



Committee Report

Planning Committee South – 24 November 2020

Application no DC/20/2441/FUL

Location

The Spa Beach
The Promenade
Felixstowe
Suffolk

Expiry date 17 September 2020

Application type Full Application

Applicant Ms Laura Hack

Parish Felixstowe

Proposal Trial for demountable concrete blocks to create a sand platform between groyne 105 and 106 in front of the Spa Pavilion, Felixstowe

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1. Summary

- 1.1. The application proposes to undertake an engineering trial using two of the existing bays that beach huts at the Spa area are usually placed on. Following discussion and detailed feedback from the Coastal Management team, the two bays most appropriate for the trial are Bay C and Bay D.
- 1.2. As the applicant and landowner is East Suffolk Council, the proposal is to be determined at Planning Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.
- 1.3. Opportunities to retain the siting of beach huts within this location, with access to the beach and enhancing the use of the Promenade is in line with the overall strategy for Felixstowe. The proposal and its part in alleviating coastal erosion has been and will continue to be carefully overseen through partnership working, mitigation and management with the Coastal Management Team.

- 1.4. The proposed works applied for under this application are temporary in nature and further planning permission would be sought should the trialled solution be deemed appropriate.
- 1.5. The proposal does not result in an increase in beach hut provision and there will be no increased harm to visual amenity.
- 1.6. The application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

2. Site description

- 2.1. The site comprises an area of beach immediately south of Felixstowe Promenade measuring approximately 40 square metres, located directly south of the Spa Pavilion and extending 180 metres westward.
- 2.2. A number of beach huts are currently sited along the adjoining stretch of Promenade. These huts are in private ownership and the owners pay an annual licence fee to the Council to site them. Some hut sites are fixed either on hard-standing or sand and others are on the beach itself. Huts are moved between the beach and the Promenade at the start and end of the season (where beach levels allow).

3. Proposal

- 3.1. The application proposes to undertake an engineering trial using two of the existing bays that beach huts at the Spa area are usually placed on. Following discussion and detailed feedback from the Coastal Management team, the two bays most appropriate for the trial are Bay C and Bay D. The works are proposed to take place so that the temporary platforms remain in place for the 2021 summer season.

Bay C

- 3.2. Bay C will be built up with sand to create a platform area to a height and depth that the huts are traditionally placed on in April. This will act as the baseline site to determine the natural migratory nature of the sand and shingle within the bays.

Bay D

- 3.3. Bay D will be subject to an experimental design - building up a concrete retaining wall behind which sand will be infilled and levelled. The wall will be made of interlocking concrete demountable blocks, approximately 2000 mm square by 1000 mm deep built two blocks high with staggered centres. This size of block has been chosen as they are of similar mass to the stones used as part of the sea defences. It is envisaged that the blocks will have a slope built in, to offer greater wave refraction. The lower row of blocks will have weep holes cut into them, to avoid hydro static pressure getting behind the blocks and causing scouring of the sand.
- 3.4. Beach huts (2.1 m x 2.1m in size) will be located adjacent to the Promenade, set back from the blocks by two metres and will be positioned approximately 0.9 metres apart, and set back two metres from the blocks by an area of sand/gravel. Timber steps will be installed from the blocks providing access to the beach.

- 3.5. The blocks are a temporary structure that can be easily removed and stored, should works need to take place to the wall; and can be rebuilt or even removed and stored over the winter period if they are moved by the action of the waves. They will be tailor-made for the purpose of the trial and will have a hook and eyes built into each for ease of assembly/disassembly by way of crane, sited in a location off of the promenade to avoid undue damage to the promenade surface.
- 3.6. Should the trial be successful, a further planning application will be made to reinstate each of the existing bays used for beach huts at the Spa, using this method, with a view that huts will return to the retained sand platforms for the 2022 season.
- 3.7. Relocating beach huts onto either sand platform will not form part of the trial.

4. Consultations/comments

- 4.1. No third party comments have been received.

Consultees

Parish/Town Council

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Felixstowe Town Council	28 July 2020	6 August 2020
Committee recommended APPROVAL but ask whether consideration could be given to improving access for disabled people and families.		

Statutory consultees

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk County Archaeological Unit	N/A	7 August 2020
Summary of comments: No objection.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Marine Maritime Organisation	19 October 2020	N/A
Summary of comments: Response referenced guidance regarding marine licences - detail noted as an informative.		

Non statutory consultees

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Head of Coastal Management	28 July 2020	12 August 2020
Summary of comments: No objection [internal consultee - comments included within reporting].		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Suffolk Wildlife Trust	28 July 2020	No response
Summary of comments: No response received.		

Consultee	Date consulted	Date reply received
Ecology (Internal)	28 July 2020	18 August 2020
Summary of comments: No objection subject to condition(s) [internal consultee - comments included within reporting].		

Publicity

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

Category	Published	Expiry	Publication
Conservation Area	7 August 2020	28 August 2020	East Anglian Daily Times

Site notices

General Site Notice	Reason for site notice: Conservation Area
	Date posted:
	Expiry date:

5. Planning policy

- 5.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that *“where in making any determination under the planning Acts, if regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”*.
- 5.2. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)
- 5.3. National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
- 5.4. The East Suffolk Council – Suffolk Coastal Local Plan was adopted on 23 September 2020 and the following policies are considered relevant:

- Policy SCLP9.3 – Coastal Change Management Area (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- Policy SCLP10.1 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- Policy SCLP11.1 – Design Quality (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- Policy SCLP12.2 - Strategy for Felixstowe (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)
- Policy SCLP12.14 - Spa Pavilion to Manor End (Suffolk Coastal Local Plan, Adopted September 2020)

6. Planning considerations

Principle of development

- 6.1. 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 where 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.
- 6.2. Policy SCLP12.14 (Spa Pavilion to Manor End) of the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal Local Plan (2020), notes that additional beach huts in this area will be limited to locations that complement the existing resort uses and do not fill the important gaps between huts.
- 6.3. As this proposal does not include the provision of additional beach huts but the means of ensuring there is a suitably engineered solution to the issue of the migratory nature of the sand and shingle within the bays for the beach huts to stand, the matter of beach hut provision does not form a material consideration in this instance. Beach huts provide an essential contribution to the Felixstowe tourist industry, providing a unique seaside experience enjoyed in various locations on the east coast.
- 6.4. Investigating proposed engineered solutions that allow for the retention of beach huts that currently sit within this stretch of the Felixstowe coastline, whilst remedying unnecessary blockages to the promenade, would support the aims of maintaining the tourism industry.
- 6.5. The purpose of the trial fundamentally supports the overall strategy for the town as a thriving coastal resort and major centre (Policy SCLP12.2) and is, therefore, supported in principle.

Coastal Management

- 6.6. The application has been reviewed by the Coastal Management Coastal Partnership East (CPE) team, who have commented in detail about the proposal. They have no objection to the trial and will support the applicant with monitoring of the performance of the trial.
- 6.7. The CPE team has advised that they intend to continue to provide information and advice to support the applicant in the design of the works, whilst supporting the applicant in consultation with relevant stakeholders and with the preparation of applications for and consents that are required to obtain beach material from local shorelines.
- 6.8. The project will require regular beach management works involving the import of beach material from local donor sites or from elsewhere. The ongoing availability of the required volume and grading of beach material is a significant uncertainty. The applicant has advised that they are aware of this significant risk.
- 6.9. If the trial proceeds the CPE team are to be involved in developing the monitoring plan and be consulted as part of the post-trial review. A proposed monitoring plan is required for both the demountable wall installation and the sand platform, together with confirmation as to what impacts or outcomes would constitute a pass and lead to a proposal for works for permanent beach hut placement. This monitoring plan should include means to collect data including beach profile data at both fill and donor sites, dip measurements taken from top of block to beach at fixed points at four-week intervals and after storms or persistent winds, and photographs from agreed fixed points.
- 6.10. The proposal is for works on the beach where they would be the subject of coastal forces and could affect coastal processes, the full effects of which are to be identified through this works as a means of investigating the potential impacts of a more permanent platform solution. Therefore, in accordance with the approach within Local Plan Policy SCLP9.3 (Coastal Change Management Area), paragraphs 166 to 169 of the NPPF and paragraph 069 of the NPPG, it would be appropriate to condition the length of time these temporary platform works are in place.

Ecology

- 6.11. East Suffolk Council Ecologist has advised that whilst there is no objection to the principle of the proposal, there appears to be limited information available in the application relating to where material to backfill the site will be sourced from.
- 6.12. Comments raised by the CPE notes the potentially taking of material from two sites, one in central Felixstowe and one in north Felixstowe. Whilst the central Felixstowe site is in a heavily used part of the beach and is, therefore, of limited biodiversity value, the northern Felixstowe area is partly designated as the Felixstowe Ferry County Wildlife Site (CWS). The CWS designation includes recognition of the important vegetated shingle and dune habitats in this area.
- 6.13. As referenced in the CPE comments, any material extraction from this area must not damage its biodiversity value. Further clarification is therefore required sought on the exact areas where material will be sourced from. If any areas of biodiversity value are chosen it must be demonstrated that extraction will not result in an adverse impact, for

example by extracting from within the area exposed to tidal action. Extraction in such areas should be done under a Method Statement, the contents and implementation of which should be secured by planning condition.

Amenity and visual impact

- 6.14. The proposed works to Bay C and Bay D will result in a variation of the beachscape, however, given the temporary nature of the trail and the undifferentiated materials proposed any visual impacts are considered negligible. Therefore, the scheme accords with Local Plan Policy SCLP11.1 (Design Quality).

Accessibility

- 6.15. As raised by Felixstowe Town Council, consideration should be given to improving access for disabled people and families. The applicants are to be advised that means of accessibility for all users is to be integrated within any further design iterations should the solution be made permanent.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. The proposal for demountable concrete blocks to create a sand platform (between groyne 105 and 106 in front of the Spa Pavilion) is an engineered solution to coastal erosion that, if deemed suitable, will allow the beach huts that currently sit within this stretch of the seafront to be re-sited from the Promenade on a more permanent basis.
- 7.2. Opportunities to retain the siting of beach huts within this location, with access to the beach and enhancing the use of the Promenade is in line with the overall strategy for Felixstowe.
- 7.3. The proposal and its part in alleviating coastal erosion has been and will continue to be carefully overseen through partnership working, mitigation and management with the Coastal Management team.
- 7.4. The proposed works applied for under this application are temporary in nature and further planning permission would be sought should the trialled solution be deemed appropriate.
- 7.5. The proposal does not result in an increase in beach hut provision and there will be no increased harm to visual amenity.
- 7.6. The scheme for temporary works as part of this trial is therefore in accordance with planning policy and relevant material planning considerations. It is therefore acceptable and recommended for approval subject to conditions.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1. Recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than the expiration of 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 be for a maximum period of one year from the date that works commence on site, after which time the structure shall be removed to the satisfaction of the local planning authority and the land reinstated to its former condition.

Reason: Having regard to the non-permanent nature of the structure, and that it is being granted as a trial to investigate the suitability of the platform and its impacts upon coastal processes.

3. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out other than in complete accordance with the following drawings received on 02 July 2020:

- Site location plan;
- Location plan (drawing number: 669225-S2-Rev. P08); and
- Alternative platform solution (drawing number: 669225-S2-Rev. P05).

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

4. The materials and finishes shall be as indicated within the submitted application and thereafter retained as such, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development in the interests of visual amenity.

5. No development shall commence until details of the strategy for the beach material extraction have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. This shall specify the location(s) from where material is to be extracted, and include a Ecological Method Statement to ensure that ecological impacts are avoided or adequately mitigated. Thereafter the extraction works shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved strategy.

Reason: To safeguard biodiversity and protected species in accordance with Policy SP14 and Policy DM27 of the East Suffolk Council - Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan - Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (2013) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. No development shall commence until full details of the proposed monitoring plan have been submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority. This monitoring plan should relate to both the demountable wall installation and the sand platform, together with identification what impacts or outcomes would constitute a pass and lead to a proposal for works for permanent beach hut placement. This plan should include means/methods to collect data including beach profile data at both fill and donor sites, dip measurements taken

from top of block to beach at fixed points at four-week intervals and after storms or persistent winds, and photographs from agreed fixed points.

Reason: The hereby permitted scheme is being permitted on a temporary basis to enable investigation of how the coastal processes would be affected by the creation of such a platform. Therefore means to monitor its effectiveness and impacts upon coastal processes need to be identified, so that it can be determined if the scheme is appropriate in terms of longer term coastal change processes, in accordance with Local Plan Policy SCLP9.3 (Coastal Change Management Area), paragraphs 166 to 169 of the NPPF and paragraph 069 of the NPPG.

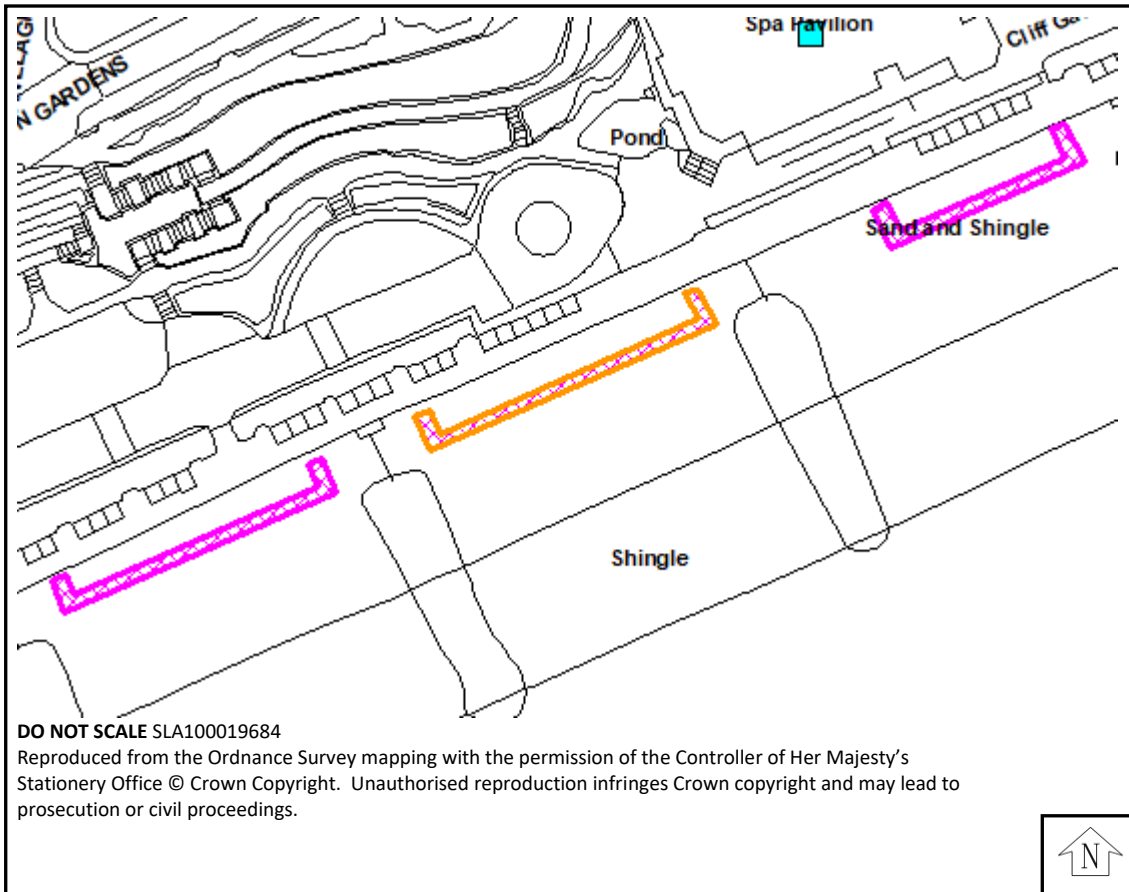
Informatives

1. The local planning authority has assessed the proposal against all material considerations including planning policies and any comments that may have been received. The planning application has been approved in accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) and local plan to promote the delivery of sustainable development and to approach decision taking in a positive way
2. Works activities taking place below the mean high-water mark may require a marine licence in accordance with the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009. Such activities include the construction, alteration or improvement of any works, dredging, or a deposit or removal of a substance or object below the mean high-water springs mark or in any tidal river to the extent of the tidal influence. Applicants are directed to the MMO's online portal to register for an application for marine licence: www.gov.uk/guidance/make-a-marine-licence-application
3. The applicant is hereby advised that, if a further application is submitted for a more permanent platform solution, it should include a monitoring report containing the data collected in accordance with the monitoring plan required under condition 6 during the trial period, an assessment of the results of the collected data and conclusions/recommendations, identified as a result of the data collected during the trial works hereby granted.





Background information

See application reference DC/20/2441/FUL on [Public Access](#)

Map



Key

-  Notified, no comments received
-  Objection
-  Representation
-  Support