

SEAFRONT STRATEGY

Introduction	257
Strategy for the Seafront	257

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11.111 Hastings seafront stretches for over 2½ miles between West St Leonards and Rock-a-Nore and sets the image of the town for many visitors. As well as the attraction of the beach, most other popular tourist attractions are located close to the eastern end of the seafront.

11.112 Almost all of the seafront is now within designated conservation areas, including the two finest ones, the Old Town and Burtons' St Leonards. Although the architectural quality of buildings is high, their condition varies considerably and some important properties have an uncertain future.

11.113 The A259 runs along the seafront and is the main east-west route through Hastings. The through traffic is unwelcome in itself, but also restricts the scope for environmental improvement and severs the promenade from the rest of the town.

Strategy for the Seafront

11.114 Other chapters on Transport, Hastings Town Centre, St Leonards and the Old Town set out some specific proposals and issues relating to regeneration of the seafront. In addition, detailed proposals will be prepared in the light of the Regeneration Strategy when it is available. Local Plan policies provide the land use framework in which they will be implemented.

11.115 Five "character areas" have been defined where regeneration monies can be directed for their improvement:-

- The Stade Maritime Heritage Area
- The Old Town seafront.
- The Pelham Group.
- The 1930s seafront.
- Burtons' St Leonards seafront.

11.116 The Council and the Hastings and Bexhill Task Force have jointly commissioned a Seafront Strategy which will have regard to these distinctive character areas, the inter-connection between them and the connectivity between the seafront and the distinctive areas immediately behind. The objective would be to highlight the specific character of each section of the seafront and to enhance the seafront as a whole, without detracting from its existing attractions and historic and cultural heritage.

11.117 The character areas can be described more fully as follows:-

11.118 The Stade Maritime Heritage Area – The Council considers that the whole of the Rock-a-Nore/Fishing Stade/Fishmarket/Net Shops/Lifeboat Station/Fishermen's Museum/Shipwreck Heritage Centre/Sealife Centre/Coach Park/Winkle Island area should be managed as a maritime heritage site for tourism and cultural purposes. At present the maritime attractions and living heritage on The Stade do not realise their potential, particularly as a tourist destination. The desire is to achieve recognition that the offer on the Maritime Stade is at least of regional importance with a product that extends the visitor season and brings increased benefit to the area. At the same time, the Borough Council recognises the unique contribution to the living heritage of the Stade area made by Britain's largest shore-based fishing fleet, and supports the industry's continuation and enhancement.

11.119 The Council has commissioned reports from the University of Greenwich (June 1998) and The Tourism Company (October 2000) on how to further enhance the heritage asset of the Maritime Stade and increase its tourist potential, particularly in terms of

attracting higher spending visitors and extending the tourist season.

11.120 The reports recommend amongst their proposals the construction of a new tourist information, interpretative and education centre as a focus for the maritime activities and to point visitors to other attractions on The Stade and improved/increased numbers of public toilets. One site that has been put forward for the new centre is the existing coach and lorry park, which would enable the centre to provide a public face to the Maritime Stade, whereas the existing facilities largely turn their back on Rock-a-Nore Road. The Council will continue to undertake public consultation on any specific proposals.

POLICY SS1

The Stade Maritime Heritage Area

Planning permission will be granted for tourism development at the Stade, including a visitor centre with interpretative/educational facilities and improved toilets, provided that it would:-

- (a) Enhance the tourist and visitor potential of the area and the Borough as a whole;**
- (b) Be of a scale and design which preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the Stade and the Old Town Conservation Area; and**
- (c) Include safe and convenient access arrangements for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles.**

11.121 The Old Town Seafront – West of the existing Tourism Information Centre, the character of the seafront changes. The area between Winkle Island and Pelham Place combines the triple role of tourism facilities, a holiday pleasure beach and the site of the medieval harbour. Although the character of the area is strongly influenced by the amusement arcades and fairground rides, the boating lake, putting green and crazy golf also provide a sense of openness and allow good views of the Old Town and East and West Hill. The seafront provides a open, accessible amenity space for residents and visitors alike.

11.122 Whilst the holiday pleasure beach and amusements in this area form part of the town's attraction to visitors as a traditional seaside resort, it is important that any further development of such attractions does not detract from the character and appearance of the Old Town Conservation Area. For this reason, the further development of amusements and related activities will be controlled (see Policy T2 in Chapter 5b 'Tourism'). In addition, any development proposed for The Stade/Old Town Seafront will be expected to respect the visual and historic link with the Old Town Conservation Area whilst serving the needs of the modern visitor.

POLICY SS2

The Stade/Old Town Seafront

Planning permission will only be granted for new development within The Stade/Old Town Seafront Area shown on the Proposals Map, provided that it would respect the open aspect and accessibility of the area and the strong visual and historical link with the Old Town.

11.123 The Pelham Group – This comprises a group of historic Grade II Listed Buildings centering around St Mary-in-the-Castle and Pelham Crescent. These buildings, which are of national

importance, form a strong visual link between the Old Town and Hastings town centre.

11.124 The 1930s Seafront – The concrete seafront esplanade extending from Harold Place to Marina was an innovative project during the 1930s by the then Borough Engineer & Surveyor, Sidney Little. Although the series of structures forms part of the town’s 1930s heritage, the effects of time and exposure to the sea have begun to have adverse effects. As a result, the Borough Council will continue to monitor their structural integrity and assess the need to conserve or replace them as a long-term measure.

11.125 Marine Court, an imposing 1930s steel-frame building of considerable visual impact and architectural quality, has been listed Grade II. As such, it merits careful conservation and management in the context of the 1930s seafront. The Borough Council will seek to conserve the architectural character of Marine Court, including extensions of additional statutory controls where appropriate.

11.126 The Council is keen to see the restoration of these buildings, together with the enhancement of their general setting, including improved pedestrian links between the town centre and the Old Town along Pelham Place.

11.127 Burtons’ St Leonards Seafront – The Burtons’ St Leonards seafront is centred on the Royal Victoria Hotel and the Regency colonnades to the east and west of it. Comprehensive proposals are to be formulated for the conservation of these “original” 1828 seafront buildings.

11.128 The Borough Council will support proposals that enhance the setting and character of the following important buildings on the Burtons’ St Leonards Seafront:–

- (i) Crown House/The Marina Colonnades/The Royal Victoria Hotel;
- (ii) The Undercliff/Grand Parade.