



## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**The proposal seeks to carry out platform repairs and an extension for the provision of six new beach huts.**

**This item has come before members on the grounds that the applicant is East Suffolk Council.**

**Despite the policy primarily directing beach huts to other locations along Felixstowe sea front, the proposal does not result in increased harm to visual amenity and would not compromise existing sea defences or adversely effect the coastal environment. The additional huts will allow for the continued use of the existing huts through the financial ability to maintain an existing group of huts. Overall, the proposal will provide further huts that positively contribute to the seaside appeal of Felixstowe and the subsequent tourism offer of the area.**

**The application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.**

## **2 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The site is located at Pier South, Sea Road, Felixstowe. Sited approximately 150 metres south of The Pier, it comprises the existing raised beach platform, contained by the retaining walls abutting the promenade.
- 2.2 At this particular location, the promenade is 7.5 meters wide, with the existing raised platform on the beach between 7m and 7.5m wide. The platform has concrete retaining walls and is filled with beach gravel and sand, located between groynes numbered A58 and A61 - two groynes (A59 and A60) extend off the retaining wall.
- 2.3 The existing platform accommodates 16 standard sized beach huts. The huts are positioned equally spaced along the platform between the beginning of April and the end of September each year. They are repositioned by the owners over the winter months to the promenade, against the sea wall, to reduce damage winter months.
- 2.4 The area of proposed engineering works and summer season beach hut locations are adjacent to but outside of the Felixstowe South Conservation Area. The winter storage area, on the promenade, is within the Conservation Area. The site is owned and managed by East Suffolk Council and it is adjacent to the Council owned car park and events space.

## **3 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The application seeks to undertake engineering works to the existing beach platform retaining wall, including repairs to the existing wall subsequent extension at both the northern and southern ends to lengthen the platform along the promenade.
- 3.2 An additional 10.5 metres would be added to its northern end and six metres at its southern end. The new concrete retaining wall would match the existing wall and would remain flush with the level of the promenade and front wall. The wall would be approximately one metre above the level of the beach, however, this would vary depending on the level of beach material and the location between groynes. The wall would be 1.5m deep overall and 300mm wide.

- 3.3 This expansion and repair work is proposed to enable the platform to accommodate six additional beach huts, with a spacing of 600mm between huts and a larger central gap of 1.8m aligned with the path leading to the car park. The huts would be of a standard size to match those existing, with doors facing onto the beach. The dimensions would be a maximum of 2.4m high, 3.5m deep and 2.4m wide. They would be constructed in painted timber with felt roofing. An area of at least 2.5m wide would be provided in front of the huts on the platform. Additional space is available of the promenade to accommodate the additional six huts in the winter time without restricting the width of access along the promenade and maintaining space around the existing sea front benches.

#### **4 CONSULTATIONS/COMMENTS**

##### **4.1 Felixstowe Town Council:**

*“Consistent with its recommendation on 7 February 2018 in relation to DC/18/0272/FUL, Committee recommended REFUSAL on the grounds that it is clearly contrary to FPP20 which states that:*

*“The provision of beach huts will be carefully monitored and limited to those which currently exist. Any increased provision will be directed towards other parts of the sea front (namely Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club to Cobbolds Point, Policy FPP18 as appropriate). Committee believes that a row of beach huts of this length and spacing on the beach in front of the promenade would result in a loss of tourism amenity, also an aim of FPP20, as large rows of closely spaced huts can be seen as intrusive and to detract from the seaside experience, in particular loss of sea views from the promenade”.*

*Members were also aware of the views of the Coast Protection team that the existing groynes in this area have a limited remaining life span of probably 10-15 years, with a consequent need for a further major Coastal Defence scheme on the frontage, potentially incompatible with the type of concrete wall structure proposed. Therefore, the creation of further beach hut sites at this location may only be sustainable in the short-term.”*

##### **4.2 Suffolk County Council Highways Authority: No objection**

##### **4.3 Suffolk County Council Lead Local Flooding Authority : No comments**

##### **4.4 Suffolk County Council Public Rights of Way : No response**

##### **4.5 Environment Agency : No objection**

##### **4.6 Head of Economic Development : No response**

##### **4.7 Third Party Representations : Four letters of objection have been received raising the following matters:**

- Not in accordance with Policy FPP20;
- Overcrowding;
- Restricts access between beach huts;
- Beach huts vary in size – not all standard as stated;
- Renting the huts will lead to people being less inclined to maintain them;
- Inconvenience caused during construction and relocation of huts on/off platform;

- Financial cost and benefit;
- Amenity and enjoyment affected; and
- Impact on Conservation Area.

## 5 PUBLICITY

5.1 The application has been subject of the following advertisement in the press:

Category	Publication date	Expiry	Publication
May affect archaeological site Conservation area	25.01.2018	14.02.2018	East Anglian Daily Times

## 6 SITE NOTICES

6.1 The following site notice(s) have been displayed at the site:

Site notice type	Reason	Date posted	Expiry date
General site notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May affect archaeological site</li> <li>• Conservation area</li> </ul>	14.05.2019	05.06.2019
General site notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May affect archaeological site</li> <li>• Conservation area</li> </ul>	26.01.2018	15.02.2018

## 7 PLANNING POLICY

7.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2019).

7.2 East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (adopted July 2013) ("The Core Strategy") policies:

SP1 Sustainable development  
 SP1A Presumption in favour of sustainable development;  
 SP8 Tourism;  
 SP19 Settlement policy;  
 SP21 Felixstowe with Walton and Trimley Villages;  
 DM23 Residential amenity.

7.3 Felixstowe Peninsula Area Action Plan Development Plan Document (January 2017) policies:

FPP2 Physical limits boundaries; and  
 FPP20 Spa Pavilion to Martello Park.

7.4 Felixstowe South Conservation Area Appraisal (June 2009).

## 8 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### Principle of Development

- 8.1 The site is located within the physical limits boundary of Felixstowe, classified as a major centre within the district. Accordingly, in principle proposals for development within the defined physical limits boundary will be acceptable, subject to other relevant policies in the Felixstowe Peninsula Area Action Plan Development Plan Document (2017) and the Core Strategy.
- 8.2 The resort of Felixstowe, located on the coast and adjacent to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), is a priority for new tourist activity. Where improving the tourism potential is seen as an important element in achieving the regeneration of the town and providing continued support in principle to the tourist industry remains a priority within the local plan. However, it is recognised that such support needs to be tailored to ensure that any expansion does not materially harm, in particular, the natural, historic and built environment assets that are the main attractions for visitors to the area and which are so important to the quality of life of local residents.
- 8.3 Local planning policy highlights the role that beach huts play in providing an essential contribution to the Felixstowe tourist industry. However, these are limited by policy to certain areas of the sea front, concentrated between Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club House to Cobbolds Point. This approach of concentrating beach huts in specific areas enables the number of beach huts in Felixstowe to be managed in a planned manner and avoid conflict with other sea front activities and beach huts should be sited so as not to cause unnecessary blockages to the promenade. With regard to the subject site location, the area between Spa Pavilion to Martello Park, beach huts will be carefully monitored and limited to those that currently exist and any increased provision will be directed towards other parts of the sea front (namely Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club to Cobbolds Point Policy FPP18) as appropriate.
- 8.4 In principle, the provision of six new beach huts within the subject site location goes against Policy FPP20 of the Felixstowe Peninsula Area Action Plan Development Plan Document (2017). However, the provision of six additional beach huts will have less than minor adverse effects on visual amenity, considering they are well maintained. Furthermore, although access to the beach huts will be limited, there is the ability for the huts to be managed to ensure that huts are allocated based on individual requirements. The proposal can be relocated along the promenade, with access retained during winter months, as shown in the submitted plans. Moreover, the proposal does not restrict access or adversely affect the setting of the adjacent conservation area or the appearance of the seafront. The additional beach huts will be of the same scale to those already on the site and would not block the promenade or interfere with the seaside views of others.
- 8.5 As supported by Felixstowe South Conservation Area Appraisal (June 2009), beach huts are a very important to retain as a feature and for local use. In this area, beach huts are all characteristic and make a good group contribution – timber structures and cladding, tin or felt roofs – small scale, unpretentious and seasidey, which should be retained. With this in mind, the additional huts would further preserve this important and characteristic seafront attraction and feature.

## Coastal Management

- 8.6 The existing platform wall is of relatively modest design for a structure that is at times exposed to significant wave attack, and will remain at risk of storm damage and undermining from wave action during winter months. At each pre-season it will be necessary to top up the space contained within the walls with locally excavated beach material. Despite it being noted in supporting documents that the beach in this area is self sustaining, East Suffolk Council is of the view that the health of the beach in this location is critically dependent upon ongoing investment in management of the existing groyne field that stabilises the beach and currently minimises the potentially damaging effect of storms and chronic erosion.
- 8.7 The Council has a capital programme item to replace the existing groyne field within 10 – 15 years in anticipation that by this date it will no longer be possible to sustain the ageing timber and concrete groynes. At this time the groynes will be removed and replaced probably with rock groynes of similar design to those over much of the South Felixstowe frontage. When this occurs, based upon experience of the performance of other local beaches with rock groynes, the beach levels between the groynes will be more variable than present and it will not be possible to retain a beach hut platform of the style currently in use at this site.
- 8.8 It is therefore recognised that alternative beach hut placement arrangements will probably be required in time. Furthermore, if works are required to repair and/or renew existing groynes or the seawall that adjoin the platform to deliver agreed shoreline management policy (including the provision of access for construction equipment), parts of the platform may need to be removed. The presence of the existing beach hut platform wall is not ideal from a coastal management perspective, however, the potential adverse effects are considered small and manageable.
- 8.9 Overall, the proposed extension of the platform wall will not cause significant adverse effect to the coastal environment. However, the life of the extended platform, and the linked ability to position beach huts to seaward of the seawall, is likely to be limited by the residual life of the existing groyne field which is estimated at 10 – 15 years. A condition is to be applied in any approval to ensure that the local authority can determine the source of 'local' beach material to fill / refill the platform on every occasion that filling is required.
- 8.10 The Council's Coastal Management Team do not object to the application.

## **9 Conclusion**

- 9.1 Despite the policy primarily directing beach huts to other locations along Felixstowe sea front, the proposal does not result in increased harm to visual amenity and would not compromise existing sea defences or adversely effect the coastal environment. The additional huts will allow for the continued use of the existing huts through the financial ability to maintain an existing group of huts. Overall, the proposal will provide further huts that positively contribute to the seaside appeal of Felixstowe and the subsequent tourism offer of the area.

## **10 RECOMMENDATION**

### **10.1 Approve subject to controlling conditions including the following:**

1. The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: This condition is imposed in accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) (as amended).

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out other than in complete accordance with the following drawings:

- Proposed winter beach hut locations - SR 353-1004 (Received on 29 April 2019);
- Proposed plan and south east elevation - SR 353-1002-B (Received on 20 February 2019); and
- North east and south west elevations - SR 353-1003-B (Received on 20 February 2019).

Reason: For avoidance of doubt as to what has been considered and approved.

3. No development shall commence until there has been a management plan for maintenance of the beach huts, the associated beach maintenance, submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The maintenance plan should include, long term design objectives, management responsibilities and a scheme of maintenance for the promenade and beach areas for a period of 20 years. The schedule should include details of the arrangements for its implementation. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved management plan.

Reason: To ensure the areas occupied by the beach huts are properly maintained in the interest of amenity and coastal management.

4. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced a scheme indicating the provision to be made for disabled people to gain access to respective beach hut(s) shall have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The agreed scheme shall be implemented before the development hereby permitted is brought into use.

Reason: To ensure the design and layout of the development provides and maintains safe and convenient access for people with disabilities.

5. The source of 'local' beach material to fill / refill the platform is to be agreed with the Coastal Management team on every occasion that filling is required.

Reasons: In order that the local planning authority may retain control over this development/site in the interests of amenity and the protection of the coastal environment.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION** Application File Reference DC/18/0272/FUL