

PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

REF NO: LU/190/09/

LOCATION: Littlehampton Coastguard Tower
The Promenade
Arun Parade Littlehampton

PROPOSAL: Proposal to convert a redundant coastguard tower to a residential property to include a change of use.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION	As above. The proposal includes the formation of balconies at second and third floor level measuring approximately 2 metres by 0.8 metres and 2.8 metres by 1.2 metres respectively. Each would have approximately 1.1 metre high balustrading.
SITE AREA	Approximately 12.5 square metres.
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT DEN	N/A
TOPOGRAPHY	Predominantly flat
TREES	None.
BOUNDARY TREATMENT	None.
SITE CHARACTERISTICS	The site is occupied by a three storey tower which is attached to a two storey building used by the Coastguard. The structure has red/brown brick elevation walls, other than at second floor level where the walls are finished with painted white/cream render. The roof is tiled and hipped.
CHARACTER OF LOCALITY	The site is located on a pedestrian-only promenade and faces towards the sea to the south and the mouth of the River Arun to the west. There is a slipway to the south that is used by the Coastguard. There is a shelter to the east and an amusement park to the rear of the site as well as a Public House and the Windmill Theatre.

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

LU/453/07/	Conversion of former coastguards tower to provide new tourist holiday accommodation	Approve Cond 19-03-2008
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REPRESENTATIONS

Representations received:

Littlehampton Town Council

The Town Council strongly objects to this application with the proposal to convert the Coastguard Tower to a residential property being wholly out of keeping with the location and

a very dangerous precedent which would be destructive to the town's seafront.

Comments on Representations received:

Noted.

CONSULTATIONS

WSCC Local Development Divis.

Environment Agency

Property Services Manager

Environmental Health

Consultations responses received:

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY:

In the absence of an adequate Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) we object to the grant of planning permission and recommend refusal on this basis for the following reasons:

The FRA submitted does not comply with the requirements set out in Annex E, paragraph E3 of PPS25. The submitted FRA does not, therefore, provide a suitable basis for assessment to be made of the flood risks arising from the proposed development.

In particular, the submitted FRA fails to adequately consider safe access/egress. It identifies a safe route from the site heading north towards South Terrace. The ground levels decrease in this direction and so the depth of flooding would not fit into the 'safe for all' cells of table 13.1 of TR2/FD2320. We also do not consider access along the beach front to be safe during extreme storm conditions.

Further, the FRA does not sufficiently consider the vulnerability of this location to wind and wave action due to its proximity to the beach.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH:

The room sizes appear to be too small for the private rented market.

A one bedroom dwelling should have a living room of 11.5 square metres, a bedroom of 7 square metres and a kitchen of 5.5 square metres. For two persons the sizes are 10.5 square metres for the bedroom and 13 square metres for the living room.

If the property comes into the private rented market and is occupied, the local authority may serve Housing Act Notices/Orders to restrict the occupancy.

PROPERTY SERVICES MANAGER:

Prior to this property being put to auction the advice was that it is not suitable for residential accommodation and it would be unlikely to receive a permission for such. The Council as landlord would need to be convinced that it is physically possible both in planning terms and in terms of Building Control that the building can be converted into residential accommodation. We are concerned that the building is very tight in its dimensions and is served internally by a narrow spiral staircase which at present only serves the second floor. Access to the first floor is via a vertical ladder. Means of fire escape, fire protection, refuse disposal and foul water drainage are just a few of the concerns the Council has as Landlord.

HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL AMENITIES & COMMUNITY SAFETY:

No information has been provided on the application for how waste will be managed or for storage of bins. They will not be allowed to store bins outside the property so need to make allowances for storage of refuse and recycling bins in the plan.

COUNTY HIGHWAYS: The Promenade is a private road not maintained by WSCC, therefore, these comments are for advice only.

Cycle parking should be included, this must be secure, covered and capable of storing at least one cycle per bedroom of the proposed dwelling. The actual details of the cycle parking facilities should be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. To accommodate cycle parking any cycle store should have minimum dimensions of 6m x 3m.

For the purposes of this application, the residential use is assumed to have nil car parking provision. A nil car parking provision does accord with the WSCC maximum parking standards and no highway safety concerns would be raised to a nil car parking provision in this location. In terms of transport, the property is situated in a sustainable location. The property is within walking distance of a range of services and public transport; hence there should be no reliance as such on the use of a private car. This application therefore is in compliance with PPG13 in encouraging the use of sustainable transport.

If the LPA are minded to approve this application a condition securing cycle parking prior to occupation of the building should be included.

COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGY: No significant archaeological implications to this applications.

COUNTY ECOLOGY: No strategic ecological objection.

Comments on Consultation responses:

Comments noted

POLICY CONTEXT

Designation applicable to site:
Outside Built-Up Area
Permitted Development Restriction

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

South East Plan:	SEPNRM4	Sustainable Flood Risk Management
Arun District Local Plan:	GEN7 GEN10 GEN3	The Form of New Development Tidal Flooding and Coastal Defence Protection of the Countryside

PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE

PPS1	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS7	Sustainable development in rural areas
PPG13	Transport
PPS25	Development and Flood Risk

POLICY COMMENTARY

The above policies combine to describe the criteria against which the application will be assessed particularly with regard to visual and residential amenity and criteria for conversion of a building

outside the built-up area boundary.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND/OR LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:-

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

The proposal is not considered to comply with relevant Development Plan policies in that it would involve an unsuitable use of a building located Outside of the Built-Up Area and a satisfactory Flood Risk Assessment has not been provided.

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is considered that there are no other material considerations to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with the Development Plan and/or legislative background.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposal seeks to change the use of the Coastguard tower to a private residential dwelling. Concern has been raised over the adequacy of the room sizes, however, this only applies to the private rented market and, in itself, is not reason enough to refuse the application.

The building is located adjacent to the beach on Littlehampton Promenade. This seafront location was considered appropriate for tourist accommodation and there is an extant permission (LU/453/07) for the use of the tower for this purpose. This proposal was acceptable because the use was commercial and therefore complied with conversion policies for development outside the built-up area boundary. In addition the Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism and Arun District Local Plan policy DEV35 encourages the use of existing or replacement buildings for tourist and visitor facilities outside the built-up area. These policies do not extend to residential dwellings. Condition 3 of planning approval LU/453/07 requires that the building shall be used for tourist holiday accommodation only and no other purposes whatsoever in order to prevent the establishment of an additional independent unit of accommodation outside the defined built-up area boundary.

The proposal contains no information to justify why the approved tourism use has not been implemented. There is no evidence that there is no demand for tourist accommodation in this location.

Further, in order to comply with policy DEV2, conversion of rural buildings for residential use, evidence would be required as part of the application, to demonstrate that reasonable attempts have been made to market and use the premises for business purposes and a statement of the efforts made should be included. No information has been submitted in this respect.

In addition, the proposal also does not contain an adequate Flood Risk Assessment and concerns have been raised by both the Environment Agency and the Council's Property Services Manager over the provision of a safe method of access/egress during an emergency.

It is therefore recommended that the application be refused for the following reasons.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE

- 1 Based on the information submitted the Local Planning Authority is not satisfied that there is insufficient demand for the tourism use previously approved on this site under policy DEV34 of Arun District Local Plan.
- 2 It has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that reasonable attempts have been made to market and use the premises for business purposes and there is no supporting statement of the efforts made, the proposal therefore conflicts with policy DEV2 of Arun District Local Plan.
- 3 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment does not comply with the requirements set out in Annex E, paragraph E3 of PPS25. It fails to adequately consider safe access/egress. It also does not sufficiently consider the vulnerability of this location to wind and wave action due to its proximity to the beach. It would be contrary to Policy GEN10 of the Arun District Local Plan.