Summary Report

Eastbourne Borough Council is preparing a Seafront Local Plan to provide a strategy for the seafront area of Eastbourne. It will identify and manage the major pressures for change and development, and aim to stimulate economic regeneration to provide a seafront that will continue to be a major asset for the town.

This summary brochure for the Issues and Options consultation sets out the main issues relating to the future of the seafront, and a range of different options for how these issues can be addressed. These will set the principles upon which planning policies for the seafront will be developed in the future. We would like to hear your views on which options you would prefer us to take forward.

Context

Eastbourne’s seafront is one of the town’s most important assets and is a defining feature of the resort. It is one of the first things that people associate about the town, and is a big drawing point for tourists and the tourism industry, which is an important economic driver for the town. An indicator of this is that 19% of all jobs in Eastbourne are supported by tourism-related expenditure.

In 2013 there were 4.8 million visitors to Eastbourne, including 700,000 overnight stays and 4.1 million day trips. It is estimated that the total value of tourism to Eastbourne is £355 million. Four in ten visitors fall into the 35-54 age group, refuting the stereotype that Eastbourne is a ‘destination for older people’. The most popular activities for tourists in Eastbourne include visiting the beach, going for a short walk, or going out for a meal. 92% of first time visitors and 77% of overnight visitors visited the beach, which shows how important the seafront is in encouraging tourism.
The seafront also has a massive social significance to local people. A survey of seafront users conducted in 2014 showed that local people particularly enjoy walking along the seafront. Other popular activities include relaxing and attending events. The survey also showed that the area between the Wish Tower and the Pier is the most used section, and that there is significantly less use of the eastern end of the seafront.

The seafront has a range of strengths and weaknesses that need to be taken into account in the Seafront Local Plan. Eastbourne seafront is recognised as being a clean and elegant resort, with a range of high quality green and open spaces, which along with the attractive Victorian and Edwardian buildings lining the seafront, gives the seafront an attractive setting.

However there are some areas where improvements could be made to the seafront. These include the provision of food and drink facilities and activities to do in wet weather. Also, despite a wide range of tourist accommodation, a significant amount of it is lower end accommodation that does not meet visitor expectations and therefore does not promote the town in an appropriate manner.

What are the Main Issues?

The following issues have been identified through engagement and discussion with stakeholders and from a review of evidence.

- **Accessibility to and along the Seafront** – Enhancing linkages between the seafront and the Town Centre and Devonshire Park, improving connectivity between different parts of the seafront, and accessibility to and along the seafront, particularly for those with mobility problems.

- **Managing the supply of Tourist Accommodation** – Ensuring that Eastbourne maintains a suitable supply of tourist accommodation, and that the accommodation stock remains fit for purpose and meets the requirements of current and future visitors to the area in terms of quality, type and quantity.

- **Under-utilisation of sites along the seafront** – Ensuring that sites that are currently underutilised make a more significant contribution to the overall offer of the seafront.

- **Widening the appeal of the Seafront** – As the seafront is one of the main drawing points for visitors to Eastbourne, the seafront should provide activities and facilities that appeal to a wide range of people, whilst also strengthening the appeal to existing markets.
• **Limited provision of leisure and community facilities** – The seafront is a significant asset for community and leisure activities. However, the provision of facilities for such uses is limited, and many consider that the leisure offer is dated, fragmented and too far removed from the areas where there are the highest levels of activity.

• **Protection of the Natural and Built Environment** – The high quality of the built and natural environment is what makes Eastbourne unique and is part of its charm that appeals to visitors. It is important that its character is not adversely affected by improvements or change.

• **Lack of opportunities for seafront activities** – The seafront is Eastbourne’s main pull as a tourist destination, but it is important that visitors have things to do when they get there. It is important to consider opportunities for increasing the range of activities on the beaches.

• **Effect of working beaches** – The working beaches are a traditional feature of the seafront and an important part of the seafront economy. Although they are a necessary part of the seafront, they can be relatively unattractive and adversely affect the feel and setting of a particular area.

• **Quality of Public Realm** – It is important that the seafront is an attractive place that people want to spend their time. The quality of the public realm is an important factor in the look and feel of the seafront.

• **Future infrastructure requirements** – The seafront is the town’s primary defence against the sea and it is imperative that any changes do not compromise the ability of these defences to properly do their job. The seafront also incorporates other infrastructure that is important for the functioning of the town.

*Do you agree with the Issues? Are there any other issues that you think should be addressed?*
A Vision for the Seafront

The Plan will be to set out a clear vision for Eastbourne seafront. The proposed vision summarises how we would like the seafront to be:

By 2035, the two sides east and west of the pier will have different characteristics that will be maintained to Eastbourne’s benefit. The contrast between west and east will represent a fine balance appealing to all sides of the community and will be mutually supportive:

- The side west of the pier will maintain a sense of tradition and cultural heritage with improvements intended to preserve, maintain and enhance the existing offerings, landscape and appeal.
- The side east of the pier will support a much more dynamic approach, with state of the art leisure facilities providing a leisure destination offering for locals and visitors alike, including the best available modern facilities and attractions, providing attractive, accessible and innovative built environments for a new generation of families to enjoy.

Do you agree with the future vision for the Seafront?

Character Areas

Anyone walking the 6km length of the seafront will be conscious of a number of changes in character in terms of landscape and activities. The Seafront Local Plan recognises that these differing characteristics account for the unique appeal and positive qualities of the seafront, and therefore the seafront has been divided into seven character areas. These are shown on the map below, along with areas of interest along the seafront.

How much change do you think there should be in each character area?

- Minimal Change
- Medium Change
- Significant Change
Character Area 1: Holywell to Western Lawns
A high quality natural mature landscape with relatively low levels of quiet and passive activity at the gateway to the South Downs National Park. An area with particular environmental significance, it includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Character Area 3: Wish Tower to Pier
The most popular and well used part of the seafront, providing the iconic image of the resort. The character of this area is dominated by four to five storey Victorian/Edwardian buildings, and the esplanade provides a distinctive promenade along the upper edge of the beach.

Character Area 5: Redoubt to Sovereign Centre
A relatively poor quality area with a range of ad hoc buildings of poor design. Fisherman’s Green includes a fishing station and some tennis courts. There are areas of high quality open space, including Princes Park and Five Acre Field, which contribute to a seaside recreational character.

Character Area 2: Wish Tower and Devonshire Park
A good quality landscape with medium noise levels as activity levels increase. One of the main focal points for events during the summer. Wilmington Square links the seafront to Devonshire Park, which includes the main theatres and the location of the annual tennis tournament.

Character Area 4: Pier to Redoubt
A mainly hard surfaced area with little vegetation and green spaces. The intact Victorian / Edwardian esplanade provides a distinctive promenade along the upper edge of the beach. Apart from attractions at either end, there is little to do aside walking the promenade.

Character Area 6: Sovereign Park to Langney Point
A generally quiet area, one of the least used parts of the seafront. The wide seaside esplanade forms a distinctive promenade along the stretches of beaches towards the Waste Water Treatment Works at Langney Point.

Character Area 7: Sovereign Harbour
Stretches of shingle beaches broken up by the harbour entrance and an artificial spit, which fronts the outer harbour and the lock gates. Recent residential development forms a backdrop to the area. It is characterised by low levels of activity.
What are the options?

A number of strategic options for the future development of the Seafront have been devised following engagement with stakeholders and a review of evidence. We would like to know which of these options you think would be most beneficial to the seafront and why. The feedback from the consultation will help set the priorities within the Plan.

What approaches should be taken to the future development of the seafront?

Tourist Accommodation

What is the most appropriate approach to ensuring a suitable amount of tourist accommodation is retained in the most appropriate locations?

It is important that Eastbourne retains a critical mass of accommodation to keep the town seriously in the frame as a tourist destination. Existing policy designates an area known as the Tourist Accommodation Area within which the loss of tourist accommodation is restricted.

- Option 1 - Continue existing policy position
- Option 2 - Remove Tourist Accommodation Area designation
- Option 3 - Reduce Tourist Accommodation Area designation
- Option 4 - Distinguish between Primary and Secondary Tourist Accommodation Areas

How should sites for new tourist accommodation be identified?

The development of new accommodation supply is valuable in order to diversify and appeal to new sources of demand, and to help upgrade the supply of tourist accommodation in order to meet future market needs.

- Option 1 – Allocate sites for new tourist accommodation
- Option 2 – Criteria-based policies for new tourist accommodation

Leisure and Recreation Facilities

What level of provision of sport and recreation facilities should be made and what form should it take?

The seafront environment lends itself well to sports and recreation. These types of activity can be a tourist attraction but are important for local people who want to exercise and enjoy spending time in the attractive seafront environment.

- Option 1 - No new sport/recreation facilities
• Option 2 - Create a single recreation hub for all activities
• Option 3 - Create ‘hubs’ for different types of activity
• Option 4 - Distribute all recreation facilities along the Seafront

**How should new children’s play areas be provided?**

Providing play areas for children is important for attracting families with children to the town, and also for the local community as these provide local facilities that can attract more people to use the seafront.

• Option 1 - No new children’s play facilities
• Option 2 - Concentrate additional play areas in a single location
• Option 3 - Create a number of small play areas
• Option 4 - Distribute play equipment along the length of the seafront

**Accessibility**

**How could linkages between the seafront and the Town Centre and Devonshire Park be improved?**

Linkages between the seafront and the Town Centre and Devonshire Park need to be improved to encourage people to move between these areas. Better linkages will improve visitors overall experience of the town.

• Option 1 - Increase signposting / way finding
• Option 2 - Investigate pedestrianisation of Terminus Road / Wilmington Square
• Option 3 - Create landmark at end of Terminus Road
• Option 4 - Consistency in public realm between Seafront and other areas

**How should connectivity between different parts of the seafront be improved?**

Improved linkages along the seafront, particularly between different areas of the seafront, will help to draw people into areas that they may not have previously thought of using.

• Option 1 - Provision of trails linking areas e.g. sculpture / arts
• Option 2 - Provision of additional ramps / disabled access
• Option 3 - Provision of additional lighting

**How can we enhance the links between the seafront and the South Downs as a gateway to the National Park?**

The close proximity of the seafront to the South Downs Way means that it is a gateway to the South Downs National Park, providing the opportunity to improve the visitor experience and help bring visitors to the town.

• Option 1 – Comprehensive redesign of the area at foot of Downs
• Option 2 – Create improved access from Holywell end of seafront to Dukes Drive

**Commercial Uses**

*In what form should new food and drink facilities be provided?*

The Seafront Survey conducted in 2014 indicated that a significant number of seafront users would like to see improved food and drink facilities on the seafront.

- Option 1 - No new additional food and drink facilities
- Option 2 - Provision of additional kiosks
- Option 3 - Provision of new cafés
- Option 4 - Provision of new restaurants

*How much should evening activity on the seafront be promoted?*

Currently, there is relatively little activity on the seafront during the evening and night-times. There may be potential to increase activity into the evening to provide a different type of offer for people using the seafront.

- Option 1 – Increase evening activities through provision of additional facilities
- Option 2 – Restrict evening activities

*How best to minimise the adverse impacts of the working beaches?*

The working beaches are a traditional feature of the seafront and an important part of the seafront economy. However, they can be relatively unattractive and adversely affect the feel and setting of a particular area.

- Option 1 – Concentrate working beaches into single area
- Option 2 – Allow distribution of working beaches

*How should the seafront make a contribution to renewable energy generation?*

It is recognised that there needs to be greater provision of our energy needs from renewable sources, and the seafront has the potential to make a contribution to the renewable supply.

- Option 1 - Do not allow renewable energy generation on the Seafront
- Option 2 - Encourage small-scale microgeneration
- Option 3 - Encourage larger scale renewable energy generation
Seafront Activities

Should the seafront be sectioned/zoned for different activities?

Currently there is no structured zoning for the seafront for different activities. Providing particular locations where activities take place will help people better understand the seafront and prevent conflicts between different activities.

- Option 1 – Sectioning the seafront for different activities
- Option 2 – Do not section seafront

What approach should be taken towards new beach huts?

The beach huts provide facilities associated with the use of the beach and can increase usage of the beaches that they are adjacent to. This complements the cafés and stalls along the beach front to the benefit of the vitality of the seafront.

- Option 1 – Restrict additional beach huts
- Option 2 – Allow additional beach huts

Should water-based activities be promoted through the provision of additional facilities?

The seafront is the ideal place for water-based activities to take place, and the popularity of facilities such as Spray Watersports shows that there is demand if the correct facilities are provided.

- Option 1 – Restrict additional water based activities
- Option 2 – Allow additional water based activities

How to best promote additional use of the beaches?

The beach is a significant part of the attraction of the seafront. Facilities could be provided as part of the beach to enhance their appeal and increase use.

- Option 1 – Provide new facilities to increase use of beaches
- Option 2 – No new additional facilities to beaches

Natural Environment

How best to protect the important and unique landscape?

The landscape is a very important element of the seafront and helps to give the seafront a unique feel. A balance should be struck between protecting the landscape and allowing development that enhances the seafront.

- Option 1 – Restrict development in areas of highest landscape sensitivity
- Option 2 – Adopt a criteria-based policy that ensures conservation of landscape
How can we balance nature conservation with development?

The seafront is home to many different types of flora and fauna, many of which are only found in seaside environments. A balance must also be struck between protection of habitats and change that enhances the seafront.

- Option 1 – Review and identify additional areas with nature conservation interest
- Option 2 – Allow changes to designated sites where replacement habitat is made

Built Environment

How do we ensure the continued protection of historic buildings?

Historic buildings are an irreplaceable resource that should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. The change of use of historic buildings could help their protection, but it can mean that the historical significance of the building is lost.

- Option 1 - Restrict the conversion of historic assets to new uses
- Option 2 - Allowing conversion of historic buildings on a case-by-case basis
- Option 3 - Encourage the re-use of historic buildings by a more flexible approach to uses

How best to continue to protect the character of the built environment and the contribution that it makes to the seafront?

The built environment makes an important contribution to the look and feel of the seafront. Parts of the built environment are protected but these designations can restrict certain change.

- Option 1 - Identify individual buildings that make a special contribution
- Option 2 - Identify areas of townscape that make a special contribution
- Option 3 - Do not actively identify any additional buildings or townscapes

How should we ensure that the design of new buildings does not adversely affect the overall look and feel of the area?

The design of any new development in the seafront area is going to affect the overall look and feel of the area, and therefore how attractive it is to visitors.

- Option 1 – Ensure that design of new developments is consistent with existing buildings
- Option 2 – Allow new modern design that complements existing facilities

Community Uses

Should community groups occupy individual buildings, or be encouraged to co-locate into new multi-use facilities?
There are a number of clubs and societies operating in the seafront area. In order to allow these community uses to flourish, appropriate facilities are required.

- Option 1 – Maintain separate community facilities
- Option 2 – Provide a new multi-use facility to allow community groups to combine

**What level of protection should open spaces in the seafront area have?**

There are a number of amenity spaces in the seafront area that are not part of a park or garden and serve no specific purpose, although they do impact upon the setting of the seafront.

- Option 1 – Retain and protect existing open spaces
- Option 2 – Allow loss of open spaces if replacement provision is made

**Tourist Attractions and Facilities**

**What type of new tourist attractions should be provided?**

The provision of tourist attractions should complement the natural pull of the seaside to attract new tourists and keep existing visitors.

- Option 1 - Provision of additional indoor tourist attractions
- Option 2 - Provision of additional outdoor tourist attractions

**Who should new attractions and facilities be mainly aimed at?**

The largest proportion of visitors falls into the ‘middle aged’ group - four in ten are aged 35-54 years. However, only one third of visitors consist of families with children.

- Option 1 – Provide facilities mainly aimed at families
- Option 2 – Provide facilities mainly aimed at adults

**On what scale should new attractions be provided?**

It is important that the seafront has appropriate attractions in order to encourage tourists to visit. Such attractions could be provided on a large scale or small scale.

- Option 1 – Develop a smaller number of larger multi-purpose facilities
- Option 2 – Develop a larger number of smaller single purpose facilities

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**Do you have any other comments or suggestions you wish to make about the seafront?**
Getting involved

We want to hear your thoughts on the Issues and Options for the Seafront. Your views will help us to choose the best strategy for the future of the seafront. For more details on the Issues and Options, please read the Seafront Local Plan - Issues and Options Report, which is available to download via www.eastbourne.gov.uk/seafront.

The consultation period starts on 17 July and finishes on Friday 9 October 2015 Friday 23 October 2015.

The consultation contains a number of set questions, some of which have been included within this summary brochure. You can respond to the questions in the consultation by completing the questionnaire, which is available in electronic format via www.eastbourne.gov.uk/seafront or in paper copy from the Seafront office or the Council offices at 1 Grove Road.

If you have any other comments or suggestions, you can make a comment on the Seafront Local Plan Issues and Options directly on-line via www.eastbourne.gov.uk/seafront, and you can also email comments to planning.policy@eastbourne.gov.uk

Once the consultation on the Issues and Options Report has concluded, all comments will be considered and used alongside evidence and other considerations to create and refine the policies that will be included in the draft Seafront Local Plan. This will be subject to consultation again in 2016.