

Report to: PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: 25 November 2015

Report from: Assistant Director of Housing and Built Environment

Application Address: Promenade from The Pier to Robertson Street junction, White Rock, Hastings

Proposal: Promenade improvements at White Rock Baths and Hastings Pier including kiosk, beach access, stage and pergola

Application No: HS/FA/15/00620

Recommendation: Grant Full Planning Permission

Ward: CASTLE
File No: FO35220T
Applicant: Hastings Borough Council per NCA Neil Choudhury Architects 170 North Street Brighton East Sussex BN1 1EA

Interest: Hastings Borough Council
Existing Use: Promenade

Policies

Conservation Area: Yes - White Rock
National Planning Policy Framework: Section 12
Hastings Local Plan -
The Hastings Planning Strategy: FA6, EN1, T3
Hastings Local Plan -
Development Management Plan: DM1, DM4, HN1

Public Consultation

Adj. Properties: Yes
Advertisement: Yes - Conservation Area
Letters of Objection: 15
Petitions Received: 0
Letters of Support: 2

Application Status: Not delegated - More than 2 letters of objection received

Summary

This application is for full planning permission to carry out improvement works to the existing promenade between Robertson Street and the Pier. Having balanced the need to preserve the character of the Conservation Area and setting of the listed buildings/memorial with the objectives of the Local Plan and Seafront Strategy, I consider that the proposed works and installation of a new kiosk will provide a welcome addition to the visitor offer in Hastings/St

Leonards. I therefore recommend approval.

The Site and its Location

The application site comprises a stretch of promenade on the south side of the A259 between Robertson Street and the Pier. It covers the area of White Rock above the White Rock Baths and part of the promenade above the Carlisle underground car park.

The site is within White Rocks Conservation Area and is considered to be in the setting of a number of listed buildings including Palace Court and premises on White Rock (A259) and the Grade II Listed Boer War Monument on the promenade.

Details of the Proposal and Other Background Information

The application for full planning permission was submitted in July 2015 and included a number of elements:

Decked timber platform 300mm above the existing promenade
Small stage centred on, and cantilevered over, the existing water feature
Projected beach viewing platform
Kiosk
Seating
8 X 5m high Palm trees
Pergola

Following comments from the Planning Authority and representations from local residents, amendments were submitted. The proposed amendments have omitted the stage and relocated the pergola further west of the listed memorial.

Previous Site History

There is no relevant, specific history to this stretch of promenade. However, the use of the White Rock Baths as a BMX facility (change of use not required) and the ongoing works to the Pier are of particular relevance.

Details of Consultations

There have been 15 letters of objection and 2 letters of support in response to neighbour consultation, a site notice and notice in the local newspaper. Following the submission of amended plans, there have been no further representations.

Reasons for objections include:

- Loss of cycle path
- Access to stage/noise
- Lack of planting
- Additional building unnecessary
- Litter
- Competition for existing businesses and the Pier
- Obstruction on promenade
- Decking/viewing platform
- Kiosk unnecessary
- Palm trees inappropriate

- Antisocial behaviour
- Seating will encourage street drinkers
- Signage

The East Sussex Transport Development Control Officer has no objection to the proposals provided the width of the shared surface is a minimum of 3 metres.

Planning Considerations

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".

Use/Need

Planning Strategy Policy FA6 : Strategic Policy for the Seafront states:

POLICY FA6: Strategic Policy for The Seafront

Along the Seafront, we will:

- a) **encourage the regeneration of key landmark sites along the seafront, from the Stade to West Marina, supporting development that builds on the Seafront's distinctive heritage and attractiveness as a destination for leisure and recreational activity**
- b) **take forward key projects and proposals in the Seafront Strategy to contribute to a co-ordinated plan for the Coastline in Hastings and Bexhill**
- c) **implement the strategic network of cycle routes along the Seafront to connect with the strategic open spaces, nature conservation areas and community facilities in the rest of the town**
- d) **support leisure and residential development to create an appealing destination at West Marina**
- e) **continue to lobby and support the delivery of the Hastings - Bexhill Link Road to relieve congestion along the A259**
- f) **support proposals for bringing the White Rock Baths building back in to use, or intermediate proposals for leisure at this site**
- g) **encourage new visitor accommodation along the Seafront and in Hastings Town Centre**
- h) **support a sustainable future for Hastings Pier**
- i) **encourage the development of all year round tourist attractions to provide permanent jobs**
- j) **install a seafront playground, other smaller play spaces, and a trail of fitness equipment at key locations**

The works proposed for this part of the promenade are designed to improve the public realm, thereby attracting more visitors to this part of the seafront. Paragraph b) of the above policy is of particular relevance as, at present, this part of the promenade is considered to be underutilised, and the Seafront Strategy focuses on improving footfall to this area. The proposed works are designed to attract more visitors to this stretch of promenade whilst complementing the proposed facilities on the Pier and the BMX/skateboarding facility at White Rock Baths.

The proposed kiosk will provide an added destination/stopping point for those visiting the pier

and travelling west along the seafront. Although some objectors have concerns with regard to existing business in the White Rock area, the new kiosk is intended to add to the existing offer and attract new business not to be in direct competition with existing businesses. The initial signage proposed for the kiosk, which was objected to, has been removed from the scheme.

The Seafront Strategy Chapter 7 states:

7.a Rebalancing

Objective:

Ensure activity takes place along the whole seafront, by improvements and investment at White Rock and the St Leonards seafront. The seafront as a whole continues to suffer from the weakness of imbalance, with an over-reliance on the visitor economy in the Rock-a-Nore, Stade and Old Town hotspots.

It is clear from the policies within the Local Plan and objectives in the Seafront Strategy that the proposed works along this stretch of the promenade are needed.

Highways/Access/Cycle Path

This stretch of promenade is currently marked out as a cycle path. The proposals show a shared promenade without demarcation for cyclists and pedestrians. The narrowest stretch of promenade remains at least 5 metres in width, which is 2 metres wider than the minimum width of 3 metres advised by ESCC Highways.

Disabled access to the raised decking has been raised as a concern. However, ramped access is provided at a gradient of 1:15.

Impact on Listed Memorial

The Grade II Listed Boer War Memorial is located within the application site. It was erected in 1903 and is a memorial to the men of Hastings who died in the South African War. It is a 5.4m high, pink granite column resting on an octagonal base on a rectangular base.

The application/improvement scheme has evolved over the last 12 months. Initially, proposals showed the memorial in close proximity to new timber benches and the pergola. It was considered that the memorial should provide an area of quiet reflection and respect, and therefore inappropriate to have such a cluttered area which could have the potential to be unnecessarily noisy and cluttered.

The submitted amended plan incorporates 3 X stone benches in an arch shape, set back from the memorial. The pergola has been minimised from 7 bays to 6 and moved further west so as to avoid a crowded area behind the memorial. I consider this to be an acceptable compromise.

Conservation Area

The site lies largely within the White Rock Conservation Area but also straddles Eversfield Place and Town Centre Conservation Areas. It is also overlooked by listed properties in White Rock, on the north side of the A259 road.

Policy EN1 of the Planning Strategy and Policy HN1 of the Development Management Plan seek to protect the significance and setting of heritage assets. The promenade, engineered

by Sidney Little currently enjoys relatively unimpeded views but although the kiosk will be a new addition, it is not considered that the proposed works will interrupt these views. The north side of the road includes a mix of different architectural styles with an eclectic mix of shopfronts.

Although the proposed timber decking is in contrast to the predominant concrete, it will lead to the newly refurbished pier, which is of a similar good quality timber to that proposed within these works. It must also be said that seaside towns are evolving in order to stay viable and as such, a deviation from historic materials is not to be disregarded, so long as the design and quality of the proposed scheme is an acceptable addition.

Residential Amenity

The stage has now been removed from the scheme and will therefore have no further impact on the residents on the north side of the A259 (White Rock and Marina). Although objections have been raised regarding loss of views, this is not a planning consideration.

Evidence of Community Involvement

In April and May stakeholders were approached and their comments considered.

A Public meeting was held on 11th June 2015 at the White Rock Hotel.

Conclusion

On balance, I consider the proposals to be acceptable and I therefore recommend approval.

These proposals comply with the Development Plan in accordance with Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The Human Rights considerations have been taken into account fully in balancing the planning issues.

Recommendation

Grant Full Planning Permission subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
2. No development shall take place until samples/details of the materials to be used in the construction of all external surfaces hereby permitted have been submitted to/made available on site and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

45_003, 453_100_1, 453_100_2, 453_101, 453_102, 453_103, 453_104, 453_105, 453_106, 453_107, 453_108, 453_109, 453_111, 453_112, 453_113, 453_114, 453_115, 453_116, 453_200_1 Rev A, 453_201 Rev A, 453_202, 453_203 Rev A, 453_204 Rev A, 453_205, 453_206, 453_207 Rev A, 453_209 Rev A, 453_211, 453_212 Rev A, 453_213 Rev A, 453_214 Rev

A, 453_215, 453_216, 453_302, 453_303, 453_304 Rev A, 453_305 Rev A, 453_420

4. No development shall take place until details of any flues/extract/mechanical equipment used in connection with the proposed kiosk hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reasons:

1. This condition is imposed in accordance with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
2. In the interests of the character and amenity of the White Rock Conservation Area.
3. For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
4. In the interests of the character and amenity of the White Rock Conservation Area.

Notes to the Applicant

1. Failure to comply with any condition imposed on this permission may result in enforcement action without further warning.
2. Statement of positive engagement: In dealing with this application Hastings Borough Council has actively sought to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner, in accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Officer to Contact

Ms K Phillips, Telephone 01424 783250

Background Papers

Application No: HS/FA/15/00620 including all letters and documents