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Note: This plan is provided for purposes of site identification only.

Application: DOV/13/01007

- Beach Huts**
- Walmer Seafront**
- The Strand**
- Walmer**

TR37815144



a) **DOV/13/001007 – ERECTION OF 20 BEACH HUTS ON LAND AT THE STRAND WALMER**

Reason for Report – Level of public interest

Report update

Members will recall that this application was deferred at the Meeting of 13th February for further information regarding highways issues, details of the waiting list for beach huts and the proposed management of the portaloo.

As noted below, KCC Highways has now confirmed that there is no highway objection given the parking controls and on street parking available. Whilst it is acknowledged that there may be some increase in on street parking, officers remain of the view that this is unlikely to be significant in the context of overall parking along the seafront.

Further information on the waiting lists for beach huts reveal that the outstanding list for the Kingsdown area currently stands at 88 with 78 for the St. Margaret's area. In the case of Kingsdown, some persons have been on the list since the mid 1990s and 70% of persons are from the local area.

The portaloo has now been omitted from the proposal and the plans amended accordingly.

In view of the above, officers are still of the view that given the demand for beach huts and the difficulties of finding suitable sites, the proposal would be in keeping with the character of the immediate area and would address a local demand. Whilst there may be some increased demand for on street parking, that also needs to be balanced against the issues above and the likely wider advantages to local traders. Accordingly officers remain of the view that the proposal is supportable in planning terms.

b) **Summary of Recommendation**

Planning Permission be granted

c) **Planning Policy and Guidance**

Core Strategy

- Key objective to maintain District's bio diversity.
- DM25 – Proposal for loss of open space not permitted unless small scale development and ancillary to enjoyment of open space. Site should have no overriding visual amenity interest, environmental role, cultural importance or nature conservation value.
- CP7 – Protect and enhance integrity of Green Infrastructure Network

Dover District Local Plan (Saved Policies)

- OS7 – Proposals for outdoor recreational facilities will be permitted if well related to urban edge of Deal, provide opportunity to access facility by public transport and would not cause harm to residential amenity through noise or illumination.

National Planning Policy Framework

- Conserve Heritage Assets – Reflects statutory guidance to preserving or enhancing character or appearance of Conservation Area.

d) **Relevant Planning History**

No relevant planning history.

e) **Consultee and Third Party Responses**

Kent County Council – Highways – No objections. Acknowledges that provision may generate some additional demand but unlikely to be significant with both the A258 and the Beach subject to parking controls with on street parking available.

Kent County Council Public Rights of Way – No objections

Natural England – No objections but points out that regard should be had to any local designations

Environmental Protection – No objections

Environment Agency – No objections but notes that area prone to damage from sea conditions. Consideration should be given to anchoring structures to ground.

Ecological Officer – Site Inspection reveals no ecological interest nor on adjoining Beach area side of site. Ecological survey not required and no ecological harm identified.

Kent Wildlife Trust. – Notes that development is within boundaries of Kingsdown and Walmer Beach Local Wildlife Site. Rare species have been found elsewhere on the Wildlife site. Beach huts would intensify activity and lead to disturbance of plant species. Will also reduce area of open space. Contrary to objectives of Core Strategy to promote bio diversity and also polices CP7 and DM25. Considers ecological survey required. Following response from ecological officer, maintains that survey should be carried out in May/June or July.

Public Representations - 5 public representations object on following grounds:

- Too many huts proposed and out of character with area.
- Would lead to additional parking problems.
- Would impact upon parking for sailing club
- Vulnerable to weather and anti social behaviour
- Portaloo not acceptable
- Compounds should be kept for boat club
- Waste of public money as public unlikely to want beach huts

Walmer Parish Council – Objects on grounds of insufficient information on guidelines for beach hut use; maintenance of portaloo; increase in on street parking a concern; beach huts would appear cramped; would affect expansion for sailing club.

One letter in support – Need for more beaches and good way of bringing more trade into the town

f) **1. The Site and the Proposal**

1.1 The site comprises two former boat compounds located immediately to the north of Down Sailing Club and to the south of some fishermen's huts. The compounds are enclosed by low picket fences on three sides and are currently underused for boat storage purposes. They are surfaced in pebbles and the eastern side of the compounds extends into the main beach area. The promenade adjoins the site to the west. The fishermen's huts are white painted with black felt roofs and are arranged in a random fashion with various items of fishing equipment and winches amongst them.

1.2 The site is included within the Conservation Area and at the very northern end of the Kingsdown and Walmer Beach Local Wildlife site which stretches for some distance along the beach to the south.

1.3 The proposal is to erect 20 beach huts on the site with 10 in each compound area. They will be white painted with black bitumen roofs to match the existing huts, and arranged in random order to maintain the character of those existing huts. A portaloo is shown at the rear of the site although no details are provided at this stage. The applicant points out that the boat compounds have been underused for a number of years and there are waiting lists for beach huts in St. Margaret's and Kingsdown. The applicant confirms that pre application consultations were carried out with the sailing club.

2. Main Issues

2.1 The main issues are; the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area; the effect on the provision of open space; the effect on the Local Wildlife Site; the effect on local parking issues.

3. Assessment

Effect on character and appearance of the Conservation Area

3.1 The site forms part of the wider Deal Conservation Area, of which the beach frontage forms part, and consequently there is a diverse character of built form and open space throughout. The immediate area is characterised by the existing fishermen's huts to the north, which are sited close together, and the large flat roofed sailing club building immediately to the south. The proposed huts have been deliberately sited to respond to the random arrangement of the existing huts and the design and size of huts will be very similar. The huts will not extend into the active beach area on the seaward side and there will still be views to the sea between the huts when walking along the promenade. It is therefore considered that the

visual impact will be acceptable and in character with the area. The character of the Conservation Area will be preserved which is the statutory test required in the primary planning legislation.

Effect on Open Space

- 3.2 Similar to the Conservation Area designation above, the site forms a small part of a much wider area of open space stretching to the north and south which is primarily aimed at protecting the open nature and accessibility of the coastal frontage. However, given the former use of the site for boat compound use, it has not actively been used for open space in the past. Indeed arguably, the opening up of the area for active recreational use will be beneficial and contribute to the objectives behind the open space designation. There will be no impact on the promenade to the rear or open beach to the front and it is therefore considered there will be no conflict with Policy DM25 which seeks to prevent loss of open space

Impact on ecology

- 3.3 The site forms a very small part of the much larger Local Wildlife Site and is located at its northern end. Although the Kent Wildlife Trust has referred to nationally important species having been found on the site in the past, this relates to the wider area rather than the current planning application site. The designation stems largely from the shingle beach backed by rough grassland which is found in evidence to the south. The application site on the other hand has been used for boat storage for many years and therefore is unlikely to have been of any significant ecological value. Even with it being underused recently, there seems little evidence of any new ecological value and on that basis it is not considered that there will be any adverse impact from an ecological point of view. That position is unlikely to change in the summer months and it is considered unreasonable to delay consideration of the application for a further survey during that time in the absence of any significant evidence that the site would increase in ecological value.

Impact on Parking

- 3.4 There is on street parking along the sea front and in the nearby car park off Kingsdown Road. The site is also easily accessible by persons using public transport. Users of the beach huts may well already be using the beach frontage generally and although there may be a slight increase in the demand for on street parking, it is not considered that it would be so significant to justify refusal in that respect. This is particularly so when weighed against the advantages of the beach huts in terms of meeting a local need and providing further opportunities for economic activity within the town.

Other Matters

- 3.5 The proposal would not affect the future ability of the sailing club to expand should it ever wish to do so, and it is understood that events held by the club are mainly on surrounding grassed areas rather than within the application site. The sailing club has raised no objections to the proposal.
- 3.6 Although a portaloo is shown on the plans, the applicant has not finally decided whether this will be part of the scheme or not. However if it is provided the applicant has confirmed that it could be clad in boarding to match the huts which would make it visually acceptable. Details of this could be secured through condition. The applicants have also confirmed

that the huts will be attached to railway sleepers and that safety calculations have shown that will be sufficient in times of inclement weather. Finally, other matters raised such as maintenance and allocation of beach huts, are operational matters for the applicant rather than land use considerations.

Conclusion

- 3.7 Given the difficulties of finding suitable sites for beach huts along the sea front, it is considered that the proposed site would be a good location in terms of limited visual impact upon the character of the area and having no other adverse environmental impact. There is clearly a need for additional huts and the location in close proximity to the town is likely to be to the advantage of local traders. The application is therefore supported.

g) Recommendation

- I PERMISSION BE GRANTED subject to: 1) standard time limit; 2) development to be carried out in accordance with approved plans; 3) anchoring of huts to be carried out prior to first being used and thereafter maintained.
- II Powers be delegated to the Head of Regeneration and Development to settle any necessary planning conditions and matters in line with the issues set out in the recommendation and resolved by the Planning Committee.

Case Officer Kim Bennett