

R08

F/TH/15/1239

PROPOSAL: Erection of two storey lifeboat station with associated ramp and engineering works.

LOCATION: Beach Area Opposite Victorian Shelter Marine Drive MARGATE Kent

WARD: Margate Central

AGENT: Mr Steve Robinson

APPLICANT: Mr Christopher Refoy

RECOMMENDATION: Refuse Permission

For the following reasons:

1 The proposed development fails to meet definition of sustainable development as enshrined within the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore does not benefit from the presumption in favour as set out at paragraph 14. The proposed development is considered to result in an impact with regards to the economic role, whilst demonstrating detrimental social and environmental impacts on balance.

2 The proposal, by virtue of its design and location would result in an inappropriate form of development that would cause significant harm to the setting of designated heritage assets, comprising of the Margate and Margate Seafront Conservation Areas as well as the listed buildings within Albert Terrace and the Clocktower on Marine Drive. The significant harm to the setting of these designated heritage assets is not outweighed by the public benefit arising from the proposed development. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to the requirements of paragraphs 17 and 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3 The proposal, by virtue of its design, scale and location, would result in a prominent, obtrusive and incongruous form of development, unrelated to the open character of the site and landscape, unresponsive to local distinctiveness within the locality, failing to integrate into the natural, built and historic environment, contrary to Thanet Local Plan Policy D1 and paragraphs 17, 60 and 61 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

4 The proposal will result in the loss of an existing playing pitch in the form of the Beach Volleyball Court without the provision of a suitable replacement facility of equivalent quality and quantity. The proposal is therefore contrary to Thanet Local plan Policy SR10, paragraph 74 of the NPPF and Sport England's Land Use Planning Statement.

5 In the absence of sufficient information regarding the provision for servicing, parking and deliveries to the proposed development it is not possible to assess the highway impacts

of the scheme on the free flow of traffic along Marine Drive and pedestrian access along the promenade. The application is therefore considered to be contrary to saved policy TR16 of the Local Plan and paragraph 32 of the NPPF.

SITE, LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The application site is located on the main beachfront to the north of the existing Marine Sands Restaurant. The proposed location would occupy the space currently utilised for the beach volleyball courts.

The beach volleyball courts are available for use between June and September and have regularly hosted the National Beach Volleyball Championship. Although privately operated, the courts were built and funded by Thanet District Council along with grants from Sport England via Volleyball England's Beach Volleyball Capital Investment Initiative and Kent County Council Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity Service.

Inland, to the east of the site are the listed buildings of Albert Terrace whilst to the south is the listed Clock Tower. The Margate Conservation Area and Margate Seafront Conservation Area are also both in view, with the boundary line being to the west of the listed Clock Tower.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant planning history that relates to this application site other than pre-application discussions in connection with the proposed development from January 2015.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal seeks detailed planning permission for a new two storey lifeboat station and ramp on the beach to provide replacement facilities for the RNLI to launch the new boats that are being made available for Margate.

The proposed new station is designed to provide modern facilities that are equivalent to many of the other stations around the coastline, whilst also providing the necessary infrastructure to enable the use of new boats that are currently unsuitable for the existing station location.

The application has been supported by information that has considered a range of potential sites taking into account a variety of factors such as exposure, geology, recovery space required, access for crew response etc. The site options appraisal considered all of the potential locations and then discounted many due to the constraints and their unsuitability for the type of vessels being considered for this location.

The application was amended following the original submission to provide additional details regarding the ramp and updating of the site options report, as well as responding to various technical consultations on the original scheme.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Thanet Local Plan Policy (2006) Saved Policies

D1 – Design principles
D2 – Landscaping
SR12 – Playing Fields
SR18 – Major Holiday Beaches
T1 – Tourist Facilities
TR12 - Cycling
TR16 - Car parking provision

NOTIFICATIONS

Letters were sent to occupiers of neighbouring premises in Marine Terrace, Marine Gardens, High Street, Albert Terrace, and Belgrave Road. A site notice was also displayed.

A total of 54 individual letters of objection were received on the original application raising the following points of concern:

- No provision for car parking for crew
- Too close to adjoining properties
- Development too high
- Inadequate access
- Loss of parking/inadequate parking
- Out of keeping with the character of the area
- Concerns over how beach would be cleared to launch boat
- Loss of existing historic and iconic views
- Loss of existing volleyball courts
- Overdevelopment of the site
- Impacts on local ecology
- Support the principle but object to the proposed location
- Increase in traffic
- Impacts on existing beach activities
- Building design of little merit in the setting
- Consideration of alternative locations that have less effect on views and enjoyment of the beach generally
- Conflict with the local plan
- Loss of light/overshadowing
- Negative impacts on the conservation area and setting of listed buildings
- Significant disruption during the construction period of up to 12 months
- The scheme would split the beach into two areas

18 letters of support have also been received on the original application stating that:

- The new facility would provide opportunities for educating locals and visitors
- It would provide a new visitor attraction
- It would retain the presence of the RNLI locally
- Superb new design
- There are no other suitable sites available on the basis of the submission documents provided
- Provision of the facility is absolutely necessary for safety at sea

- Existing station is not feasible due to the need to replace the existing boat and the replacement being unsuitable for the existing location
- The site will not result in the loss of any beach area as it is used for volleyball courts at present

In March 2016 revised and additional information was submitted by the applicant resulting in re-notification letters being sent and a new site notice being displayed. The re-notification resulted in a further 31 letters of objection and 2 letters of support. A petition with 3,124 signatures objecting to the scheme was also submitted by the Save Our Sands campaign group.

Issues raised in the objection letters not previously stated above related to:

- Minor revisions made to the ramp design but the main design remains the same and is still out of keeping
- The designs do not include any facilities for tourist attractions as suggested in the letters of support
- Lack of specific details about the construction impacts on the wider beach for a year with the need for the contractor compound

New issues raised in the letters of support not previously stated above relate to:

- The site remains the only viable option to deliver a new facility by the end of 2017

CONSULTATIONS

Environment Agency - We have assessed this application as having a low environmental risk. We therefore have no comments to make.

Sport England - The proposed development involves the erection of a two storey lifeboat station with associated ramp and engineering works. The proposed development would result in the loss of an existing volleyball court. Sport England has assessed the application in the light of Sport England's Land Use Planning Policy Statement 'Planning for Sport Aims and Objectives'.

The statement details Sport England's three objectives in its involvement in planning matters;

- 1) To prevent the loss of sports facilities and land along with access to natural resources used for sport.
- 2) To ensure that the best use is made of existing facilities in order to maintain and provide greater opportunities for participation and to ensure that facilities are sustainable.
- 3) To ensure that new sports facilities are planned for and provided in a positive and integrated way and that opportunities for new facilities are identified to meet current and future demands for sporting participation.

Sport England therefore considers that the proposal conflicts with Objective 1.

In light of the above, Sport England wishes to object to the application.

However, Sport England would be happy to review this position if the existing volleyball court could be satisfactorily relocated.

Further comments – no further comments to make as the original comments still apply.

Volleyball England – Upon further review of the emails and plans we oppose the proposed development, unless suitable relocation is given to the beach courts.

Further comments – the original comments still apply. We would like to know that the plans are for the beach [volleyball] facility in the proposed development.

KCC Highways and Transportation – initial comments: I raise no objection on behalf of the local highway authority. Due to the location of the proposals it is likely that traffic management will be required during construction and must be agreed with KCC Roadworks. The following should be secured by condition; Construction Management Plan

Further comments: KCC Highways and Transportation will not support vehicles parking illegally on the highway and/or footway and Thanet District Council will enforce the parking restrictions already in place. The proposed loading/unloading in the bus stop is unacceptable. Therefore further clarification is required from the applicant as to whether or not the emergency parking will still be available at the current RLNI site for the staff members. Also details of the size and frequency of delivery vehicles are required; along with how the deliveries can be made without causing an obstruction to the highway and/or footway.

Further comments – Clarification has not been given as to how often deliveries will take place and the detail of deliveries. Fuel deliveries will need to be piped from a tanker to the building, which means the existing loading bay on the eastern side of Marine Drive would not be suitable for these fuel deliveries. Therefore a new loading bay must be provided on the sea side of Marine Drive, this would be possible by extending the bus layby to the north. If a line is required to run over the footway/cycleway then details of how the users of the highway will be safeguarded is required. A loading strategy plan of the management of deliveries is required and this will need to be agreed with the KCC Roadworks Team. The strategy could be resolved by condition, and must include details of the closure of the footway/cycleway and the timing of the closures (avoiding the closure of the promenade at peak periods).

Margate Civic Society – Whilst Margate Civic Society fully supports the principle of relocating the Lifeboat Station we wish to express our gravest concerns relating to the proposed siting of the new two-storey structure. We feel that the current uncluttered view out to sea from anywhere along the Margate seafront together with the seafront's largest asset, namely Margate Main Sands, will be severely impaired should the current proposal be allowed to proceed. Margate Main Sands are the town's prime asset and being of historic long standing are worthy of protection. The Society would fully support the construction of a new station in a less prominent location to the west or to the east of that currently proposed in order to prevent the loss of amenity that would result should the existing application be allowed.

Further comments – the original main objections have not been addressed. We would support a less intrusive siting for the new station but cannot support the latest proposal any more than the earlier application. We therefore raise the strongest possible objections to the latest application.

KCC Biodiversity Officer – We have reviewed the documents referenced below and advise that additional information/clarification is sought to inform the determination of the application with regards to the assessment of potential ecological impacts.

We advise that clarification is sought regarding the lack of reference to (breeding) little terns and golden plover, as features of the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA. Even if there is limited potential for significant effects on these species, such that they could be screened out of the assessment, there is a need to demonstrate that all potential impacts have been adequately considered.

The embedded mitigation measures form the key part of this application and while these may be appropriate in principle, we advise that clarification is sought regarding the assessment of the potential for disturbance of wintering birds during construction. In particular, the Ecological Appraisal refers to a Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust report that we have not seen in full so it is important that the information is reported clearly.

The use of the surrounding area by wintering birds appears to be focussed in the locations highlighted in Figure 3 of the Ecological Appraisal, though the reporting of whether this use is for foraging or use as a high tide roost is somewhat unclear.

We advise that clarification / justification is sought for the proposed mitigation that allows 'noisy' construction to take place at high tide during the winter; we note the conclusion that "it is thought likely that disturbance levels resulting from construction and operation exercises will not exceed a level which would cause adverse disturbance effects (to birds using Margate Harbour)", but our assessment is that the Harbour is closer to the site than the 350m reported in the Ecological Appraisal and no information has been provided to demonstrate how far the noise from construction work could travel. It is also not clear why 69dbAmax has been selected as the limit beyond which the timing constraints will be implemented. It may be that this is used as standard but clarification should be sought.

The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is somewhat vague in places and this seems to be due to the stated intention that "final details...will be agreed with Natural England and included in the final CEMP". It is our understanding that embedded mitigation measures must be sufficiently detailed for a likely significant effect to be ruled out and we would consider this to include details of the measures including the noise monitoring protocols, the area of works that should be checked for wintering birds prior to 'noisy' works

TDC Deputy Technical Services Manager - Having reviewed the flood risk and site location documents for the proposed lifeboat station there are a number of points I need to highlight.

Flood Risk Assessment

1. Not all imagery and plans of Margate include the stepped revetment and are therefore out of date.
2. An assumption is made that TDC street cleansing will remove litter from the rocks to be placed under the structure, this needs to be clarified with Street Cleansing.
3. The report describes how the proposed structure will improve the flood protection at the frontage at the lifeboat house location, in my opinion this is incorrect as the area that will

improve has little or no over topping as existing, the area which will be negatively affected has a greater overtopping risk. If you take a risk of 0 and then make improvements to reduce the risk it will still be 0, If you take a risk of 1 and then increase that risk by 1 the risk is 2. The culmination of this is an increased risk of overtopping of 1.

Site Option Appraisal

The site option appraisal is very biased towards the preferred location at Margate sands, the assessment does not take the negative aspects of the main sands location in to account, such as the fact that there is a lack of parking and it is a very popular busy area.

I would like to see further analysis of alternative locations such as St Mildred's bay (car park end) this is stated as being exposed which I don't fully understand, as I have seen life boat stations in much more exposed locations. An option which has not been considered is a life boat house with remote office space which would mean the life boat house on the shore/harbour could be much smaller.

Although I don't feel that the site option appraisal is entirely fair/accurate in its appraisal of all of the sites I do agree that most of the alternative sites would not be suitable. Anywhere East of Margate harbour is amongst other negatives too exposed, and anywhere West of Westgate is too remote, exposed or has a lack of amenities and services.

I am surprised that the report does not mention charitable donations as a reason to prefer Margate as a location as this must be a key benefit of their preferred location on Margate beach.

Further comments – It is still my view that there will be no gross increase in flood defence, however I do not think there will be a negative impact either.

The new plan shows increased access from the beach to the stepped revetment, due to part of the slipway being covered in sand which improves the situation with regard to access from the revetment.

Natural England –

Internationally designated sites – no objection - conditions

Natural England notes that a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report has been produced to check the proposal for the likelihood of significant effects. This HRA has not been produced by your authority, but by the applicant. As competent authority, it is your responsibility to produce the HRA. We provide the following advice on the assumption that your authority intends to adopt this HRA to fulfil your duty as competent authority.

The assessment concludes that the proposal can be screened out from further stages of the HRA process because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination. This conclusion has been drawn having regard for the measures built into the proposal that seek to avoid all potential impacts. On the basis of the information provided, Natural England concurs with this view. However, if permission is granted, the provision of the following measures stated in the application documents should be secured via appropriately worded planning conditions:

- * All construction workers will be made aware of the boundaries of the designated sites and construction works will be conducted from the landward side of the development, avoiding designated habitats
- * The construction site compound will be located off the beach outside of all designated sites
- * Disturbance from artificial lighting during construction to be minimised by carrying out works during periods of daylight only (As per point 3, Section 8, Ecological Appraisal)
- * Construction works generating high levels of noise likely to cause disturbance to birds (e.g. percussive piling generating noise levels in excess of 65dbAmax within the SPA/Ramsar site) will be avoided during the winter months (October to March inclusive)
- * A finalised Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be produced prior to the commencement of any construction works and agreed by the local planning authority with advice from Natural England

Nationally designated sites - no objection – no conditions requested

This application is in close proximity to the Thanet Coast SSSI and the Thanet Coast MCZ. Natural England is satisfied that the proposed development being carried out in strict accordance with the details of the application, as submitted, will not damage or destroy the interest features for which these sites have been notified. We therefore advise your authority that these sites do not represent a constraint in determining this application.

Further comments – Natural England's continued advice is that to enable robust protection of the designated sites the measures highlighted in our previous response should be secured via planning conditions. We are also disappointed that the bullet-pointed section of our letter has simply been copied and pasted into a separate section of the updated CEMP when our intention was that it should be used to revise the relevant sections.

Natural England is concerned that there appear to be some discrepancies between the mitigation measures offered in the original application documents and what is captured in the revised CEMP. Our advice is that the CEMP should be further revised to fully reflect the commitments made in either the Ecological Appraisal dated 06 March 2015 or the information to Inform a Habitats Regulation Assessment dated 02 November 2015.

Southern Water – position of public surface water main needs to be confirmed. Object due to assessment that there is limited potential to divert existing apparatus. Layout of the development should be amended with 3.5m clearance either side of the sewer. A formal connection to the public foul sewer.

Conservation Officer - I have concern with the location and design of the proposed lifeboat building. In my view there is a great likelihood of the building to cause harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area and setting of listed buildings.

The crucial part of the development of Margate as a sea resort was to provide open space and view of the Marine Sands between Nayland Rock and the harbour and to keep the promenade open to the beach and free from any large developments. This unobtrusiveness of the sand beach is due its being predominantly comprised of low height buildings and structures including the shelter, toilets, the food concessions building and the paddling pool which minimise their impact on the openness of the area.

The scale and design of the building will result into a very prominent structure within the Marine Sands which would be inconsistent with the low lying structures currently on the beach. To have such a large development in this location would have a great impact on the

Sands and the area as a whole. The proposed building will dominate the sea front and be out of character with the area.

The open character of the promenade positively contributes to the character of the conservation area and the setting of listed buildings behind the promenade. It also allows uninterrupted views back off the seaside to the buildings along Marine Terrace, Marine Drive and the Clock Tower. On approach the proposed building would be visible from all directions. It would obstruct the long views of both on approach from Canterbury Road and Station Approach from the west, views from Belgrave Road on the south which would obstruct views of the lighthouse and pier, views from the Rendezvous across the harbour interrupting views of the Clock Tower and as well as views out to and from the sea.

It has also come to my notice that one of the primary aims of the Margate Sea Defences project was to connect Margate Sands with the Old Town. In the early 2000s, the Margate Old Town Action Plan work had looked at why this part of Margate had failed. One of the conclusions, backed up by on-the-ground research by Space Syntax, was that the Old Town was cut off from the most active parts of Margate – the Sands and Cecil Square. The project was designed so that people could walk from the Sands onto the steps in the dry, even at high tide. The success of the Stepped Revetment in connecting the Old Town and the Sands has been remarkable, and in addition, many empty buildings along Marine Drive – opposite the Steps - are now thriving business. The proposed lifeboat station will break this relationship at high tide, again cutting off the Old Town as well as reducing the continuation of the Sands. It could harm the attractiveness of the Margate Sands as a visitor destination which could have a knock-on effect on the town's economy.

The vibrancy of the Sands in particular during summer times, and activities taking place within it also enhances the character of the conservation area. The proposed lifeboat station would have an effect on these.

In my view, I am not satisfied that the assessment of the location for the proposed lifeboat building has been well explored and that the chosen site given due consideration of its importance and its contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding heritage assets (the conservation area and setting of listed buildings). Therefore I have the opinion that the location chosen would have a serious detrimental impact on the character and visual appearance of seafront detriment to the conservation area and setting of listed buildings.

The information provided in support of the proposal is also in my view insufficient in particular the assessment of the alternative sites and the description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the potential impact of the proposal on their significance contrary to requirements of the NPPF and Policy SR18 and Policy E 10 of the Local Plan and emerging Local Plan respectively.

I therefore do not support this application.

Further comments - My previous concerns and comments still stand. The site is adjacent to the Margate Conservation Area and the setting of Margate Seafront Conservation Area. The site also provides the setting and has direct views towards and from several listed buildings along Marine Gardens and Albert Terrace.

I believe that a crucial part of the development of Margate as a seaside resort was to keep the sands and the promenade free from any large development so as to provide open views of the sands between Nayland Rock and the harbour. The open character of the promenade also allows uninterrupted views back of the seaside to the listed buildings and the promenade.

There is no question that there is a need of a more accessible lifeboat station, however the location of this building is still what I have the biggest problem with. To have such a large development in this location would have a serious detrimental impact on the character and visual appearance of Margate as a Conservation Area as well as setting of listed buildings. I therefore cannot give this application my full support.

Heritage Advisor - Margate Main Sands, that area of beach between the Nayland Rock and the Stone Pier, are the town's defining feature and its main asset. They are a consequence of the building of Marine Terrace in the 1820s and can claim several 'firsts' - including donkey rides and deck chairs. They are a highly sensitive and vulnerable environment, and one that has seen little change in their 200 year history.

There has only ever been one building on the Sands – the octagonal café built in 1997 replacing a timber hut. The various huts and play equipment which have come and gone over the years clearly read as temporary structures, and probably do not need planning consent. The two pools, the tidal swimming pool at the Nayland Rock and the boating pool opposite Marine Drive (mostly destroyed by the construction of the sea defences) are/were integral to the marine environment and covered at high tide. The sea defences are not a building, they are an extension of the hard landscape of the sea wall. The Stone Pier and the Sun Deck off Marine Terrace (1926-1982) are/were piers – an established and easily recognised part of the seaside landscape and engineering structures rather than buildings.

The hierarchy of Margate seafront is clear and consistent. There is a backdrop of buildings which have seen little changed since the C19th, there is a pavement a road and a pavement, there is the sea wall, the sand and then the sea. The only building outside of this arrangement is the café and, as it is a special case it has strong significance. However, it is small and low and is in a special place – half way along the seawall, opposite the open space of Marine Gardens and where the road bends. It successfully becomes a 'hinge point' for the sea wall. Were it larger or higher it would be discordant.

The proposed RNLI building automatically draws attention to itself by not conforming to the pattern of development and character of Margate Sands. It is a very large structure composed of two mono-pitch roofed boxes with glazed corners clad in timber boarding. Because of its size and siting it will be the dominant structure of Margate Sands possessing immense power over its environment. Although saving lives at sea is an integral part of the history of the seaside, the proposed building is too crudely designed to warrant such dominance. Its presence would be extremely detrimental to the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings – especially when in use at night when its lighting would unbalance the character of the beach.

The one of the design parameters of the awarding winning sea defences was that they would provide a route from the Sands to the Old Town at all states of the time. The high

water mark shown on the submitted drawings is incorrect – at high tide people has to jump on to the steps to avoid getting wet (see attached photograph). The proposed building would disrupt this carefully planned route. A further design principle of the sea defences was that the use of rock armour would be avoided due to its alien nature in sandy Margate. Rock armour is proposed in this scheme as a way of preventing access under the building.

Further comments - My previous comments stand. The sun deck clearly read as a pier; the sort of structure one would expect to see crossing a foreshore. It was on stilts and beach users could pass underneath it. It had a pavilion structure at its sea end and was linked to the land by a bridge. The pavilion was subservient to the lattice structure on which it sat. The proposed lifeboat station is a large building which out-scales its solid base.

In terms of historic precedent St Mildred's Bay Westgate was the site of the RNAS-RAF seaplane base (1914-1920) and therefore the site has a history of beach launching.

Margate Conservation Area Advisory Group –

Precedent – The proposal would set a precedent for multi-story buildings on the beach.

Parking – Given the emergency nature of the use, there will be a need for parking of emergency vehicles and for staff to park quickly. There is little parking available in the area, especially in busy days for beach-users.

Views – The proposal has a negative overbearing impact on historic and iconic views of the main sands, views of Marine Drive, Old Town (VP05). Blocks out Dreamland (VP08).

Height: The proposed structure is very high compared to what it would seem to be needed.

Facilities – The proposal would divide the main sands into two and block access to the main sands from the steps at high tide.

The building will also cast large shadows on the beach making a large area unusable for sunbathing and leisure. The location could be dangerous if the boat had to be launched and beach users were in the way (for example buried in the sand)

Overdevelopment - The application tries to put too many facilities in one building.

Design - The design of such a large building in a prominent location that impacts on important historic views should be a high quality design. The proposal is not designed for the specific sensitive location. I agree with the Planning Officer's advice:

The design including height, scale and materials would need to be extremely well considered and responsive to the context.

I consider that the physical presence of the building on the sands given its location has the potential to both harm the setting of the beach and also have a serious detrimental impact on the character and visual appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings.

Alternative sites - 4 sites were proposed. The alternative sites haven't been sufficiently explored.

Summary

- * Ruins historic urban and coastal views
- * Blocks access to the beach, removes a large area of beach including casting a large shadow. Could be dangerous.
- * Creates a precedent of building tall permanent buildings on the beach.
- * More appropriate sites are available.

Historic England

Summary - Historic England recognises the crucial work of the RNLI and welcomes this opportunity to assist it in identifying a new site for its facilities as it plans to relocate from the site to the east of the Turner Contemporary Gallery, known as the Rendezvous. However, we have serious concerns about the likely impacts on the historic environment of this facility in its currently proposed location and recommend that this application should not be approved. We encourage the applicant to explore more fully alternative locations for this facility.

Advice - Margate is one of England's earliest and foremost seaside resorts. In 1735 it became the first to offer seawater baths to visitors and in the middle decades of the eighteenth century it was transformed from a small fishing village into an exclusive resort for fashionable visitors keen to sample the benefits of seawater bathing. From the early nineteenth century, Margate began to develop a mass-market appeal when boats started ferrying large numbers of visitors cheaply from London. Major attractions were added over the course of the next 150 years to occupy this major influx of visitors.

Margate Sands was at the heart of all the above activity. Historic images of the beach show how long rows of bathing machines were by the twentieth century replaced by a carpet of sunbathers, both activities that underline the beach's central role in the history and development of the town and of the English seaside resort more generally.

Although the beach is located just outside both the Margate and Margate Seafront conservation areas, because its distinctive crescent of sand defines an arc of buildings surrounding it, and because it also defines use of these buildings which exist solely to exploit its visitors, the beach must be seen as making a key contribution to the significance of both conservation areas.

In addition, many individual buildings and structures around the beach have been designed to create focal-points in views across the bay and derive significance as a result (the deliberately eye-catching silhouette of the grade II* listed Dreamland Cinema being a key example), while most (including the grade-II listed harbour and Albert Terrace) can be particularly appreciated in such views because of the openness and scenic qualities of the beach in the foreground.

Although we support in principle the creation of a modern lifeboat station for Margate, we have serious concerns about the location, size and design of the current proposal and its consequent impacts on Margate's historic environment.

The new facility is proposed for Margate's beach, just north-east of the Marine Sands Restaurant and on the site of the existing beach volleyball court. The considerable size of accommodation proposed for the facility and the intention for it to be placed on stilts above the sand would result in it dominating many views across the beach, resulting in some loss of the characteristic openness of the beach and the obstruction of some important views of historic buildings that are set out in a distinctive arc around it.

Photomontages 11 and 5 demonstrate the most serious impacts of the proposed development on views across the beach, with the former taken from approximately the front of Dreamland showing the lifeboat station obscuring some of the buildings along Marine Drive and competing in prominence with the harbour and Turner Gallery, while the latter from Marine Drive shows complete obstruction of a major view back across the beach to the Dreamland cinema. Historic England concludes that this proposal would consequently result in considerable harm to the significance of Margate's two conservation areas, as well as additional harm to Dreamland Cinema, the harbour arm and Albert Terrace.

The NPPF requires that 'great weight' is given to the historic environment when balancing harm to it against other factors in the planning process (para. 132). Any such harm requires 'clear and convincing justification'. Although we accept there will be public benefits resulting from the scheme, we are not persuaded that these outweigh the above serious harm to the historic environment. We think this harm has not been adequately justified, and could be avoided by locating the proposed facility in an alternative location. We do not think that such alternative locations have been fully explored. We therefore recommend that the current application should be refused.

Recommendation - Historic England objects to this application and recommends that it should be refused in its current form. We recommend that the applicant should carefully and exhaustively consider alternative locations for this important proposed facility. We would be happy to discuss the scheme further when this piece of work is complete.

Further comments – We do not wish to add anything further to our previous comments.

KCC Archaeology - Thank you for consulting on the proposed RNLI building on the Margate front. It is difficult to know fully what the archaeological potential on this area is. The land is on the northern edge of the former stream valley discharging into the sea at this point. The flanking north side, Fort Hill was a major prehistoric settlement site with later Roman occupation also known there. This site area could therefore have potential if deposits have survived the tidal environment and beach and sea defence works. Elsewhere early land surfaces, features and finds are known to survive under beach deposits on the Thanet coastline including at Margate.

The impact from the scheme appears to be mostly limited to piling although I expect site preparation works may also be involved. I could not see any geotechnical report on the planning portal so am unable to judge the ground sequence in the footprint.

I think the best approach in terms of archaeology would be to allow for a programme of archaeological works that can be refined in light of geotechnical studies and more detail on scheme impacts as they become finalised. The following condition would suit:

AR1 No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Grounds: To ensure that features of archaeological interest are properly examined and recorded.

Margate Town Team - whilst Margate Town Team fully supports the principle of relocating the Lifeboat Station, we wish to express our gravest concerns relating to the proposed siting of the new two-storey structure. We feel that the existing panoramic view out to sea along the Margate seafront and the historic Margate Main Sands are worthy of protection, being the town's prime asset and should this proposal go ahead, this will be severely impaired.

We would, however, fully support the construction of a new station in a less prominent location either to the west or the east of the site currently proposed, in order to prevent the loss of amenity that would result should the existing application be permitted.

TDC Tourism Manager - Many thanks for forwarding me the link and for providing the opportunity to give comments on the above planning application.

From a tourism perspective we do have concerns about the location and design of the building proposed for the RNLI Station. Margate has a long history of people visiting for its clear views and open space and in recent years, with the sea defence development, we have seen that side of the beach being an attractor for people to sit and enjoy the views. We have seen new businesses opening along Marine Drive, many of which are open in the evenings, which has provided an offer for Margate's evening economy, which is essential for growing tourism.

The proposed building we feel would divide the beach again, the sea defence development aimed to connect the beach with the Old Town which has been a great success. The large scale of this building would be seen from various angles and would be very intrusive and wouldn't fit with the character and architecture of the surrounding buildings.

On a practical view point how would the boat launching work when large numbers are on the beach, would areas have to be cleared or marked out so people would be unable to use the space in front. This would reduce the capacity of the numbers of visitors able to be on the beach in the peak of the season, which clearly would have an impact on local businesses. Where would the crew and deliveries park? The traffic around the seafront in peak season can be high due to increase in volume of traffic and the pedestrians using the many crossings, often with a 30 minute delay being reported, which the crew would get caught up in.

With the opening of Turner Contemporary and Dreamland last year we have seen an increase in visitors coming to Margate, with the beach still being an important motivator for people's visit. We would be concerned about the reduction of space and beach activities available to visitors on this popular area of the beach, which would also impact on the businesses in the locality.

The hugely important work and presence of the RNLI at a coastal destination does generate interest from visitors and we can see that the new location would make the RNLI more visible in the town, as the current location is tucked away and possibly missed by visitors. It would be good to know more about the proposed station's visitor offer, whether it is a shop with viewing platform or more of an engaging offer with interpretation and activities like other stations. Clearly the increased footfall that Margate has would make this location more attractive for fundraising than others.

COMMENTS

This application was called to committee by Councillor Johnson to consider the impact on the appearance of the area. Main considerations are the principle of development, impact on character and appearance of the area, impact on highways safety, environmental considerations, impact on sport and recreation and other planning matters.

Principle of Development

By the very nature of the proposed use it is accepted that a coastline location is required for the proposed new development and as such the principle of a beach location should be considered. The key service that is provided by the RNLI in providing important protection for those at sea, both inshore and offshore, is also acknowledged and supported. Equally, the need for a new facility to enable the provision of a new station and vessels is supported by the wider NPPF planning principles.

This level of support must be weighed against the wider planning considerations established through adopted development plan policy. The application site is one of the District's most popular tourist beaches providing an important tourist and recreation facility locally. Adopted development plan policies seek to restrict development on such important spaces both in regards to use and also visual appearance.

In addition it also provides sporting facilities in the form of the existing volleyball courts that receive national recognition through the volleyball championships. There are also the potential impacts to the setting of the conservation areas and listed buildings that need to be considered in the wider planning balance.

Subject to demonstrating that the above impacts are either acceptable, or are outweighed by the public benefits that arise from the proposed development, the principle of development may be considered acceptable, however this is dependent on all other material planning considerations.

Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area

Design

The NPPF states that planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area; establish a strong sense of place; respond to local character and history; reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials; and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping (paragraph 58). Policy D1 of the Thanet Local Plan outlines that the design of all new proposals must respect or enhance the character or appearance of the area particularly in scale, massing, rhythm and use of materials.

The application site at present functions as the beach volleyball courts and lacks any permanent built form as such. In contrast, the proposed development seeks permission for a building that is on two levels and elevated above the beach level to provide the necessary gradient for launching the vessel. This inevitably means that the built form has a prominent position above the promenade when viewed in all directions. The building will be notably higher than the beach café, extending 8.8metres to ridge height above the level of the public highway. This is particularly evident from the supporting Design and Access Statement and the photomontages when viewed from the south east on Marine Gardens/Albert Terrace (picture 44 of the document). This would result in a highly prominent development, unrelated in scale to other built form at the beach, and therefore would appear incongruous within this context.

The dominance of the building itself has been recognised by the applicant in the sense that the design has been revised from using the palette of materials typically preferred by the RNLI in favour of alternative materials that offer a softer, lighter shade of colour in an attempt to blend into the surroundings. Whilst these materials could be considered to be more sympathetic than the traditional palette, the material pay no reference to the local distinctiveness of development in the area or to the environment, and concerns with the overall design impact nevertheless remain. The heritage advisor has drawn particular criticism of the design and choice of materials, noting that the building would be a 'dominant structure' and is 'too crudely designed to warrant such dominance.' This is a view that is supported by the Conservation Officer, Margate Conservation Area Advisory Group as well as Historic England. Although justified on the basis of being a contemporary design it is noted that the design is typical of many more modern buildings and does not respond to the unique setting of the proposed site in terms of its form or materials. It is accepted that the scale of the building is derived by the requirements for gaining entry to the lifeboat and the required facilities within the building itself, however given its location and prominence, significant concerns are raised over the design approach.

Views

The impacts of the proposed new building on significant vistas must also be considered. Historic England have noted that the existing buildings and structures around the beach create focal points and indeed derive their significance from these, including the Grade II* listed Dreamland Cinema. In addition, the longer views provide appreciation of the listed harbour as well as Albert Terrace. It is felt that the proposed development would result in serious impacts on these views, as evidenced by some of the photomontages submitted in support of the application. In some instances the proposed development results in a

complete loss of these significant views representing harm to the setting of the conservation areas as well as to the setting of individual listed buildings. This is also supported by the comments from the Heritage advisor and Conservation officer amongst others.

In addition to the views that exist linking the distinct areas of the town the physical connection between areas is of vital importance as well. The public have raised concerns with the physical separation of parts of the beach as a consequence of the proposed development, which was an issue that the Council brought to the applicant's attention in the course of the pre-application discussions. The proposal would also result in a severe detrimental impact on the characteristic openness of the beach landscape, impacting on views around the crescent of development along Marine Terrace.

Conservation Area

The hierarchy of buildings within the broader conservation areas is a further issue to consider. The heritage advisor has set out the general hierarchy in the area noting that the Marine Sands café is a special case in its appearance and that the proposed development would be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the pattern of development. This is a view that is shared within many of the letters of objection from residents. In response to this the applicant has suggested that the proposed use of the building has a different use to those of the surrounding buildings and that this would justify its design in at least the same manner as the café. This is further justified by the statement that the station is an engineering structure (thus in the same category as the pavement, road or even sea wall) and therefore appropriate to its surroundings.

It is only arguably the lower level of the building that can be considered an engineering structure, entailing the piled foundations and rock armour beneath the structure. The remaining part of the proposal is clearly a building and therefore it must be considered in the context of the hierarchy of buildings around it. The building would dominate its surroundings and be a prominent built form within both conservation areas, which does not respond to its context, appearing functional and generic with no reference to the historic built environment nor open spaces in the Conservation areas. Furthermore, the character of the conservation areas in this particular location is one of long views along the promenade with either no built form or low scale modest buildings (the café, beach huts etc). The proposed station therefore conflicts with this modest character and will disrupt the established appearance of the area, affecting the significant of the heritage asset.

Listed Buildings

The supporting Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment acknowledges at paragraph 173 that "the proposed development is predicted to give rise to adverse effects on the settings of several Listed Buildings within this character area." This is a view that is acknowledged by Historic England, the Conservation officer and the Heritage advisor as well as by other heritage groups who have been consulted on the application.

It is noted that objections to the scheme have been based on the proposed building obscuring long views of the Clock Tower from the Rendezvous to the north west of the site, as well as views of the Dreamland Cinema building. Similarly, the longer views from the west

of the site along Canterbury Road towards Albert Terrace will be detrimentally impacted by the proposed development.

Contrary to the assessment made at paragraphs 174 and 175 that the design is of high quality and would make a positive contribution to its immediate setting, Historic England have clearly stated that in their opinion that the scheme would result in serious harm to the historic environment and that the proposal in its current form lacks the necessary justification to outweigh the harm. This is the same conclusion that the conservation officer has arrived at as well, and it is noted that neither of these positions have changed upon receipt of the amended details.

Indeed, although the application was amended with the submission of additional information no further heritage justification was provided. The summary of responses to comments provided that was issued by the applicant with the revised details states that in response to the issues regarding the heritage assets "A heritage assessment was not included as part of the screening opinion response provided by Thanet District Council and has therefore not been prepared for this development." On the basis that the application site directly abuts a conservation area and will affect views into and out of another conservation area as well as impacting on the setting of listed buildings such a report would normally be present to enable such a detailed assessment to be undertaken.

In summary, the proposed development will result in detrimental impacts to the setting of the listed Clock Tower and Albert Terrace due to the disruption of their setting relative to the promenade, and the longer views of these designated heritage assets from the west. The less than substantial harm to these assets needs to be weighed against any public benefits before considering whether or not the development is acceptable.

Highways

The application makes no provision for any dedicated car parking to serve the development. The supporting Design and Access Statement refers to the need for 10-12 parking spaces close to the station in an ideal situation, noting that in this location it is not practical. Reference is made to parking provision along Marine Drive as an option, however this is extremely limited as much of this is for loading or permit holders only. This does not therefore provide a realistic option to meet the full needs of the proposed development, with any traffic stopping on this part of the network likely to cause severe disruption in a congested location. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that Kent Highways do not raise any objection on parking levels.

Issues regarding access and deliveries for the proposed development are less straightforward however. Kent Highways stated in additional comments that they required details of the means of servicing the proposed station to demonstrate an acceptable solution as illegal parking within designated bus spaces was not acceptable. Despite these further comments it should be noted that the only response to date is that set out in the response to consultation comments issued by the applicant as revised in March 2016. This is relying on a previous email that indicated a loading bay could be used for most deliveries as well as the bus stop. This email predates the subsequent correspondence and is therefore to be afforded less weight in the consideration of this scheme. Furthermore, the email contact was

with the operational services team at the council primarily in regards to the availability of spaces within the Dreamland site for parking and was not email contact directly from Kent Highways who are responsible for commenting on planning applications in respect to highways impacts. Irrespective of this, Kent Highways have requested information regarding the frequency of deliveries to the station which remains outstanding. The lack of information regarding the servicing of the proposed station results in the inability to determine how the traffic movements could have implications on the free flow of traffic on one of the main distributor roads into and out of Margate, as well as the potential impacts on pedestrian traffic along the promenade. These are considered to be significant issues that need full assessment before determining whether the proposals are acceptable in regards to highways impacts.

Sport and Recreation

Recreation space

The application site is part of the Marine Sands beach which functions as an area of open space providing important recreational facilities. The beach is not specifically designated as public open space on the proposals map and is not therefore afforded any protection in regards to saved policy SR10. However, the beach is designated as one of the major holiday beaches protected by saved policy SR18. This policy clearly states that recreational facilities will be concentrated in the area affected by the proposed development, and that any built form should not project above the seafront promenade.

The proposed development will result in the loss of an area of recreational space due to the building and its lower level engineering structure, together with the proposed ramp to provide the necessary launch for the lifeboat. This resultant loss of space, together with the conflict with the policy in regards to the height of the built form, means that the application is contrary to the aims of the saved policy and would reduce the level of recreational space provided on the beach.

Playing fields

The proposed development is shown on the location of the existing beach volleyball courts that presently provide an important role for recreation and sport. The quality of the courts is recognised through the use of these consistently as part of the National championships. Sport England, and Volleyball England, have raised objections to the current proposals on the basis of the loss of the facility without satisfactory relocation of the facility on a quantitative and qualitative basis.

It is noted that the applicant has stated in their summary of responses that they are willing to assist in the relocation of the courts but no further details have been provided, indeed we are not aware of any discussions having been held with Sport England regarding the relocation of the existing facilities.

In order to address the objection full details would need to be provided showing a suitable alternative location under the control of the applicant that would enable the facilities to be provided to an equivalent standard as those presently provided at the application site. Without such details the scheme would result in the loss of playing facilities contrary to

saved policy SR12 of the local plan and Sport England's Land Use Planning Statement, as well as paragraph 74 of the NPPF. In view of Sport England's objection any decision to recommend approval would need to be referred to the Secretary of State to determine whether or not to call in the application for determination.

Environment

Protected species

Natural England provided comments on the original application and were in agreement that a Habitat Regulations Assessment was not required following the issuing of the screening report by the applicant. However, additional comments were made requiring the inclusion of additional measures through a finalised Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) as well as the imposition of appropriate planning conditions. The subsequent amended application included an updated CEMP which included the suggested comments from Natural England without considering the request for certain measures to be controlled through planning condition. The amendments, together with a further technical note, also sought to address the issues that KCC Biodiversity raised with regards the need for clarification on specific elements of the report such as breeding birds, disturbance to wintering birds and the noise limit and harbour distance.

Natural England have subsequently confirmed that the use of planning conditions is a more appropriate means of ensuring the necessary controls are in place. In addition they have also noted that errors have appeared in the CEMP providing details that are not in accordance with the previous ecology reports dated 06 March 2015 or 02 November 2015. These are not significant issues and are capable of being addressed prior to any formal approval of the CEMP if it is considered that the scheme is otherwise acceptable. The errors are not so significant as to warrant a reason of refusal should it be determined that the proposed development is unacceptable.

In regards to the impacts on the SSSI and the Thanet Coast Marine Conservation Zone it is accepted that the development, if carried out in accordance with the submitted details, will not damage or destroy the protected interests and they are not therefore constraints in determining the application.

Drainage

Southern water have commented on the proposals and revised them upon receipt of the additional consultation. Issues have been raised with regards to the need for clearance either side of a sewer to ensure protection during construction as well as future maintenance access.

Subsequent work by the applicant's team has confirmed the precise location of the sewer and the proposed development is designed to ensure that the required separation distances are maintained, together with protection for future maintenance access.

It is therefore considered that the matter of drainage is satisfactorily addressed and could be dealt with through a planning condition or informative should the application be found acceptable.

Flood risk

The site is within flood zone 3 with a high risk of sea flooding and is therefore supported by a detailed flood risk assessment. The overall assessment and conclusions set out within the assessment have been accepted by the Council's technical services manager, however there have been specific issues raised with regards some of the details. There remains an element of disagreement over the cumulative impacts of flood protection arising from the development. It is accepted that the proposal will result in localised overtopping to the north of the proposed site between the station and the seawall. The applicant considers that this would be offset by the reduced risk of overtopping along the longer length of seawall to the west. However, the issue remains that the risk of overtopping was greater in the north and low risk to the west and as such any increased risk is not offset by the marginal reduction of an existing low risk.

Notwithstanding this difference of assessment regarding the cumulative impacts there is no proposed objection in principle to the proposed development on the basis of flood risks, as the building has been designed to withstand flooding.

Archaeology

KCC Archaeology have requested the implementation of a programme of archaeology works given the potential for archaeology to be found on the site, as Thanet is rich in archaeological deposits in this area. This is considered appropriate to be conditioned to be agreed (as a programme of work to include geotechnical studies), with the findings assessed prior to any development occurring.

Other matters

The site options report considered a range of alternative locations for the new facility, discounting the majority of these due to various technical constraints. The evidence provided within the report was not fully agreed upon in discussions with the Council. This has resulted in the report identifying the Margate beach volleyball court as being the preferred option despite scoring identically to the sites at Margate beach steps or Margate harbour.

The revised options report received in March 2016 sets to justify the selection on the basis of a greater area of dry sand at high tide and the view that it has a less prominent location against the built form. The later conclusion is not specifically evidenced within the submission, and is in contrast to the comments received from all heritage bodies and groups that have been consulted on the application. The harbour site has been discounted in part due to the impacts it may have on the Turner Contemporary, yet balanced against the comments in relation to the current application no additional justification has been provided for the visual impacts of the proposed location.

On balance it is therefore considered that the sequential approach to identifying suitable sites has not been supported with sufficient justification to prove beyond doubt that there are no other suitable alternatives. The other identified options, including a potential new Slipway and replacement facility at the existing site, should be subject to additional consideration to

demonstrate conclusively why they do not represent viable options for the proposed development.

The supporting Design and Access Statement refers to the tourism role that the existing station provides in regards to a souvenir shop within the building functioning as a popular tourist attraction. The desire is to retain this within the current proposals and a 20 sqm outlet is shown on the ground floor plans of the station. This facility can only be described as having a minor beneficial impact on tourism and is not considered to necessarily constitute the scale of benefit that is envisaged by saved policy T1 of the local plan. Whilst not quantifiable, the loss of an area of one of the main holiday beaches is likely to result in a detrimental impact on the tourism industry, potentially affecting the perception of Margate as a destination for visitors. In addition to this potential impact, the loss of the existing volleyball courts also represents a detrimental impact to the economy through the loss of the trade in hiring the courts as well as the additional generation from the National Championship use annually. On the basis that these impacts cannot be accurately quantified it is considered the economic impacts of the scheme are considered to be neutral, albeit with notable concern about how the proposal would affect the tourist industry in Margate.

Conclusion

The need to upgrade the existing RNLI facility to serve Margate is accepted in principle as an appropriate form of development requiring a coastal location. The provision of a modern RNLI station with appropriate lifeboats represents a public benefit of the scheme. Furthermore it is accepted that the proposal does not result in detrimental impacts to protected species, drainage or flooding risks elsewhere. There may be an argument to demonstrate some economic benefits arising from the provision of a souvenir shop within the proposed station. However, these need to be balanced against the identified harm that has been set out in detail within this report.

The proposal is considered to result in significant harm to the setting of the two conservation areas as well as to the setting of the nearby listed buildings. Furthermore, the design of the proposed building is considered to detrimentally affect the character and appearance of the areas and the open beach landscape that Margate is nationally recognised for.

In addition to the significant harm to the heritage assets, the impacts on open space and playing provision also need to be considered. The proposal would result in the loss of an existing beach volleyball facility that is nationally recognised and valued. The scheme makes no provision for its replacement with a facility of equivalent quality and quantity other than a statement that the applicant would be willing to assist with the relocation. This promise lacks any detail as to where the facility would be provided, when it would be provided and how it would be maintained. It would be necessary for such a facility to be provided prior to the development commencing that would result in the loss of the current facility in order to ensure that there is no quantitative or qualitative loss of facilities.

In regards to highways, there is insufficient information as part of the application to demonstrate that the proposed building can accommodate parking and be serviced without causing harm to the free flow of traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, along Marine Drive

despite the request for such information from Kent Highways with their detailed comments provided prior to the amended scheme being submitted.

In order to benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development applications must be assessed against their economic, social and environmental roles as set out within paragraph 7 of the NPPF. In this instance the economic role is limited to the role that the souvenir shop will provide minor benefit to the economy, however the impact on the beach landscape, through the loss of the beach area and the impact from the unrelated design of the building on both the historic environment and the wider appearance of the area, has the potential to detrimentally affect the tourist economy in Margate and the beach as a commercial asset. The social role is addressed through the provision of a needed key service to provide safety for those at sea. However, this must also be balanced against the social impacts of losing an existing playing facility as well as the impacts on the loss of open space on the beach itself. Environmentally it is accepted that the proposal will not impact on the SSSI or Thanet Coast MCZ or protected species. When considering the impacts to the built and historic environment paragraph 133 of the NPPF must be considered in order to determine whether the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm. Whilst the provision of the station in the proposed location represents a clear public benefit in terms for the function of the RNLI, the harm identified to the built historic environment and the lack of clear reasoning to discount alternative sites that provide similar opportunities for a facility with a lesser impact on designated heritage assets and the environment weighs against the proposal. Accordingly, in this case and on the basis of the information provided, the public benefits are not substantial enough to outweigh the significant harm from the proposal to the heritage assets. Therefore the proposal would detrimental impact on the environmental role of sustainable development.

On balance, and taking account of all material planning considerations, the proposal is not considered to represent sustainable development in this location. It is therefore recommended that Members refuse this application on the identified grounds.

Case Officer

Iain Livingstone

TITLE: F/TH/15/1239

Project Beach Area Opposite Victorian Shelter Marine Drive MARGATE Kent

Scale:



