

Public comments regarding application DC/21/1208/FUL (replacement beach huts on Jubilee Parade)

I am submitting the following text as a public comment that I would like to have read at the next appropriate planning and environments meeting

(Text follows)

Dear Councillors

I would like to make the following representation to you in respect of my personal views on the planning application for the new Beach Huts.

The design of the beach huts, whilst they may not be to everybody's taste is innovative and contemporary and has been executed by a highly regarded architectural firm local to the region using traditional materials. The huts represent a small, rare but significant contribution of high quality design in Lowestoft's Public realm. They have a design that is of its time and has been designed on its own merits. As such they represent a positive and forward looking contribution to the town. It is important for all generations but particularly the young that contemporary designs are seen to have a value alongside the design solutions of the past. Without that what hope are we giving those that follow us?

The use of this site as an opportunity to feature a contemporary design of beach huts has been heralded several times over the last few years by East Suffolk Council as part of a wider plan to bring economic regeneration to the town. One might have personal misgivings about whether the communication with the public has been adequate but it is the design which is the subject of the planning application not the process. As a business owner and resident in Lowestoft, I can only stress the importance of economic regeneration activities and publically funded initiatives represent the most significant element of this.

For what it is worth, a positive post (on the 24th March) about the beach hut in a social media group of over 32 thousand locals has attracted hundreds of overwhelmingly positive comments. Typical reactions include "they look amazing", "really lovely", "love them", "great", "so cool", "well nice", "lush", "look fab" and "they get my vote". Please take this into account if you attempt to use social media to gauge public reaction.

I hope that you feel able to lend the application your support.

Public comments re application DC/21/1208/FUL

Please find below my Public Comment/Objection regarding the above application.

Public Comment re Planning Application DC/21/1208/FUL - Jubilee Parade Beach Huts. For consideration by your planning and Environment committee - Friday 9th April 2021.

I object to this application on the following grounds:

Design:

The design which has been described as "bold & modern" is in my opinion ugly and unsuitable for the particular location. I appreciate good innovative and contemporary design in an appropriate location but I do not believe the planned location is right for this particular design. The beach huts resemble basic square boxes and lack style or fresh innovative design. Apart from being made of traditional wood, they do not in any way shape or form represent Lowestoft nor utilise local materials or vernacular.

Dominating/Overbearing:

72 huts as proposed is excessive and will have a negative material visual impact on the overall appearance of the seafront promenade. The beach huts will over dominate the landscape by virtue of their two level design.

Inappropriate in Conservation Area:

The design of the beach huts pay no attention to the current appearance of any other built structures within or around the proposed location. Their appearance will be harmful and detrimental to the overall vista of the wider conservation area. They do not compliment the remaining section of the 1930s terrace nor do they sit well with the designs of the nearby existing more traditional beach huts. They are in my view an ill-conceived experiment.

Over Development:

The number (72) of proposed beach huts appears to be excessive, the beach huts will be crammed together so as to ensure financial viability of the development.

Other general observations:

Of course investment, refurbishment, regeneration, renewal are all to be welcomed and benefit the local economy, tourism and local people but all of these factors could and can be achieved without the need to foist upon the public, what I believe the majority feel is inappropriate design concepts on what is and will always be a traditional family seaside resort. That is not to say that Lowestoft should in any way be backward looking, on the contrary, we must strive forward and change and look to the future. Part of this process is modernisation but let us not also spoil and harm the good traditional elements that we also retain. It is a great pity that the youth of our town were not consulted nor involved in some way with the design of this development. If we truly want young, contemporary innovative ideas to filter through then let us involve the local younger generation in projects such as this. They should feel part of the process not only to encourage their respect for our built environment but also to help install pride in their town, its existing and future heritage.

As someone who has taken a keen interest in this proposed development I have reviewed several social media sights and noted various comments that have been made on them. Many issues have been raised including the following:

Inappropriate design for setting and not in keeping with surroundings • Impact on Conservation Area • Lack of disabled access to upper deck • Over development • Poor Design • Non-traditional design • Lack of public consultation • Encroachment onto the promenade • Void people deck may be used by homeless/individuals to seek shelter or minors to get lost in • Loss of green space • No defence against flooding as made from wood • Short slight solution • Lack of surrounding parking • Impact on outlook • New toilet block • Impact on cafe • Temporary appearance • Lack of lights and security cameras • Increased rubbish and need for more bins.

In addition, positive comments include:

Addition of more need beach huts • Well designed and architecturally interesting • Benefit and improvement to the area • Retention of existing accesses • Sustainable materials used.

Of the social media Facebook pages and groups I have noted the following as of 5/4/2021:

Lowestoft Heritage & Architectural Appreciation Group:

263 Comments - of which 45 opposed compared to 9 in support.

BBC Radio Suffolk Facebook Page:

298 Comments - of which 95 opposed compared 16 in support.

Lowestoft Journal Facebook Page:

116 Comments - of which 30 opposed compared to 15 in support.

Out of approximately 210 comments where a particular view was expressed, 170 were opposed compared to 40 in support. That equates to 81% opposed compared to 19% in support of the proposals.

That is of course just a snapshot but is nonetheless interesting to note.

Of the 29 public comments lodged on the East Suffolk District Council Planning Portal, 20 (69%) are opposed compared to 9 (31%) in support.

I simply request that councillors take the above comments into account when considering this application. Thank you.

DC/21/1208/FUL OBJECTION TO THIS DEVELOPMENT April 5th 2021

This design has little architectural merit, presenting as quasi '*utility, passive-brutalism*' structures so popular in the 1970/80s that have more in common with garden sheds or gun emplacements than a place to relax by the sea. What should be surprising is that East Suffolk Council and local councillors generally consider this development to be in keeping with the concept of a Conservation Area and enhancement of local heritage.

Of course, from experience it has been demonstrated that the attitude toward Conservation Areas in Kirkley by some Councillors and the East Suffolk Council Planning Department has not been sympathetic, and it is therefore no surprise that this form of so-called 'modern' architecture is deemed acceptable.

The question needs to be asked, by Public Inquiry, why has East Suffolk Council used tax-payers money commissioning architects to design a development that is totally contrary to any form of conservation or heritage protection. Four slabs of material with complementary windows is hardly high tech and does not in my opinion, justify any expenditure at all. Saturation level development in this case, and to whose advantage? What is the cost of this questionable development, what is the estimated financial return to the local taxpayer, what fees were paid to the architects for the design of these unattractive proposed constructions? If the instructions to the architects were to design something that would reflect the heritage of Kirkley, the result suggests that they are tyros in the art of understanding Conservation Areas. Or perhaps, those who issued the instruction chose to ignore the actual requirement in pursuit of a group-flattering scheme? Let the public decide if this is money well spent before claiming public and Councillor support. More importantly, let there be a Public Consultation on the matter, not a platitudinal and delusional '*You have been consulted because we say so*', so often not said, but implied in council decisions.

What of the elected area town councillors, where do they stand on this, as they were no doubt elected on the basis that they supported the aspirations of Kirkley, in this case (and others), based on the alleged legally binding ESC/WDC document designed to protect Kirkley from this type of contrary development.

This form of dichotomous thinking with regard to local Conservation Areas and Heritage is little more than self-defeating, and contempt for the opinions of local residents. With a degree of fanfare the Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) program appeared. What is their take on this? HAZ statement: ***The government funding comes as part of a four year programme of physical improvements, community engagement and cultural activities designed to regenerate the South Lowestoft Conservation Area to give them a new lease of life. Note the key words; physical improvements, community engagement, regenerate, and South Lowestoft Conservation area.*** How many times have long-term residents of Kirkley heard this?

This development requires a complete re-think, with the concept of conservation and heritage being paramount. I feel it must be agreed that those who pay lip service to preserving local heritage and conservation areas and then act totally contrary to these ambitions, are at least uniformly consistent in inconsistency, and should consider their position. East Suffolk Council inherited from their

predecessors Waveney District Council, the well publicised document on Conservation Areas in Lowestoft, supplemented by Article 4 Directions. If this document is no longer considered relevant, and has been removed (without consultation) from the intentions and expressed policy of ESC, an explanation is seriously required. If it remains in force simply to be ignored by East Suffolk Council and their Planning Officers, the public, particularly residents of Kirkley, should be allowed the opportunity to determine the case.

Councillor quote: *"The project will achieve a lot. It will of course clear an area which is a bit of an eyesore at the moment and allow us to create a much greater and more attractive offering for visitors. In September we will be discussing further plans for new beach huts and further enhancements which will really improve the area for everyone."* So replacing an eyesore with a greater eyesore is progress and improvement? I am not persuaded.

Key words for planners and councillors: consultation, conservation, heritage and transparency.

April 5th 2021.

I would like to add my concerns regarding the new proposed beach huts. The bottom tier looks as if it encroaches a long way onto the bottom prom, narrowing the walkway hugely. When the occupants have added their sun loungers, table and windbreaks as seems to be the norm with hut residents there looks to be very little room to pass. Please can the council take this into account when making a decision?

Have no problem with the development as long whoever uses them don't put their deck chairs etc on the promenade blocking others walking by and of course social distance
They appear to have a platform on the beach hut for that .
Anyway they can go on the beach that's what it's there for to enjoy that also applies to all beach hut users too

You are inviting comments ahead of the upcoming planning meeting.

Although I realise there is a valid argument for 'new and exciting' the proposed beach huts are not in keeping and do not reflect the ethos of the south beach or the traditional nature of the existing architecture in a conservation area. Among other concerns already suggested by others elsewhere, the structures make no attempt to acknowledge the very real practicalities of their situation and the design does not take into account the aggressive conditions of the coastal 'climate'. I think it would be difficult to imagine a design so adept at collecting the wind-born sand that is evident each winter during regular south/south easterly winds and which will clearly build-up under and around the structures. How will it be removed?

FWIW. A copy of my comments on the relevant Facebook pages.

"The planned new beach huts encroach too far onto the promenade which will cause trip hazards and further problems by restricting the width of the walkway.

I seriously doubt the reasons given for development are truthful. If they needed to support the cliff why didn't they do all of it, including removing the small café, the extensive lifeguard hut facility, and the public toilets which are all in the shadow of the same cliff and were built at the same time?

This is little more than a cynical money making scheme* by East Suffolk Council (who have been encouraged to 'liquidate all assets' by government) and who will retain the profit from the top row of huts which will be sold to the public. They will also retain the rent from the lower level of huts rather than passing it to Lowestoft Town Council.

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* the same money making scheme they used to demolish only part of the Battery Green car park in Lowestoft citing bizarrely, 'concrete cancer', and the buildings to the rear of the old Lowestoft Town Hall complex, so they could develop the area as a drive in fast food outlet, which has yet to materialise. Just rampant and unjustifiable Neo-liberalism which is not part of their remit.

Shameful. Not only that they stonewall or denigrate anyone who opposes their preferred narrative."

I look forward to the Town council reflecting these concerns in their considerations. Not least because I fear the ESC will kick and skweem to get their own way, and the decision has already been taken to move this proposal forward to the benefit of their 'preferred partners' and this application is little more than a box ticking exercise.

I make no apologies for what some may opine to be my belligerent and cynical opinions.

My submission as member of the public and tax payer- 6th April 2021

Replacement beach huts on two levels of jubilee parade. Total 72 beach huts, with associated platform, and access stairs. Provision of 6 accessible beach huts.

Jubilee Parade The Esplanade Lowestoft Suffolk

Ref. No: DC/21/1208/FUL | Validated: Fri 12 Mar 2021 | Status: Awaiting decision

I have just viewed these new proposed beach huts in the local newspapers EDP & Journal. I am all for a change in design or a more modern approach but In my opinion the design of these beach huts is awful. The design might work better in stone or reinforced concrete with appropriate facings but in wood they just look like garden sheds gone wrong. Beach huts normally present a colourful happy holiday façade as per the much photographed examples at Southwold. They also take up far too much room on the lower promenade. People will find it hard to walk along the promenade with such a narrow traverse. Please think again because in the longer term these huts will deteriorate and look even worse.

I cant help wondering who will be responsible for digging them out, when due to their design the new beach huts are inundated by wind blown sand. Which happens regularly each winter.

