

PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

REF NO: LU/247/09/

LOCATION: Littlehampton Promenade
Littlehampton

PROPOSAL: Removal of existing benches and shelters on seafront promenade. Replacement with single bench structure from east Beach cafe to rear of concessions adjacent to Harbour Park (sited along southern boundary with existing dwarf wall). Erection of two new public shelter structures

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION

The bench is proposed along the length of Littlehampton seafront from East Beach Cafe to Harbour Park. The total length of the site is 483m. The bench will sit in front of the existing dwarf wall on its southern side of the promenade and provide a continuous seating structure.

The bench will roll behind the existing bins and go around the front of the existing lamp stands. In the areas of existing openings, the bench will be dropped to go into the pedestrian surface in a variety of designs.

The two existing public shelters are proposed to be replaced by open shelters with the bench twisting and looping within. The shelters will be 13.7m in width x 4.4m in depth x 3.6m in height and are sited at a slight angle to provide shelter from the prevailing south west winds. The shelters will be constructed of stainless steel and be clad in metal panels. It is suggested that the finish would be a brass/bronze colour.

SITE AREA

0.25 ha

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT DEN

N/A

TOPOGRAPHY

Predominantly flat.

TREES

None affected by the proposed development.

BOUNDARY TREATMENT

Dwarf wall to the north of the proposal along its length.

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Area is a flat public promenade on the coast.

CHARACTER OF LOCALITY

There are a number of elements of street furniture on the promenade and two public shelters. To the north are areas for car parking, green open space and some commercial activity.

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

LU/56/99/	A wooden beach deck to provide seating and a wind break for use by the general public.	Approve 04-06-1999
LU/365/07/	Change of use from public beach area to customer seating deck associated with existing fast food kiosk	Approve Cond 09-11-2007
LU/71/49	Promenade shelters	Approve 27-06-1949

REPRESENTATIONS

Representations received:

Littlehampton Town Council

Support as long as District Council is confident design will not change to meet time constraints. Bins should blend in with the bench design.

Littlehampton Civic Society: Application being pushed through with undue haste. Appears to be no attempt to ensure seating is comfortable, practical or designed to please. Design will have limited appeal and life-span. Maintenance costs could be substantial.

Eighteen letters of objection (two from same household);

Best served by keeping existing shelters

No practical purpose for the bench

Not a long term proposal

Bench appears to prevent access from car parks and Green

Bench will not provide comfortable seating

Does not allow wheelchair users to sit alongside their friends

Gimmick at expense of facilities needed by local community

Plans are not appropriate for Littlehampton seafront

New shelters would look awful

How will people, especially people with disabilities, gain access to the seafront?

Shelters inadequate as protection from the elements

Maintenance will be from local taxes

Traditional seafront will be spoilt

Will be a target for graffiti and vandals

Money could be spent in more productive way

Existing shelters are practical; Proposed shelters are not

Gaudy and out of character

No need for additional seating

Bench loops will be invitation for youths to play which will be dangerous

Would like to see shelters more like Rustington

Materials out of keeping with surroundings

Will prevent further concessions on the seafront

Bench will not attract visitors to the town

Question whether it will be 'the longest bench'

It will divide the Green from the sea

Will be a safety hazard for children

One letter of comment;

Should enhance the seafront
Shelters are visually interesting
Lack of partitions in shelters of concern as there will be little wind break need a screen within the shelters.

One letter of support;

Great idea. Would like to see more colours, perhaps to represent specific causes.

Comments on Representations received:

Comments are noted. In terms of clarification, the proposed bench will not inhibit access between the promenade and the car parks and Green; the bench will drop down at the existing access points to be in the ground so that the existing level of access is maintained.

There are 10 recessed bays specifically incorporated to allow wheelchair/pushchair users to sit alongside other users.

The funding for this project is not coming from Arun District Council. The funding is from Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and a private donation that are specific to this project.

CONSULTATIONS

Sussex Police-Community Safety
Property Services Manager
Parks and Landscapes
Environmental Health
Cultural Development
Engineering Services Manager
Engineers (Coastal Protection)
Economic Regeneration
Car Parks

Consultations responses received:

Environmental Health: No objections

Environmental Amenities: Glad that bench runs behind the bins. It may not be possible to use mechanical sweeper once bench is in place, which means it may not be possible to have the area cleaned by 8am.

Coastal Engineers: No comments

Parks & Greenspaces: No objection

Comments on Consultation responses:

Comments noted.

POLICY CONTEXT

Within Built up area

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

South East Plan: [SEPTSR1](#) Coastal Resorts

Arun District Local Plan: [GEN7](#) The Form of New Development
[GEN13](#) Public Access to the Coast

PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development

SUPPLEMENTARY POLICY GUIDANCE

XXX3 Good Planning Practice Guide on Tourism

POLICY COMMENTARY

The above policies combine to describe the criteria against which the application will be assessed particularly with regard to visual amenity.

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 considered to comply with relevant Development Plan policies in that it would have no material adverse effect on the visual amenities or character of the locality.

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 application falls within the Littlehampton Vision (2004) study area, within which the Green & Seafront are defined as 'Areas of Opportunity' with development potential. An important element of this is to increase the environmental attractiveness to maximise the area as a visitor destination. Policies within the Local Plan seek to secure developments that display high quality design.

The bench is proposed along the length of Littlehampton seafront from East Beach Cafe to Harbour Park. The total length of the site is 483m. The bench will sit in front of the existing dwarf wall on its southern side and provide a continuous seating structure. Within this length, the proposed bench will negotiate the following;

- 9 Arun District Council bins
- 11 lamp stands
- 4 flag poles
- 9 openings to the beach green and car parks
- 6 set back areas (approximately 5.5m in width) with existing benches

The bench will roll behind the existing bins and go around the front of the existing lamp stands. In the areas of existing openings, the bench will be dropped to go into the pedestrian surface in a variety of designs.

The proposed bench will incorporate the following elements

- 10 recesses in the structure to allow for wheelchair/pushchair bays alongside other users
- Back rests to areas of the bench in areas where the dwarf wall is recessed
- Arm rests at 6-10m intervals

The bench is made up of thousands of enamelled stainless steel bars. This material has been selected to provide a bright long lasting finish (without fading) and will be corrosion resistant. In accordance with relevant British Standards the bars should not chip, would be resistant to vandalism and require minimal maintenance. The fixing brackets will be pre-fabricated (off-site). Extensive pre-application consultation has taken place with the Council Engineers and Cleansing Operation in respect of design quality and continued maintenance and no objections have been made on this basis to the application.

Around 2,000 additional bars will be manufactured to allow for future maintenance and replacements, if required. It has been confirmed that the bench has been designed with a minimum life expectancy of 20 years. The designers anticipate a much longer life expectancy and it is also expected that local manufacturers will be used for construction of the structure.

The two existing public shelters are proposed to be replaced by open shelters with the bench twisting and looping within. The structures will be 13.7m in width x 4.4m in depth x 3.6m in height and are sited at a slight angle to provide shelter from the prevailing south west winds and the gaps between the bars of the bench in the shelters are reduced to not only prevent climbing but also provide secondary wind breaks in the shelters.

The shelters will be constructed of stainless steel and be clad in metal panels. It is proposed that the finish would be a brass/bronze colour. The floor areas of the structures will be soft (as in playground construction) and the Council's Parks and Green Spaces Officer has confirmed that this material performs very well in terms of wearing and colour retention. A trim will be embedded into the promenade to delineate the looped shape.

The bench will substantially increase the provision of seating on the promenade and will actually increase areas of seating with back supports.

There can be no doubt that the proposals will radically alter the visual appearance of the promenade. However, this area of the town has remained practically unaltered for approximately 50 years and the existing shelters, while providing good shelter, are often used for anti-social activity. As part of the overall 'vision' for Littlehampton, the proposals would accord with the aspiration of improving environmental quality, providing further visitor facilities and potentially a visitor attraction.

Access between the car parks and the Green and the seafront will be maintained and the proposed bench provides areas to facilitate wheelchair users whilst providing an interesting physical feature to the seafront.

It is therefore recommended that the application be approved subject to the following conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE CONDITIONALLY

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 Prior to the commencement of development, full details of coloured samples of surface material and surface trim around the shelters to be submitted to, and agreed in writing by, the local planning authority prior to the commencement of development. The approved coloured materials shall thereafter be used in the construction around the shelters and be permanently maintained in those materials.

REASON: In the interest of the visual amenities of the area and in accordance with policy GEN7 of the Arun Local Plan.

- 3 Prior to the commencement of development, details of the colour of the metal panels to clad the shelters shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority prior to the commencement of development. The approved coloured materials shall thereafter be used in the construction of the shelters and be permanently maintained in those materials.

REASON: In the interest of the visual amenities of the area and in accordance with policy GEN7 of the Arun Local Plan.

- 4 This permission relates to the following approved plans.

113_00_000 B
113_00_011 B
113_00_012 B
113_00_013 B
113_00_014 B
113_00_111 B
113_00_112 B
113_00_113 B
113_00_114 B

113_01_001 B
113_01_101 B
113_01_110 B
113_01_111 B
113_01_112 B
113_01_113 B
113_01_114 B
113_01_115 B

113_02_101 B
113_03_001 B
113_03_002 B
113_03_101 B
113_03_102 B

113_04_100 B
113_04_101 B
113_04_102 B
113_04_110 B

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of amenity and the environment in accordance with policy GEN7 of the Arun District Local Plan.

5 INFORMATIVE: Summary of Reasons for Grant Article 22(1) General Development Procedure Order 1995

SUMMARY

This planning permission is granted because it complies with the policies listed below in that the development would not cause any material adverse effect on visual amenity on the surrounding area and its character and there are no material considerations to indicate otherwise.

RELEVANT POLICIES

LOCAL PLAN: GEN7, GEN13

NATIONAL POLICIES: PPS1, GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE TO TOURISM

This is only a summary of reasons for granting to comply with Article 22 and full reasons appear in the Officer report.