcasing of public art and further development and more vigorous promotion of the heritage trial linking this part of the seafront to the myriad of other assets across town. Taken together, these elements provide the foundations for a co-ordinated, coherent and culturally accessible heritage hub.

The broader setting already supports a number of activities without compromising the openness that forms the basis of its appeal, including a bowling green and fitness and holistic activities linked to a beach-side wellbeing centre.

Following a modification of the original design, it is arguable that the impact of the courts would be limited, given that the surrounding structure is now far less obtrusive, with lightweight netting, diminishing concerns about its prominence, dominance and conspicuousness. The fact that the development is characterised by visual permeability, and is s seasonal and reversible, offers significant additional reassurance.

For these reasons, my judgement is that whilst the development would represent a risk, and would cause harm, any harm would be less than substantial and would be mitigated by public benefits arising from attendant increased tourism and public interest. "

Specialist Advisor (Engineering) Support the proposal

First response (24/10/2016)

"It appears unlikely that the construction of the volleyball court will compromise the integrity of the coastal defences (the shingle beach) and therefore I have no objection to the siting of the volleyball courts at this location"

Further comments (24/10/2016)

- Sufficient space must be left for heavy machinery on the promenade.
- Development should be constructed 2 metres away from the Beach Groyne.
- Courts are located on relatively sheltered part of beach however risk remains of courts being washed away.

Further comments (06/02/2017)

"It is my judgement that this is the most suitable location in Eastbourne for a beach volley ball court because it lies in the lee of a significant discontinuity in the shoreline, i.e. it is protected from the prevailing south westerly winds. ... In my opinion the only other possible location that could be considered for a beach volley ball court is on the wide beach area in front of the Lifeboat Museum. Again this area is protected from the prevailing winds. However, I do have reservations about this site inasmuch that it is a crucial area for accessing the foreshore to undertake beach re-charge and recycling works"

External:

Southern Water: (Letter dated 11/11/2016) general advice

- "The Council's technical staff and the relevant authority for land water drainage consent should comment on the adequacy of the proposals to discharge surface water to the local watercourse".

Environment Agency: No response received

Historic England: Letters dated 8 November 2016, and 27 January 2017 following receipt of revised plans: Outline that any harm caused by the development would need to be less than substantial and supported by wider public benefits for the scheme to be considered appropriate.

First Letter (8 November 2016

"The development proposals for volleyball courts at Eastbourne Seafront will cause changes within the setting of the Eastbourne Redoubt scheduled monument that have the potential to cause harm to its significance. In addition the development may cause harm to the buried fabric of the Redoubt, and may also impact upon the significance of the Eastbourne Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area. We therefore recommend that a heritage assessment to assess the potential impact to both designated and undesignated heritage assets from the development, and that without this assessment being submitted the application should be refused".

Second Letter (27 January 2017) – following receipt of heritage statement

"Any development within or in close proximity to these heritage assets (the redoubt and seafront part of the Conservation Area) that detracts from their openness is likely to cause harm. The inclusion of a new volleyball facility will introduce additional modern paraphernalia into a currently open area of beach immediately adjacent to the Redoubt, and within the conservation area. Some parts of the development, including wooden panelling and 2.6 m tall coloured fencing, will significantly intrude into and detract from the open space from which the designated heritage assets derive their communal, historic and aesthetic significance".

"The development proposal for creation of volleyball courts at Eastbourne Seafront will cause changes that are harmful to the heritage significance of the scheduled monument Eastbourne Redoubt, and impact the character and significance of the Eastbourne Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area. As such the development proposal does not seek to conserve designated heritage assets, and does not demonstrate positive improvements to the historic environment"

"We are in agreement with the concluding levels of heritage significance assessed as part of the HS" (Heritage Statement)

Request that alternative locations be explored in order to mitigate the impacts

Conclusion: "Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 9, 17 and 132".

County Archaeologist - No objections subject to conditions

"The proposed development is situated immediately adjacent to a Scheduled Monument and an Archaeological Notification Area, defining the remains of an early 19th Century Fortress ... It is highly likely that the multiple military uses of this site would have extended outside and onto the upper beach,

especially in relation to ancillary defensive works... In light of the potential for loss of heritage assets on this site from development of the area affected by the proposals should be the subject of a 'programme of archaeological works. This will enable any archaeological deposits and features, disturbed during the proposed works, to be adequately recorded"

Recommended condition

Neighbour Representations:

Objections have been received and cover the following points:

(Summaries – full response on electronic case file)

First Consultation (November 2016)

1 Petition – opposing 'beach volleyball on the quiet stretch of beach between the redoubt fortress and Beach deck restaurant' – presented by the owners of Bassets House, 72 Royal Parade and signed by 50 names.

1 letter of support

 Welcoming proposed refurbishment of shop facilities and café surrounding redoubt monument, and regeneration of surrounding area.

10 letters of objection

Issues raised

Principle of Development

- The enclosure of part of the beach for one small interest group (volleyball users) at the expense of the wider public interest.
- Concern about what the precise nature of the use is as application documentation suggests uses other than volleyball to be carried out on the site.

Heritage Impact

- Concern that there is a lack of information submitted in support of the application and no assessment made of impact on surrounding historic assets.
- Development is inappropriate in close vicinity to the Redoubt fortress which is Grade 2 listed and a scheduled monument.
- Development is of a character inconsistent with the immediate surroundings.
- Development is in close proximity to scheduled monument and is located within town centre and seafront conservation area.

- Proposal is inconsistent with work undertaken by Eastbourne Borough Council in the landscape character assessment (March 2010) and draft Seafront Local Plan (July 2015)

Design

- Design of proposed courts (boundary treatments) is inappropriate and will detract from attractiveness of area.
- Level of design information provided insufficient to allow a proper assessment to be made of its appearance and impact.
- Fencing proposed is visually intrusive and out of character with surrounding area.

Noise

- Volleyball courts are a high impact use through noise.
- Volleyball courts are likely to result in noise eg through 'boom box' activities.
- Proposal is adjacent to bowling greens and natural fitness centre which are used for quiet recreation.
- Noise from the volleyball courts will harm other beach users and change the character of this part of the seafront promenade.
- No technical assessment prepared of the noise resulting from the proposed development.

Visual amenity

- Volleyball fences would intrude on those who sit on the promenade outside bowling green.
- Concern that proposal would result in floodlighting altering the appearance of this part of the seafront.
- Loss of sea views from surrounding commercial and residential properties.

Highways/Parking

- Concern that there is inadequate parking given proximity of other traffic generating uses along seafront.

Economic impact/ impact on tourism

- Concern that proposal will discourage tourism and returning guests to hotels on this part of the seafront.
- Due to its harm in respect of the Redoubt and the conservation area, the proposal will not protect the historic environment and would damage the developing tourism offer at the Redoubt Fort.

Other matters

- Insufficient space in between courts and no spectator facilities provided, risk of danger arising from spectators clustering on promenade and balls escaping from the court.
- Volleyball courts are not designed to modern technical standards.
- Planning application has failed to demonstrate that the proposed location is the only viable site and alternative sites have not been adequately considered.
- Concern about noise and impact on quiet environment enjoyed by adjacent natural fitness centre and the possible loss of this business.
- Volleyball activity will result in a danger to other users on the promenade.
- Concern about a loss of sheltered area of beach reducing the amenity offered to other beach users.
- Concern about safety, security and visual appearance in the winter months and that proposal will result in anti-social behaviour.
- Concern that seasonal nature of business will mean that it is not viable.
- Recommend that alternative locations are considered such as underutilised tennis courts and basketball courts further east of the location, Buzz, the sovereign centre.
- Concerns that proposal would result in additional toilet usage thereby putting pressure on existing drainage systems which are in a poor state of repair.
- Concern that proposal is not viable in proposed location due to short practical season together with high winds and high seas.
- Concern that proposal is in close proximity to beach Groynes.
- Recommendation that proposal is made conditional upon the refurbishment of the Spinnakers building and a condition is set out requiring restoration of the beach at the end of its economic life.

Second consultation (January 2017)

Three further objections received. Two letters of objection state that their views expressed in the first consultation remain unchanged.

One further objection letter bringing attention to concerns about noise and requesting that the proposed development is relocated to a les used area of the beach.

Appraisal:

Principle

It is clear that this development site is located on a parcel of beach close to heritage assets and as such will result in some impacts; if the application can demonstrate that less than substantial harm results from the proposal and that wider public benefits ensue then there is no objection in principle to the proposed development.

Heritage and Conservation Issues

The Redoubt fortress was constructed in 1805 and is one of a number of defensive structures (known as Martello Towers) located along the southern coast of England. The structure was listed in 1949 and was designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1981, as such it is afforded the highest level of protection in the planning system against inappropriate alterations and adaptations including development within its setting. The Redoubt was originally constructed on open beach, and over time the concrete promenade has been built around it as the land has been adapted for the construction of housing, sea defences, and for tourism purposes. As such its existing setting is a modern construction, and one that is continually evolving, reflecting changes in social, environmental and economic conditions.

As a consequence of its siting close to the Redoubt and within views around the conservation area the proposal will have an impact on the open setting of the Redoubt Monument and Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area. Historic England, together with the applicants own commissioned Heritage impact assessment and the Council's specialist advisor (conservation) agree that the harm resulting from this loss of openness amounts to 'less than substantial harm' for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework and I have no evidence to dispute this conclusion. As such, paragraph 134 of the NPPF is engaged, which states that "where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use".

In response to the detailed comments made by Historic England and the specialist heritage advice the applicant has sought to improve the appearance of the structure by reducing the solid elements in the structure, reducing the height of the boundary to the courts and reducing the extent of decorative features previously proposed. This is as far as this matter can realistically be taken, as the business plan for the venture necessitates some form of security fencing and enclosure to protect the sand from contamination by other beach users when it is not in use.

In terms of finding an alternative location for the volleyball courts as suggested by Historic England the Council's specialist advisor (engineering) advises that the identified area of beach is the only suitable location for the proposal. This is due to the fact that it is the only part of the beach that is sufficiently sheltered to enable the courts to be built without a significant risk of failure (beach erosion) and a location sheltered from prevailing winds and remote from underground services. Whilst other locations inland as suggested by other consultees may be feasible, none of these would have the appeal of a location on the beach itself, which is intrinsic to the appeal of the proposal itself.

Considering the public benefits of the proposal, the Redoubt monument itself is currently operated by Eastbourne Council as a seasonal museum, although a long term solution for its ongoing use is yet to be found. As part of a broader strategy to drive tourist traffic towards the east of the pier the Redoubt monument and the area immediately surrounding it has been designated as a Tourism Opportunity site. Driving tourism towards this area is a key objective of Policy C3 of the Core Strategy (Seaside Neighbourhood Policy).

The construction of beach volleyball courts in this location is being proposed with the intention of attracting people to the area and generating tourist activity to this part of the seafront. It is to a large extent a speculative proposal bought forward by the Council with the purpose of achieving the broader aims of the Seaside Neighbourhood Vision and regenerating the area. This offers the potential to secure the long term viability of the monument itself through an alternative and sustainable tourism related use for the monument itself. The policy framework set out by policy C3 of the Core Strategy is a significant material consideration in this decision and one that has the potential to balance the less than substantial harm created to the setting of the Redoubt and surrounding conservation area.

Notwithstanding this, it is acknowledged that the public benefits of the proposal through the regeneration of the area are unproven. In light of this, it is recommended that planning permission is granted for a period of five years after which the application must be renewed and or the structure must be removed and the beach restored to its current state. This meets the policy test of necessity as a result of the sensitivity of this location.. A five year period should be sufficient for the developer to build the structure, and an operator to establish a viable business on the site that achieves the objectives of the local plan. Any future proposal to extend the grant of temporary planning permission must demonstrate the public benefits in retaining the structure outweigh any the harm to the surrounding heritage assets, and would need to be assessed against the policy framework in operation at that time.

The grant of temporary planning permission would also serve to address the fears of a number of consultees that the proposal is not viable due to its seasonal nature, and that the site will become derelict and an eyesore. The temporary use condition would require to the site to be reinstated to its present condition upon the expiration of the five years.

A condition is recommended to require that any materials used to cover the sand during the closed season matches the natural colour of the beach shingle. This is to ensure that the impact of the proposal on the appearance of the beach in short and long views when it is not in use is minimised. This is considered to address the points made by the Conservation Area advisory group in their consideration of the proposal.

Members should also note that as free holder there remain other powers outside of this application should the development fall into disrepair and become an eyesore.

Noise

A number of consultation responses express concern that the proposal will result in an undesirable change in the character of this part of the seafront through additional noise generated by the volleyball courts. The experience of other similar sporting facilities is that they do not normally create large amounts of noise. In any event, the noise levels would depend on the popularity of the facility and intensity of use which at this point is an unknown. In this context, a requirement for a noise assessment as requested by one consultee would not meet the test of being relevant, necessary and material to the application in question as set out in paragraph 193 of the NPPF.

The small scale use of music (amplified music) by users of the courts is consistent with the use of public open space and beach front and it would be unreasonable to seek to control such activity through the use of planning conditions. In the event that the proposal created significant amounts of noise which interfered with surrounding uses, a complaint could be pursued under environmental health legislation. It is noted that the facility would ultimately remain under the control of the Council who would remain responsible for the facility, and who would be the authority responsible for dealing with noise complaints.

Whilst the more general concern expressed by residents that the tranquil and quiet nature of the existing area would be diminished as a result of the proposal is appreciated and understood, this concern must be framed in the context of Policy C3 of the Core Strategy which seeks to promote the site for tourism purposes. As such any development within this location is likely to have an impact on the character of this area through additional noise and footfall. The broader public interest is considered to be served in supporting the development of this part of the seafront for tourism purposes, in line with the objectives of the Core Strategy.

Lighting

The proposal does not show any new external floodlighting, and as such it is not considered that there is any risk of the proposal having an unacceptable impact on the conservation area at night time. A condition prevents any illumination (temporary or permanent) of the facility hereby approved. An informative on the decision notice states that any floodlighting would require planning permission.

Highways and Parking

It is considered that the facility is on a comparatively small scale and any new parking demand created by the facility can be absorbed by surrounding public car parks. The site is also well located for public transport accessibility, being located within walking distance of the town centre and directly adjacent to bus routes along Royal Parade.

Other issues raised in consultation

On the advice of the County Archaeologist a condition requiring a written scheme of investigation has been added as a condition.

A condition requires that notwithstanding the approved plans a distance of two metres from timber beach groynes is left clear to enable access for maintenance works, as requested by the Specialist Advisor (engineering)

In response to concerns about the spectators to the new facility blocking the beachfront promenade a condition has been added requiring that the promenade is kept clear at all times to ensure public access and emergency services access to the promenade at all times.

Concerns about loss of sea views from residential and commercial properties are noted and it is acknowledged that the proposal has been sited in a way that limits the impact on views from the residential and commercial properties along Royal Parade.

The points about the poor condition of the former café building surrounding the redoubt are noted, although given that the proposal is a temporary planning permission it is not considered reasonable to make the refurbishment of these facilities conditional on the grant of this permission. The Council as freeholder may choose to refurbish this building with or without this application

In response to the concerns raised by one consultee that the volleyball courts are poorly designed and do not meet modern standards of safety and security it is considered that the boundary treatment is a necessary compromise given the heritage issues discussed at length in this report. Beyond the imposition of a condition requiring that the promenade is kept clear at all times, issues relating to the safety and security of users of the volleyball courts, spectators and other beach users are a matter for the operator of the facility and not matters which it is reasonable to seek to control through the use of planning conditions. Compliance with Health and Safety legislation is the responsibility of the operator of the site.

The proposal would not generate significant new demand for drainage facilities surrounding the redoubt monument. The condition of existing drains around the site is not a material planning consideration in this decision.

The comments made by one respondent to the consultation that the proposal is not consistent with the Eastbourne Borough Council in the landscape

character assessment (March 2010) and draft Seafront Local Plan (July 2015) are noted, however for the reasons set out previously in this report these considerations are considered to be outweighed by the public benefits that derive from the achievement of the objectives of policy C3 of the adopted Local Plan (2013).

A number of consultees question what the precise use of the facilities will be and question the inference that the facilities may be used for purposes other than volleyball. The same considerations set out in this report would apply to other sporting activities being carried out at the facility, such as extreme Frisbee.

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:

Because of its location on a major seafront promenade close heritage assets, the proposal will result in harm to the setting of the Redoubt Scheduled Monument and the Town Centre and Seafront Conservation Area. However, this harm is less than substantial and has the potential to be outweighed by public benefits resulting from the advancement of tourism to this part of the seafront which line with the objectives of the Seaside Neighbourhood Policy (C3 of the Core Strategy).

It is therefore recommended that temporary planning permission is granted for a period of five years to enable the public benefits of the proposal to be tested and to ensure that the principle that the long term impact of the proposal of the setting surrounding the redoubt monument is kept under review.

Recommendation:

Grant conditional planning permission for a temporary period of five years.

Conditions:

- 1. Commencement within three years
- 2. Temporary planning permission (5 years from date of commencement of development), after which the beach must be restored to its present condition.
- 3. Development in accordance with approved plans
- 4. archaeology.

- 5. Notwithstanding approved plans the area surrounding groynes to be protected to 2m in distance.
- 6. The beachfront promenade must be kept clear at all times and to secure access for all beach users and emergency services.
- 7. The cover for the sand during periods where the proposal is not in use must match the natural colour of the sand.
- 8. no illumination (permanent or temporary) shall be installed at the site unless previously agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Informatives:

- 1. You are reminded to consult with the Specialist Advisor (Engineering) to ensure that, following completion of the project sufficient distance is left for heavy machinery to pass along the front of the seafront.
- 2. No floodlighting or illumination has been approved by this permission and condition 8 restricts the installation of any temporary illumination at the site. Should you wish to install external lighting around the courts planning permission must be sought.
- 3. Temporary permission has been granted in light of emerging planning policy relating to The Redoubt area and to ensure that the impact of the proposal on the scheduled monument is kept under review.

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**.