

Arun District Council, Civic Centre, Maltravers Rd, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5LF
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From: Rod Brown [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 April 2021 19:03
To: Anita Gardner <Anita.Gardner@arun.gov.uk>
Subject: LU/50/21/PL : Proposal to place 20 Beach Huts at Sea Road Littlehampton.

Dear Mrs Gardner,

I am writing to place an objection against the proposal by Arun District Council to place 20 additional beach huts south of the promenade to the East of the East beach Cafe at Norfolk Road and Sea Road, Littlehampton.

I have been a resident of the East Beach / Norfolk Road area for over 45 years, and first visited the town almost 60 years ago. I tend to walk on the Seafront most days, and for about 25 of the years I have lived here I have taken a dog along past the row of beach huts four or five times a week, both on the prom or along the strand. I know the huts well, from the large Glass-fibre shells prior to 1987, through the timber planked cabins that replaced them, to the current plastic huts. And I know how much (or actually, how little) the huts are actively used.

There are two characteristics of this part of Littlehampton that make it special to both Residents and Visitors, and a source of delight over and over again, which are the Sea, Sky and Beachscape from the Promenade; and the first glimpse and emerging view of the sea on the approach along Norfolk Road, a view that is iconic to residents returning home after a days work, to families walking down to the beach, and to the visitors arriving in town for the first time and on every return visit.

I have no doubt whatever that the proposed increase in the number and density of beach huts eastwards from the East Beach Cafe will have a highly destructive effect on both these characteristics, and in practice the damage will be irreversible for several generations to come, considering that there have been beach huts along Sea Road from a point further East for around a century, and the number and extent has increased over that time.

Objections to this application already received show that users of the promenade, whether local or from outside the town, value the amenity of the Seascape, and find the existing obstructions (which of course have increased since 1987) already get in the way of their enjoyment of what should be a timeless outlook, available to all. They totally deplore the proposal to reduce the views even more.

But the proposed additional group of ten huts at the west end of the row is an even bigger act of destruction, because it will utterly ruin the only view of the sea, with horizon and sky meeting, in the entire town from Street Level. It is beyond belief that the unique value of this place isn't recognised by either Littlehampton Town Council comments or in the Planning Officer's Report that were on the Arun DC Website until 21st April.

The objection is not to huts in principle at all, but is to the Loss of Amenity it will cause to a great section of the Community. That is to the hundreds of people who walk the prom every day of the year, and to similar numbers who drive along Sea Road and down Norfolk Road.

The huts will be in position and blocking and degrading views all day, all round the year. Every year the proposal will diminish the enjoyment of tens of thousand of people who don't possess beach huts and reduce the known positive effect on mood and mental health that comes from clear views of the Seascape and open Sky. There will be no Public Benefit, just a limited amount of private pleasure.

This proposal clearly does not accord with the intentions of Planning Policy SCP-1 because it would have a significant adverse impact upon the seascapes with no mitigation or Public Benefit.

The proposal trades the considerable value attributed to the Seascape by the large number of people who try to get benefit every day against a tiny amount of use by the additional beach hut users, who for the most part only open up and use the huts a few times a year.

I note that the only justification provided is that there is a long waiting list for huts that might take 20 years to satisfy (although in the that time another 200 names could have joined the list!).

The following may not be a normal Planning Consideration, but it is a Local Authority matter, and it bears directly on the motivation and attempted justification of the proposal.

Although I haven't investigated where this proposal originated, it seems likely it comes from the Environment and Leisure Group, as Beach Huts are essentially Leisure facilities. It also seems likely that the proposal for more huts is driven both by demand and a wish to raise revenue by tapping into this demand.

It is appreciated that Local Authorities have taken some very heavy hits to their finances, and need to find ways to raise more income. But building more huts is not the only way to increase income from the Beach Huts, nor may it be the most efficient as new huts come with both new capital cost and additional maintenance costs.

I understand that the huts are only rented on 12-month leases, and that the cost is around £1000 per unit per year, or a little less than £20 a week, so maybe it could be thought of as about £6 for a weekend's use. That is far below what a family would expect to pay to have the use of a hut for two days. It is also clear that the majority of the huts have extremely light use, and judging from conversations I've had with Hut tenants, many are paying the equivalent of several hundred pounds for each day they use their huts. Just a few people use their huts frequently, and it's great to see the doors open and the furniture and windbreaks up, and the families getting lots of benefit.

But in the past a proportion of the huts were leased on a short-term basis, by the week or possibly by the day. I have a feeling that this was abandoned because of the amount of bother it caused to the Foreshore Office, compared with the ease of letting all the huts for entire years.

But even on the warmest, balmiest, best days of the summer it is practically unknown for more than 1 in 3 huts to be in use. The amount of time when the facility is spectacularly underused or not used at all clearly indicates there is enormous potential capacity to satisfy the unfulfilled demand. For almost the entire year, most of the huts are no more than expensive Garden Sheds where beach furniture is stored.

As so many of the huts get such light use, and as that use does not happen on the same days for all the light-use huts, it's highly likely that some form of time-sharing and some scheme to lease huts at a suitable rate on a daily and weekly basis would result in both a higher occupancy and a greater overall income - which would satisfy both objectives - AND not cause the unacceptable Loss of Amenity that would be suffered by the General Public using the beach, promenade and adjoining roads.

What's needed is some Lateral Thinking, not Lateral Infill that obliterates the Seascape.

Yours Truly,
Rodney Brown
4 Norfolk Place
Littlehampton
BN17 5PD