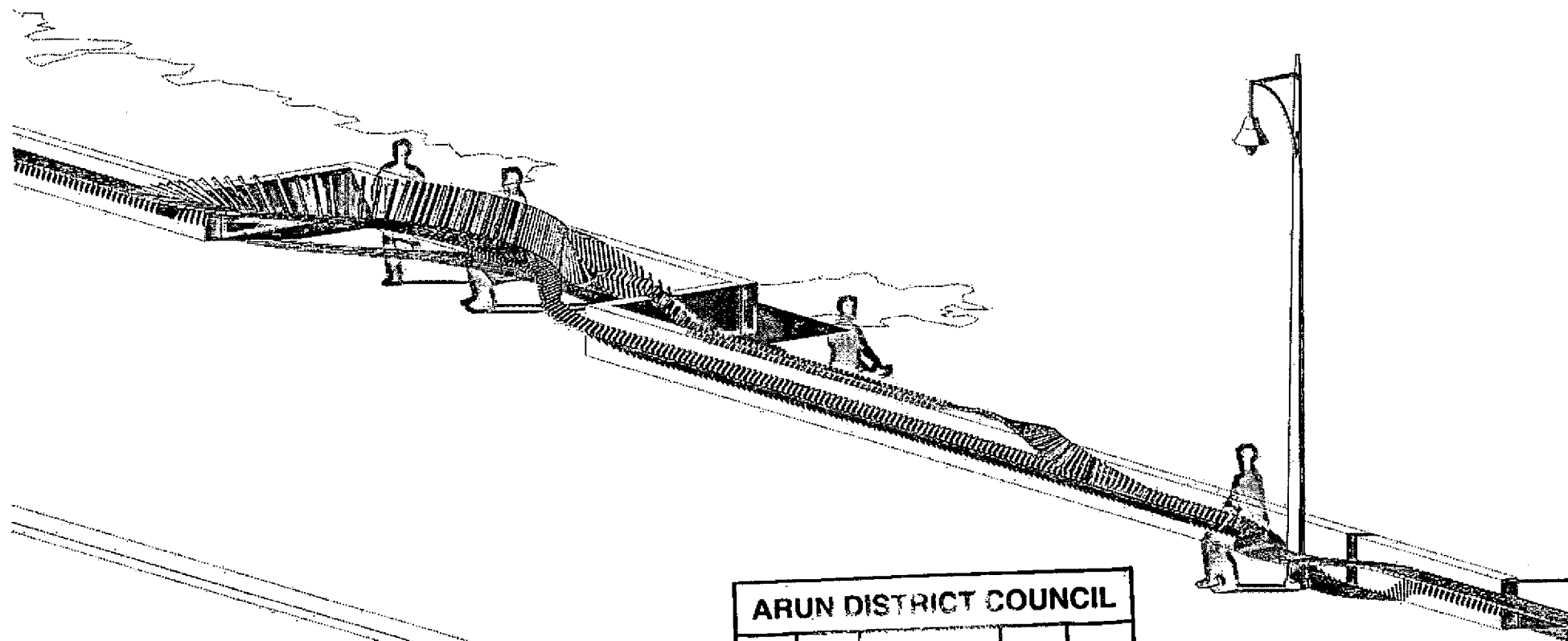




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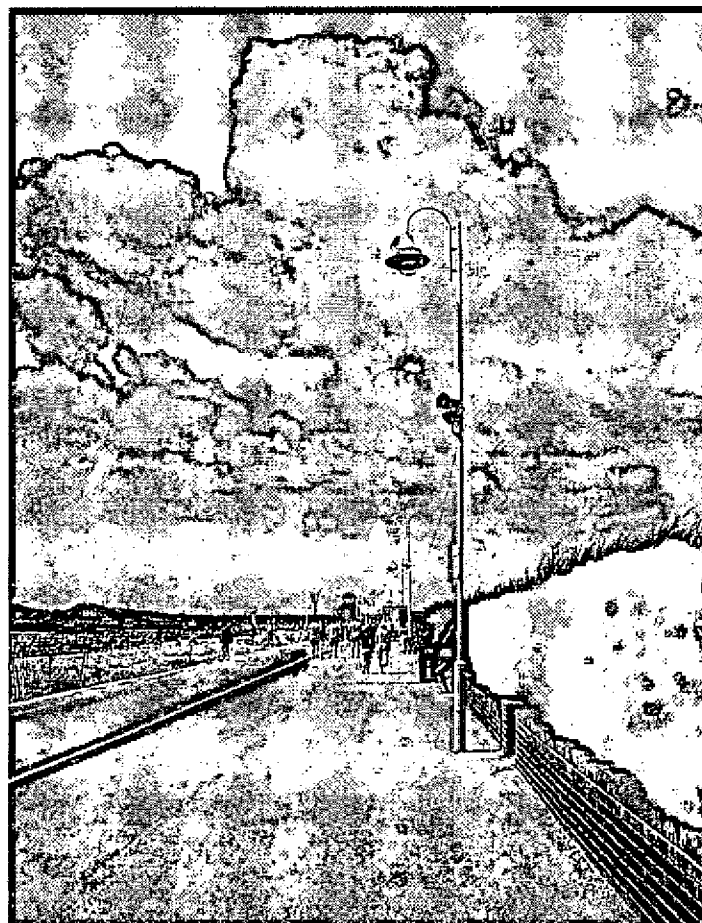
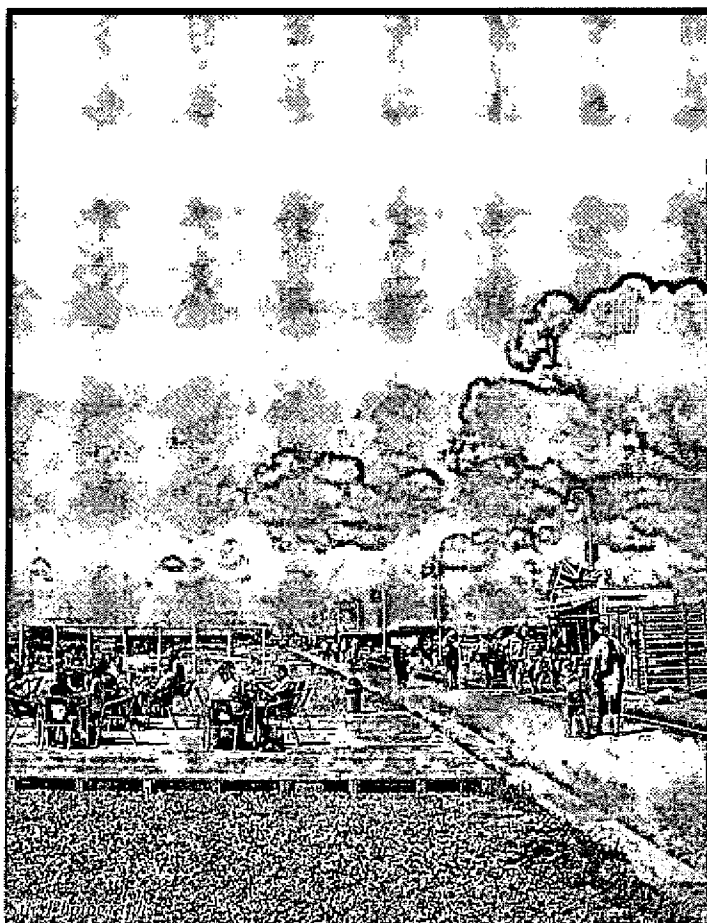
THE LONGEST BENCH

Littlehampton

Design and Access Statement

Studio Weave

January 2010, Revision A



1 Introduction

This project began as an idea to create a very long bench down the spine of the promenade at Littlehampton. The structure currently measures 618m (following the curve of the bench) and this would be the longest bench in the UK or perhaps the world.

Inspired by Boardwalks and Charm Bracelets, the structure will form a long bench which will meander around lampposts and rise and bend to form shelters and wind breaks, connecting and defining the promenade as a whole, while underlining it as a string of special places.

To inspire and develop this string of places, we worked with Connaught Junior School. The children showed us how they use the promenade, what they think of it, and what it means to them, giving us insights into the site we would never otherwise have.

This statement sets out our site research and analysis; involvement and consultation; aims, and design proposals.

This document is prepared by Studio Weave for Arun District Council.

2 The Site

2.2 Site Ownership

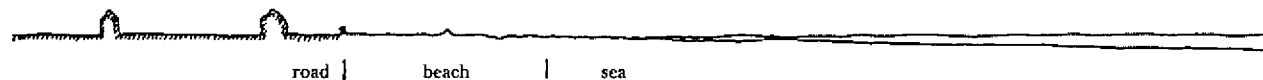
The site is owned and maintained by Arun District Council.

2.3 Seaside Comparisons

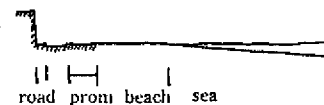
Our initial impressions and research revealed the distinctive character of Littlehampton promenade. Unusually, the promenade is level with the beach. Without the often seen barriers of sharp level changes and bulky handrails, the connection with the sea is strong.

Also, this promenade, unlike many, is not backed by a busy seafront road and rows of facades but stretches between the beach and a green. Promenades are normally found either by the water or through a park, Littlehampton promenade is both.

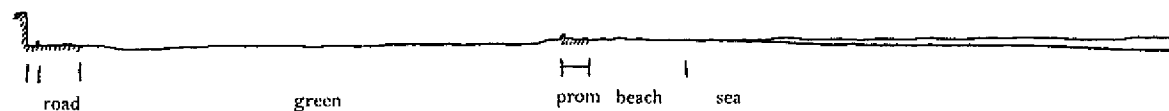
West Wittering



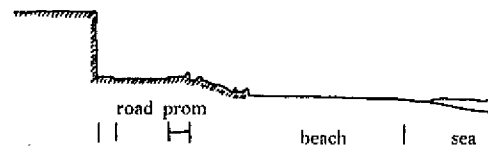
Bognor



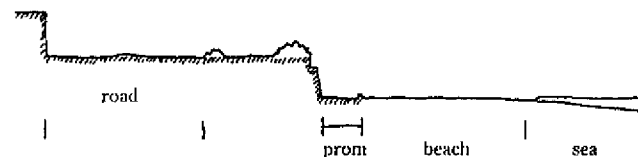
Littlehampton



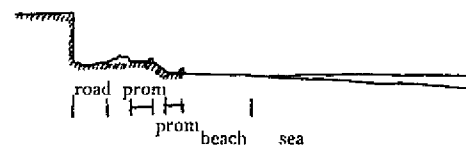
Brighton



Saltdean



Eastbourne



2 The Site

2.5 Social and Economic Context

Littlehampton is the second largest town in the Arun District (population 35,000). The local economy has suffered from the decline of the traditional staying seaside holiday market, accentuated by the loss of key manufacturing employers. Parts of the town suffer from economic and social problems with two of the most deprived wards in West Sussex and an identified Local Neighbourhood Improvement Area.

In response to these issues, the Council and its partners are working towards a co-ordinated approach to regenerate the town. Building on the already successful East Bank development – which has received a number of design awards; and the recent development of the iconic East Beach Café – which since opening has achieved national prominence; the regeneration programme is gaining significant momentum.

2.6 Planning Policy

2.6.1 The Waterfront Strategy

The strategy for regeneration in Littlehampton is guided by the Littlehampton Vision which proposes a framework for development over the next fifteen years. This identifies opportunities to develop, enhance and better integrate the town centre, the harbour, and seafront area. One of the actions identified by the Town Centre Action Group was the development of a Waterfront Strategy. The Longest Bench forms an integral part of this strategy and aims to, along with the Café, act as a catalyst for future development.

2.6.2 The Arun District Council Local Plan

The Local Plan describes the Council's overarching objective as being to implement sustainable development, defined as: "development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (the "Brutland" definition).

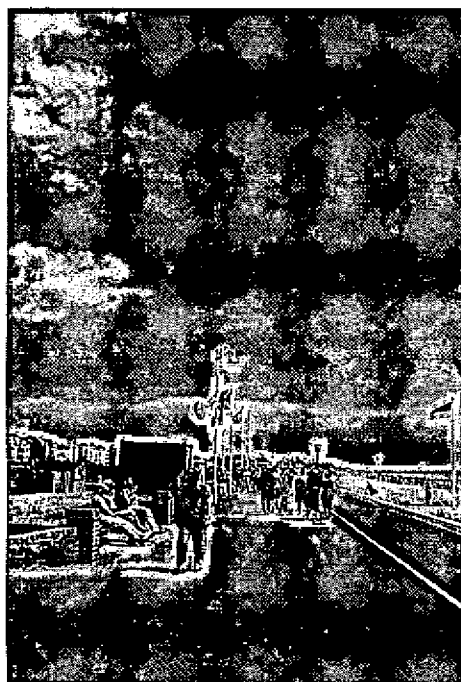
The Longest Bench also aims to meet the needs of the present – by providing seating and shelter along the seafront within an attractive and unique but light-touching development; as well as not compromising future development – like a charm bracelet, the bench would support diverse future additions to the bench as future generations see fit.

More specific policy areas affecting the bench include the following:

The Longest Bench falls outside Policy Area 2: Built-up Area Boundary, however, the proposals are not for buildings but for seating and shelter which supports the recreational use of the seafront.

The Green falls within Policy Area 5: Protection of Open Space. This policy states that "The District Council will protect public and private open spaces, playing fields, outdoor sports facilities and children's play facilities from development other than associated recreational development." The Longest Bench recognises the significance of the green as a recreational space and does not damage the quality of or reduce the area of the green. The proposed new seating and shelters will serve to improve the accessibility, use, and attractiveness of the green.

The Promenade also borders Policy Area 8: The Littlehampton Harbour Strategy. This policy states that planning permission will only be granted within this area for development which "supports the continuation and development of the harbour as a commercial and recreational port." The Longest Bench does not fall within this area however the project aims to complement the leisure and fairground character of the harbour park.



Site Photograph

4 Proposals

4.1 Aims and Objectives

The aims of this project are to:

*** Build the longest bench in the world!**

At over 600m (following the curve of the bench) this bench would be the longest bench in the UK or maybe even the world! This would create a huge amount of new seating that would cater for residents and visitors alike.

*** Create a landmark project that creates an attraction throughout the year.**

While creating a unique landmark, that looks great in all seasons, the project also respects its environment and touches the ground lightly with minimal disruption to the site.

*** Play on the unique duality of Littlehampton promenade.**

The promenade at Littlehampton runs between the beach and the green. The Longest Bench aims to celebrate this quality by addressing both sides of the wall and promenade.

*** Identify and improve underused facilities.**

The current shelters are dark, dirty, and obstructive. The project aims to replace these with shelters that feel open, bright and safe.

*** Create a durable and robust public space.**

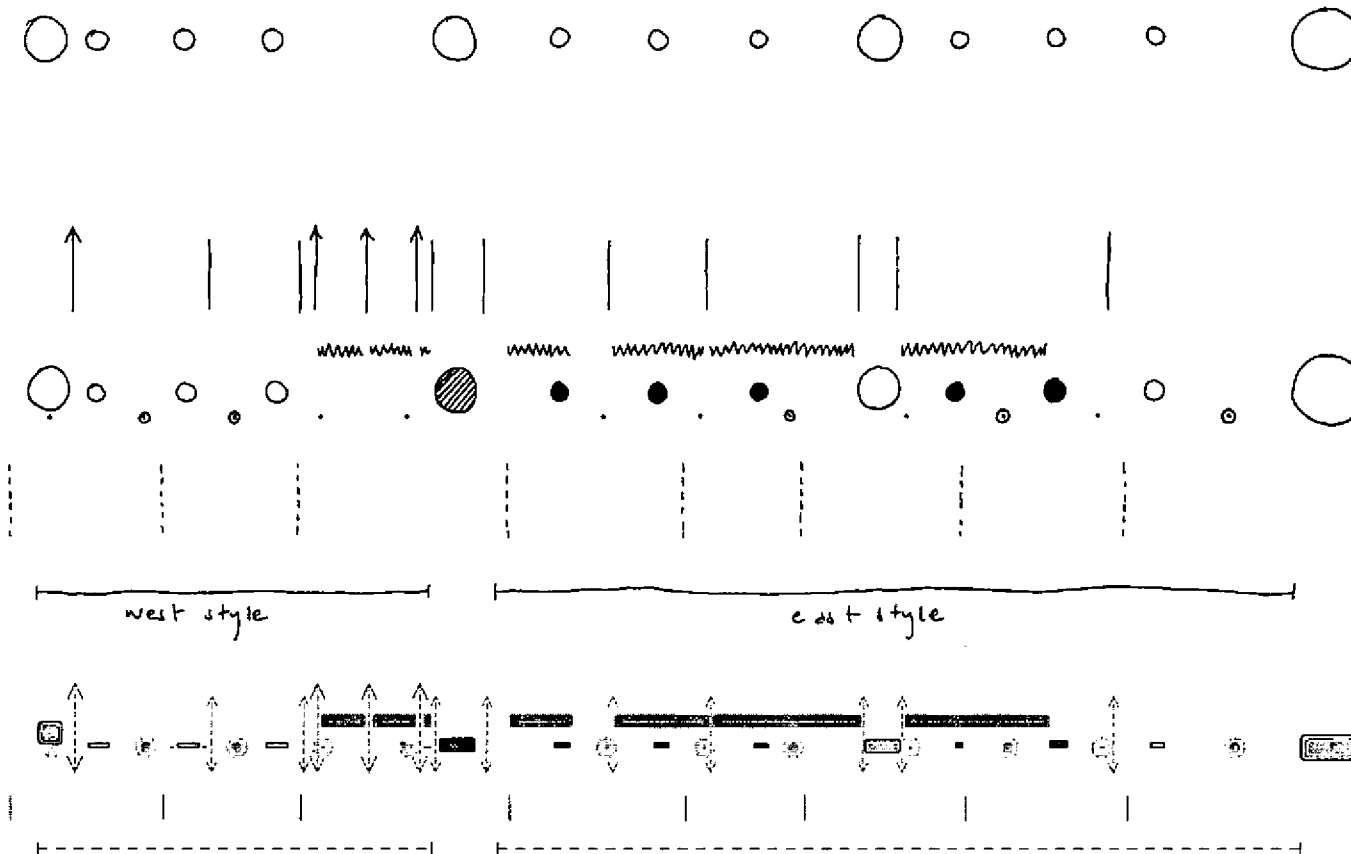
The materials and design will be carefully considered to ensure the Longest Bench is easy to look after so it can be used for a long time.

*** Build on the success of the East Bank development and the East Beach Café.**

These projects have worked to redefine Littlehampton as a place of outstanding, dynamic, and exciting cultural offering. The Longest Bench will carry on the momentum created by these projects in attracting interest and visitors to the town.

*** Create a backbone for future development.**

The Longest Bench is a core feature of the Waterfront Strategy, designed to ensure that the cultural renaissance of Littlehampton is cohesive; has public support; and sets a framework which is consistent with the Littlehampton Vision and with associated developments on the seafront and elsewhere in the town.



Site Analysis Diagrams

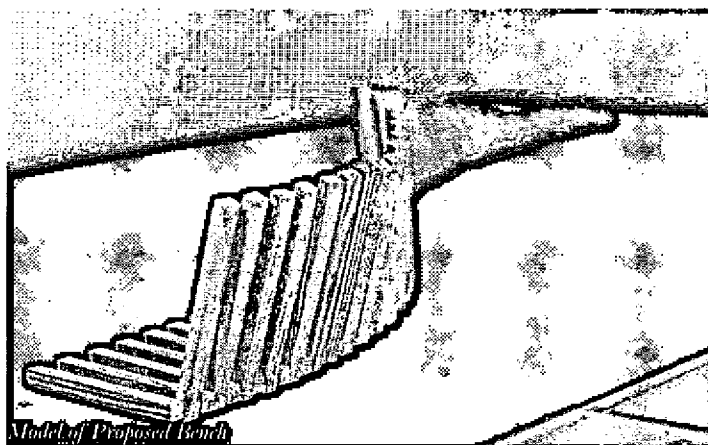
4 Proposals

4.3 The Longest Bench

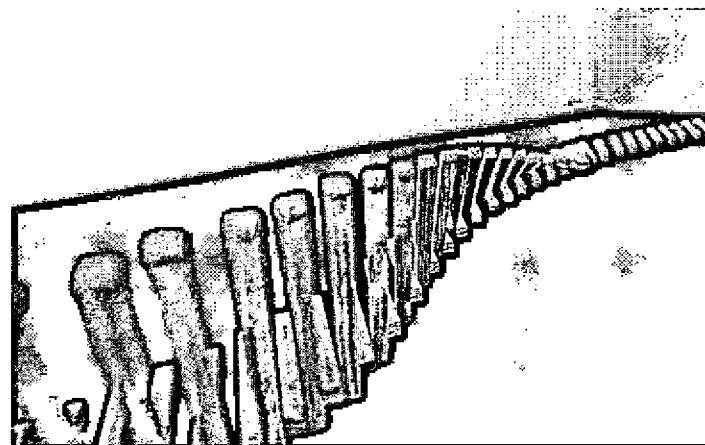
4.3.1 Objectives

As the drawings illustrate, we have carried out a careful site analysis plotting each incident along the promenade including the variations and openings in the wall, lampposts, flagpoles, bins, benches, and the start and finish of the wall.

Our aim is to leave the existing site as unchanged as possible, using the variations and interruptions to inform the bench. The existing bins will be maintained and incorporated into the design. Access to lampposts, flagpoles and other fixtures will be maintained.



Model of Proposed Bench



4 Proposals

This boardwalk forms the "chain" of the charm bracelet which is the continuous base for a collection of charm-places. It is made up of identical simple components that are arrayed to accommodate the complex shapes called for by the form of the wall and the activities which take place along it. In places a second array un-zips to form seat backs or to jump over the wall to create seating on both sides. An unobtrusive arm can also be fixed to the main bench at intervals to provide arm support and prevent cycling along the bench.

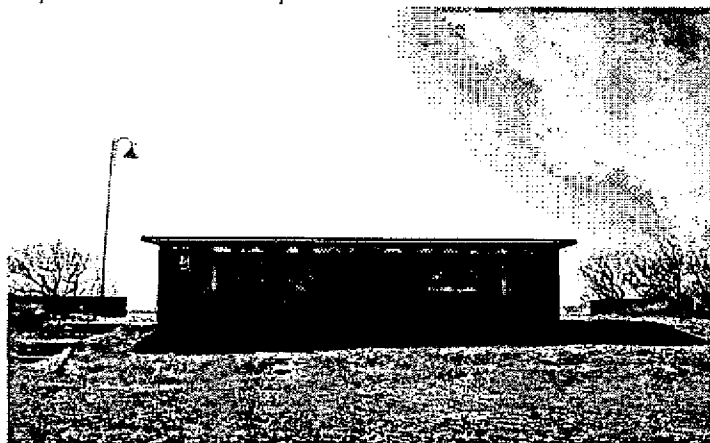
The bars will be predominantly timber but a proportion will be coloured stainless steel allowing the bench to burst into colour as it rounds lampposts or settles back into a kink in the wall.



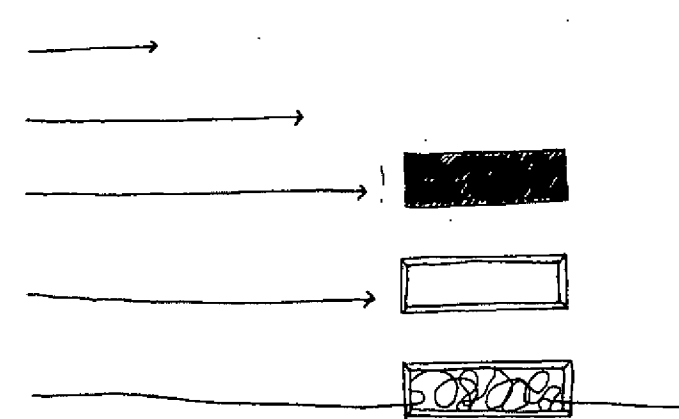
Image to show movement bursting into colour



Proposed Shelter Formal Concept



Existing Shelter



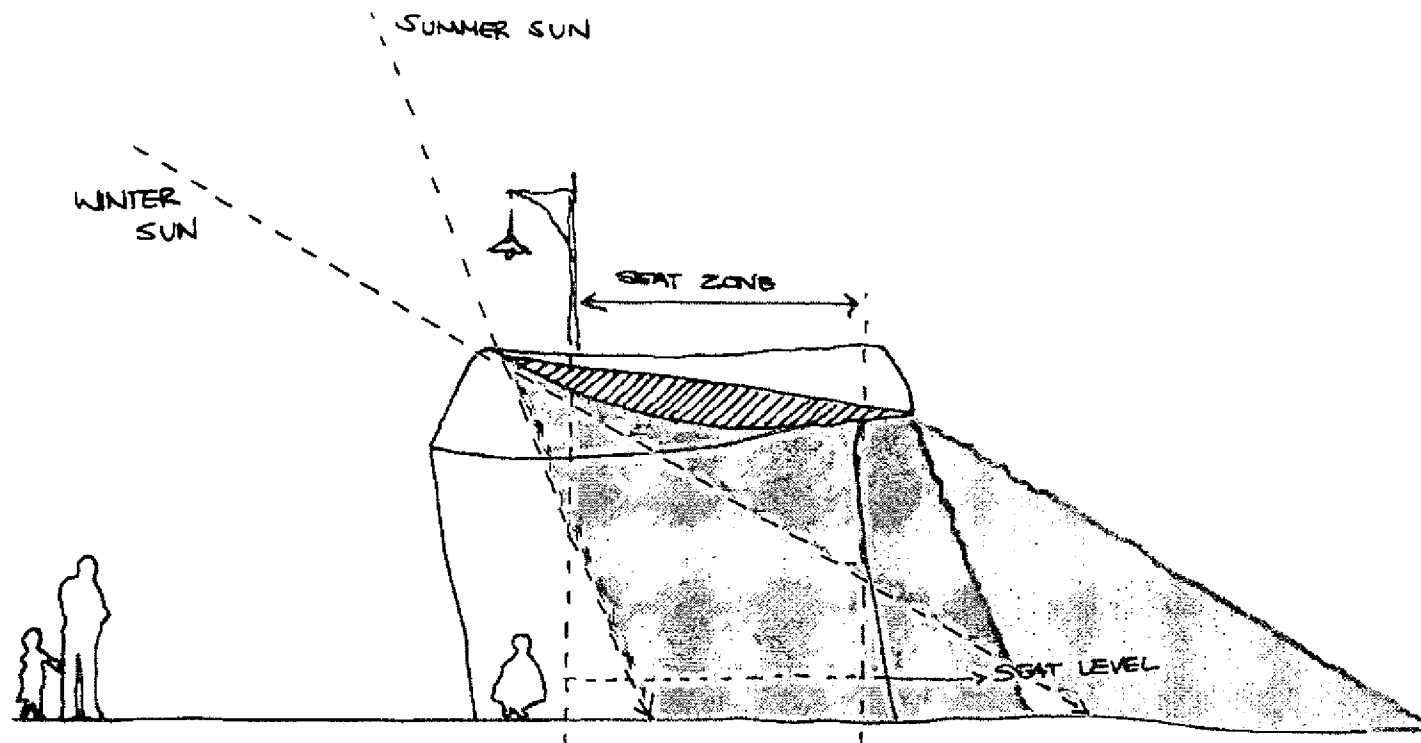
Proposed Shelter Concept

4 Proposals

4.4 Shelter Charms

4.4.1 Objectives

Two important incidents along the promenade are the two shelters. The children told us they felt these were dirty and unsafe. They are dividing rather than connecting the green and the promenade. We would like to propose two new shelters, in place of the existing structures, that define the connection between the promenade and the green and feel bright, open, and safe.

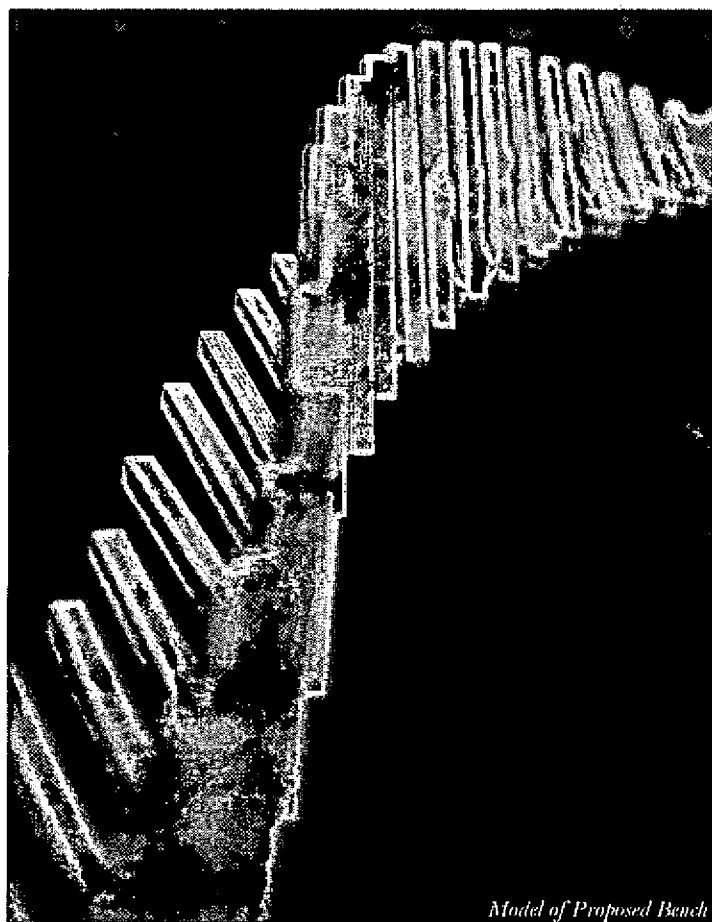


4 Proposals

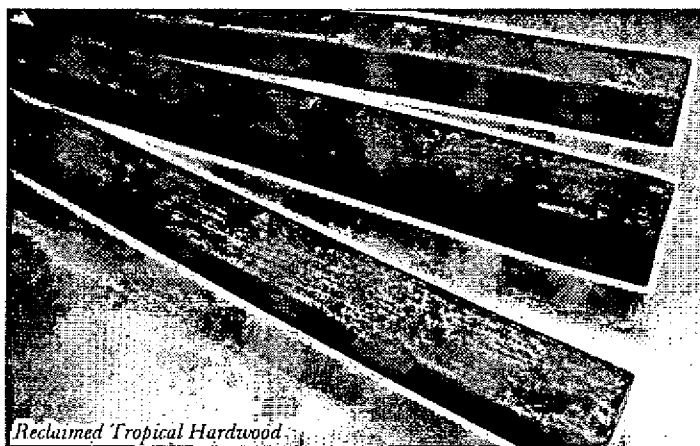
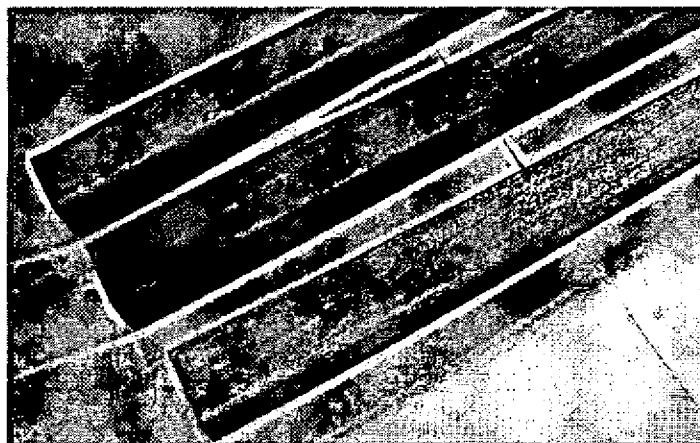
4.4.3 Shelter from the Elements

The broad roof provides shelter from the rain and protection from the bright summer sunshine.

Diagram of Shelter to show Sun Shading



Model of Proposed Bench



Reclaimed Tropical Hardwood

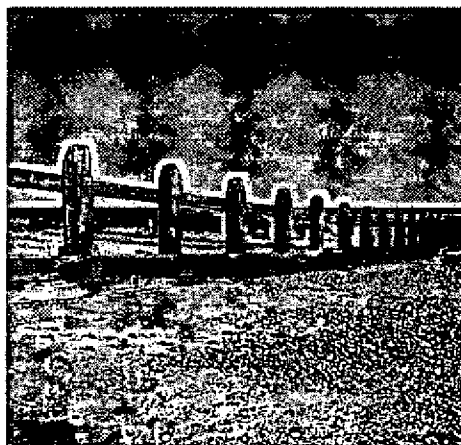
4 Proposals

4.5 Materials

4.5.1 Bench

The bench will be made from thousands of identically sized bars. The bars will predominantly be made from reclaimed tropical hardwood with a proportion in coloured stainless steel allowing the bench to burst into colour as it rounds lampposts or settles back into a kink in the wall. The coloured bars will be brightly and lastingly coloured.

These bars will be supported on a simple and minimal stainless steel structure which will sit inconspicuously in front of the existing low redbrick wall. The intention is that the structure will simply support the bars, impacting on the existing site as little as possible.



Groyne at Littlehampton

4 Proposals

4.5.3 Life Expectancy

The bench is designed to have a minimum 20 year life expectancy however, given the longevity of the proposed materials, the bench should enjoy a much longer life.

Reclaimed Tropical Hardwood is a very durable and robust material with a life expectancy of minimum 20 years. Extensive examples and studies show this material is very long lasting in a marine environment. (Much of the timber is reclaimed from old groynes.)

4.5.4 Maintenance

All materials are very low maintenance, requiring only an occasional wash. Tropical hardwood is very dense and hard making it difficult to carve into or damage compared with other timber species such as oak. Single bars can be easily replaced if required.

* Access to Low Wall

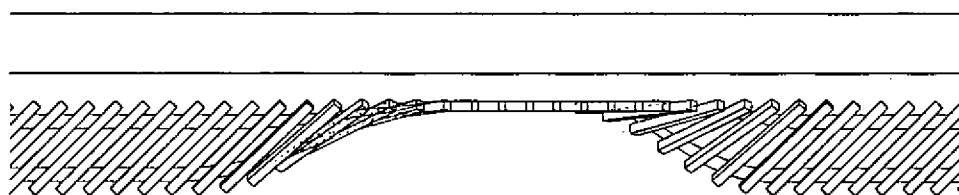
Should access be required for the maintenance of a section of wall or a lamppost, for example, the bench will be removable both by slat and by length with the exception of the shelters. All fixings will be tamper proof to ensure this can only be done with the proper equipment.

* Cleaning

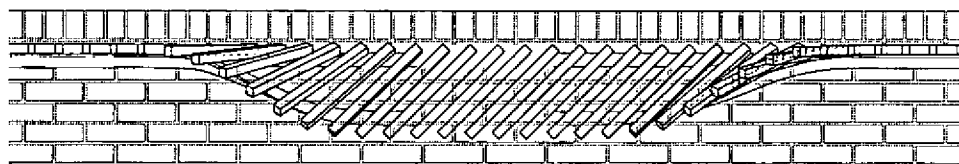
The full length of the bench including underneath it is accessible so there should be no undue collection of litter or sand over and above the existing. The bench incorporates the existing bins so users of the promenade can continue to use these.

* Tamarisk Hedge

There may be more desire to keep the Tamarisk hedge well trimmed to ensure the bench is accessible along its entire length.



Plan



Elevation

Example of recess for wheelchairs and pushchairs

4 Proposals

4.7 Access

4.7.1 Disabled Users

As there is level access to the entire length of the bench, the project is completely accessible.

The bench substantially increases the provision of seating along the promenade, a proportion of this with back support.

There will also be several spots along the length where there is space for a wheelchair user to sit within the line of the bench next to other users.

The project will meet the requirements of the DDA and an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken.

By definition the Longest Bench will be available to and accessible by everyone.

4.7.2 Access for Maintenance

The bench will be removable both by slat and by length to allow for access for maintenance to a section of wall, lampposts, flagpoles etc. All fixings will be tamper proof to ensure this can only be done with the proper equipment.

5 The Team

