

EXMOUTH LITTLEHAM
(Exmouth)

07/1952/FUL

Target Date: 31.10.2007

Applicant: RNLI Trading Limited

Location: Land South of Queens Drive, Foxholes Car Park

Proposal: New Lifeboat Station

CONSULTATIONS

County Highway Authority

I have the following initial highway comment to make on this planning application.

1. It is proposed to locate the new building on land that is recorded as being public highway. The hatched area is not the whole extent of the public highway.

If it is decreed that highway land can be released for the purpose of this development, the 'highway area' in question would need to be formally stopped up. I understand this can be done through the planning process using S247 of the TCPA. The applicant will need to undertake the necessary procedure with GOSW.

2. A 4.5m x 70m visibility splay to the nearside carriageway edge at the junction of Queens Drive with Maer Lane should be retained, ensuring that no obstruction exists within the splay. The sightline should be indicated on the plans.
3. Car Parking - I understand the two bays of 5no car parking spaces would not be delineated and marked out to prevent the public from using them, but I assume the kerbing would be dropped at these points. Presumably, the RNLI staff would have some form of special permit displayed on their windscreens. It would be useful to learn whether or not the proposed parking arrangements have been agreed with the Police Authority responsible for delivering the traffic warden service in the town. The applicant should be invited to confirm (or otherwise) these points. Both areas would require the removal of edge of highway marker posts. The western block is located too close to the pedestrian refuge crossing point which could lead to conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. This block requires relocating westwards. I would also like to know how often the car parking spaces are likely to be in use.
4. I would welcome clarification as to how pedestrians (walking along the esplanade) would be informed of the lifeboat launching to prevent a potential conflict between the lifeboat and pedestrians to the rear of the building. At the other end of this section of the building, confirmation should be sought that the entrance would take the form of a roller shutter door to prevent a conflict with cyclists using the re-routed cycleway.

Once I have received amended plans and further information satisfactorily addressing the issues raised above I should be in a position to offer a formal recommendation.

South West Water

No comments received

Natural England

Natural England advised EDDC at screening phase that an Appropriate Assessment would be required. Natural England has reviewed the environmental statement (ES) and agrees with its findings. Natural England considers that as long as the mitigation identified in the ES is undertaken and an environmental action plan implemented then the proposed works will not have a likely significant effect on the Special Protection Area (SPA). As long as EDDC agrees with our advice a formal appropriate assessment will not be required.

Natural England does have some concerns about the precedent this development will set in terms of future developments within or adjacent to the SPA. Natural England considers this development to be an exception to the rule due to the location chosen, mitigation identified and the design methodology and should not be considered in anyway as setting any precedent.

English Heritage

No comments

Devon County Archaeology

Assessment of the Historic Environment Record (HER) and the details submitted by the applicant suggest that the scale and situation of this development will have no archaeological impact.

However, it needs to be recognised that the HER does not provide a complete record of Devon's historic environment. We would therefore be grateful if it was made known to the applicant that if any significant archaeological remains (pottery, human or animal skeletal remains etc) were discovered during ground works they should be reported to this office.

Environmental Health

Thank you for the above application. I have read the Environmental Impact Assessment and agree in principal to the noise levels quoted for the proposed pile driving activities. However, I would like to recommend that the following condition is attached to any permission granted.

No use of pile driving equipment between the hours of 1800hrs and 0800hrs unless previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Beach Safety Officer

As requested I am commenting on the planning permission for the new lifeboat station adjacent to the 'Foxholes Cafe'.

There are two areas of concern from a Beach Safety point of view about the intended location and operation from that point by both the inshore lifeboat and off-shore all weather boat.

1. The main issue is that of public safety upon launching and operation of the vessels across the main beach.
 - Both the 4x4 beach safety vehicle and the beach cleaning machinery operated by the District Council are removed from the beach before midday during the summer period. The main reason for this is that the beach gets far too busy for the interaction of plant and the public. In the winter months contractor vehicles are used in areas requiring maintenance but under direct supervision of banks men and with cordoned off areas.

- The area requested is serviced by on street car parking both sides of the road, Maer Road Car Park, Foxholes Car Park, and on street parking towards Orcombe Point. It has toilets in two locations, cafe and designated safe bathing area. This means that it is by far the most populated section of beach along the almost two miles of sand. The main usage is from families especially with small children. It has the largest width of sand from the sea to the prom, which makes the sand ideal for sunbathing and general beach use.
 - Due to the immediate nature of the service when required, and the unpredictable nature of water based emergencies, I believe it would not be best served at this location. The need for so many extra, or ancillary staff to move the public out of the way, of the access to, and the launch area, not to mention to control the panic that would ensue in doing so (especially when small children are involved) would in fact considerably increase the launch time for both boats. Currently the lifeboat is launched from a relatively narrow stretch of beach and from a mooring.
2. The change that would occur in beach usage and the impact it would have on local concessions and bather safety.
- People will migrate, due to disturbance, from the area surrounding the lifeboat station to other areas of the beach. The problem is that the area is so popular at the moment; the numbers moving would be substantial. They would only be able to move into areas that are not considered safe for bathing such as the jet ski area or no bathing area. For well over twenty years both the Exmouth Beach Rescue Club and more recently the Council Beach Lifeguards have been directing people into the relatively safe bathing of Maer Bay.

After discussion with Jack Knott from Exeter City Council, I understand that the new channel that has naturally punched its way through the sand bar at Exmouth (opposite Maer Rocks), will by the end of this year be buoyed as an alternative channel to the channel as it is now (out through Orcombe Point). He believes that this new channel will be a long term feature and so negates any issues of the current channel being too shallow for the lifeboat, as I believe does the proposed new lifeboat (having a shallow draft and jet drive).

The council has initiated a study of beach and river topography; studying mainly the movement of sand with the estuary and the issues that may arise from building on the beach. I would at least recommend that any decisions be held until the result of that study.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL

No objection but the Committee would like Clarification as to the applicant RNLI Trading Ltd. as it wished to be clear that the major use would be for a lifeboat station and not a retail outlet.

WARD MEMBER(S)

No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Objections

12 letters have been received raising the following points:

- EIA report is out of date
- The proposed location is still to the west of the location where silting up occurs

- Launching of new craft will be difficult due to proximity to the busiest section of bathing beach and the rocks which are submerged at mid and high tides
- Always difficult to safely reverse a trailer (particularly when this obscures visibility)
- To require beach marshals will make it more difficult to get sufficient crew
- Debatable whether an All Weather Lifeboat is required in this location
- Proposed site is unsuitable as the scheme would spoil the panoramic views and thereby reduce incomes from tourists
- Will the area lose its designation as a safe bathing area
- Current proposals should be located on/adjacent to the current First Aid kiosk to allow use of the swashway as the main channel.
- Development will be the green light to further development along the esplanade and clutter the seafront
- Two storey height of the building dominating and unnecessary
- There is likely to be the use of claxons to alert the public regarding a launch which is denied in the EIA report
- The boathouse will block the site lines of the Beach Rescue volunteers who operate on the seafront
- Construction works during the tourist season will affect local income
- Launching to the east of Maer Rocks will cause erosion and damage to the soft sand the important rocks
- There is a danger of operating large mechanised equipment on a crowded beach where people are unpredictable – this could cause them to migrate to less safe areas of beach
- The wash from moving boats could cause a surge across areas such as rock pools knocking over children
- Determination should await the findings of the Shoreline Management plan 2
- No practical route along the beach at high water – therefore ramped provision should be made
- Building is an enormous monstrosity for such a sensitive area
- Development should not be built within a Flood zone
- Harm the quaintness of the café, beach club building and the beach huts
- Will ruin the natural end of the seafront
- The elevated slipway will split the beach in half making it difficult for holiday makers and local alike using the beach
- Previous concerns identified that the area is too dangerous to launch boats from

Support

440 copies of a 'copy-letter' supporting the application have been received.

In addition 32 individual letters have been received raising the following points:

- Skegness Lifeboat launches through similar busy beach with no safety concerns
- Proposals represent an effective way of providing All Weather Lifeboat coverage to Exmouth
- A fast carriage boat is suitable for an estuary that is silting up and will prevent the existing boat getting stuck in the channel
- Scheme should be approved with vital urgency
- Building as proposed is modern well designed scheme built for purpose
- Wish that the cycle way is considered and extended at the planning and building stage
- Facility is long awaited and will be a boost for Exmouth
- Development will be built to good environmental standards
- Development will provide improved facilities that are required for the crew
- Facility will provide improved training area

- Boathouse will complement Exmouth seafront without any detrimental effect on the local traffic beach users or pedestrians
- Location will support and enhance the safety aspects of the Exmouth seafront
- The site will be a popular visitor attraction where the work of the RNLI will be seen at first hand.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

App.No:	Proposal	Decision	Date
92/P0716	Single storey building for utilisation as beach and rescue headquarters	Deemed Consent	22.06.1992
92/P0103	Construct new clubhouse	Withdrawn	20.03.1992
91/P1539	New clubhouse and storage of rescue equipment	Deemed Refusal	25.11.1991
83/P0615	Re-siting of HQ Hut	Approved	16.05.1983
82/P1050	Erection of single storey public conveniences	Deemed consent	21.09.1982

PLANNING POLICIES

Government Guidance

PPS 1 – Delivering Sustainable development
 PPS 9 – Biodiversity and ecological conservation
 PPG 20- Coastal Planning
 PPS 25 – Development and Flood Risk

Devon Country Structure Plan (2001-2016)

Policy ST1 - Sustainable development
 Policy ST5 - Development Strategy
 Policy C01 - Landscape character and Local Distinctiveness
 Policy CO3 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 Policy CO6 - Quality of New Development
 Policy C010 - Protection of Nature Conservation Sites and Species
 Policy CO13 - Protecting Water Resources and Flood Defence
 Policy TR4 - Parking Strategy, Standards and Proposals
 Policy TR10 – Strategic Road Network

East Devon Local Plan (1995-2011)

Policy S4 – Development within built up area boundaries
 Policy D1 – Design and Local Distinctiveness
 Policy D2 – Sustainable Construction
 Policy D4 – Landscape Requirements
 Policy EN1 - Development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 Policy EN4 - Nationally Important Sites – including Sites of Special scientific Interest
 Policy EN8 - Protection of Local Nature Reserves, County Wildlife Sites and County Geological Sites
 Policy EN20 - River and Coastal Flooding
 Policy T06 - Provision of Visitor attraction

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The application affects a parcel of land located at the junction formed in Queens Drive, where the road splits with a spur off to the roundabout linking Maer Road and Foxholes Hill. At this section of Queens Drive therefore the existing pavement is widened and extends beyond the footpath and cycle way that runs parallel to the sea wall. It is understood that a former WC block was located in this area although, the site is now open pavement with three flag poles adding to the character and definition of the area. There is no on street parking permitted within the area due to the nature of the road junction and the pedestrian crossing points that are located along Queens Drive. There is no sea wall above the pavement level at this point, although a split level walling forms the drop in the level between the pavement and beach area.

On the seaward side of the beach, the evidence of the outfall is clearly seen with the robust concrete encased protrusion jutting out into the estuary, to the east of this is Maer Rocks. These are a red sandstone low lying cluster of rocks popular with holiday makers at low tide (for rock pooling) and thereby forming an important and distinguishable feature of this area.

The whole site is located within a Flood Zone 3a which is classified as high risk, and falls within an area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), RAMSAR Wetland Site, and Special Protection Area.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes the erection of new boat house for both the All Weather boat and Inshore boat, crew room, public viewing area and retail facility for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. This would be positioned on the extended area of pavement and angled such that a new slipway could be built out onto the sand permitting boat/launch access to the sea.

The Boathouses

The whole structure would be encased within a single contemporary roof structure where there would be a steeply pitched roof over the main boat house and a series of wings (one to the east and two to the west). This roof structure would be formed in pre patinated copper with a glazed atrium section along the main pitched roof section of the boathouse. The copper roof would have deep eaves and a large overhang with added glazing, breaking up the roof form.

The walls would be split between the random rubble finish (formed from blue lias) to the lower section and timber cladding (western red cedar) to the upper areas. The fenestration throughout the building would be formed from hardwood with glazed viewing panels cut into the boat house doors to the front and rear to provide visual interest and enable the public to have views into the building.

On the western side (lowest section) it is proposed to house an in shore lifeboat (ILB). This would be pulled by a tractor in a system similar to the existing further up Exmouth Beach. A central section would then provide a two storey area for the crew room and crew observation floor. The main element of the building is the all weather lifeboat (ALB) house. This is proposed as a fast carriage boat to be transported by means of a tractor unit that would push the boat down the slipway and out into the sea. This again would be a two storey building with a pitched roof and a maximum height of 9.1m. to the pitch. On the eastern side of the building with a cantilevered style roof forming kick projections from just above eaves level of the main boathouse section would be a public viewing gallery and retail area. This would provide a similar function to that found at the existing inshore RNLI station at Exmouth. Here it is proposed that there is a ground floor retail sales with a lift and stairs providing access to a first floor viewing platform into the ALB area.

Proposed Slipway

This would protrude from the existing pavement level out over the split level sea wall that currently exists. Subject to shifting sand heights, it is proposed that the slipway would be approximately 35 – 40m long. The slipway would be formed from pre cast concrete planks spanning longitudinal sections themselves fixed to piles.

CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

This application arises from the need to relocate the existing RNLI facilities to meet the current and predicted future demands of Lifeboat cover at Exmouth and within Lyme Bay. The current arrangement operates from a split site where the Inshore Lifeboat is located close to Carlton Hill on Queens Drive and the ALB operate from the estuary with temporary facilities located close to the Marina. Due to changes in the currents and the silting up of the estuary it is now found that the ALB is unable to launch from the estuary at all states of the tide and therefore alternative options have been explored with the current scheme meeting the operational needs of the RNLI.

However the whole of the Exmouth seafront beach and its accompanying estuary are designated as areas of Internal ecological and nature conservation importance and Exmouth also has an important tourism economy with the prime bathing beach being located to the west of Maer Rocks. Together with additional considerations in terms of design, visual appearance, impact on the character of the area and highway and parking, these form the main considerations for the application

Environmental Statement

Due to the site's ecological importance, the proposed works (prior to the application's submission) were screened as EIA development requiring the submission of an Environmental Statement (ES) with the application. Following an Environmental Scoping opinion being formed, itself following extensive consultation, an ES has duly been submitted with the application and forms a material consideration with the application. The Statement considers aspects of:

- coastal processes,
- geology,
- sediment and water quality,
- ecological resources,
- landscape and visual impacts,
- archaeology and heritage,
- traffic and the road network,
- noise and vibration,
- recreational tourism and public access,
- commercial fishing and fisheries resources.

While particular aspects of tourism and landscape/visual impact, will be considered later in the report, the remaining aspects will be detailed and considered here.

Within an ES there is set terminology for classifying the predicted effects. These are outlined as follows:

Negligible	- The impact is not of concern
Minor Adverse	- The impact is undesirable but of limited concern
Moderate adverse	- The impact gives rise to some concern but it is likely to be tolerable (depending on its scale and duration)
Major adverse	- The impact gives rise to serious concern and should be considered unacceptable

- Minor beneficial - The impact is of minor significance but has some environmental benefit
Moderate beneficial - The impact has some gain to the environment
Major beneficial - The impact provides significant positive gain

It is recognised that the beach area is a dynamic and a constantly evolving environment where careful analysis and on going study is required. Currently underway is a major study where East Devon District Council is a key stakeholder. This is being undertaken by Halcrow and is likely to report in 18 months to 2 years. Although some consultees have sought to hold the current application until the report is finalised, the application itself has been the subject of a thorough Environmental Statement (ES) and it would therefore be unreasonable to hold the determination. However it is considered that although already formally aware of this study, the applicant should again be advised to make their own representations to the study. If the application is approved, this can be undertaken though a note to applicants added to the decision notice.

For the current ES, the findings note that impacts from construction and operation for the following are of negligible impact and negligible residual significance:

- coastal process
- geology

This classification results from the location of the main development being on the existing promenade and the new slipway being of limited length and projection and not extending beyond the point of mean high-water. In this regard it is predicted that there will be no impacts on coastal processes through effects on wave and tidal regime, on shore –off shore sediment movements and the overall sediment regime and beach system. Further it is highly unlikely that there would be impacts on the geology, due to the primary launch position being located to the west of the outfall which protects Maer Rocks.

Sediment and Water Quality

In terms of sediment and water quality, it is considered that there is likely to be minor adverse impacts due to the potential for accidental spills both during and post construction. These are limited by the distance between the site and the water. It is advised that provided the applicants adhere to existing guidance contained with the Environment Agency's Pollution prevention guide, there should be no harmful effects

Ecological resources

With regard to the impact on the ecological resources minor adverse effects are predicted for intertidal communities during construction and intertidal habitats during future operation. These specifically relate to the compaction and amount of plant access during the construction phase, the noise and disturbance from piling and the loss of a small section of intertidal beach area (0.5m²). It is recognised that the latter issue can not be mitigated against because the slipway would remain in situ, but that the resource that would be lost due to this work is plentiful within the Exmouth Area and therefore the loss is not considered harmful. The noise issue regarding the disturbance of birds is also of particular concern. However the nearby roosting and feeding site (at Dawlish Warren) is located approximately 500m away and this distance is considered too far away for detail to be distinguished and for disturbance to occur. It is important to note that significant noise and disruption to the area occurs already due to the proximity of the road and the number of annual visitors.

Archaeology and Heritage

This aspect has been considered by the Devon County Archaeologist as well as being detailed within the ES. In this regard both sources confirm that the site per se is not noteworthy of artefacts although care must be taken during works to ensure that any finds are suitably reported and investigated. Such a requirement is standard practise and can be detailed on any decision notice as additional information.

Noise and vibration

Although there are no predicted noise or vibration impacts during the future operation, this is the only aspect noted as being of major adverse and moderate adverse impact during the construction phase. Such a classification results from the proposed use of piles to secure the building which are required given the nature of the environment in which it is being constructed. The assessment has been made against the nearest non residential property Foxholes Café which is approximately 30m from the proposed site and the nearest residential property known as Mearbrook which is approximately 120m from the site. Using appropriate methodology, it has been recognised and predicted that there is the potential for noise impacts that register a major adverse impact. In this regard, mitigation of at least 10dB is required in order to bring construction noise levels down to a potentially acceptable level of 70dB L_{aeq} or less at Foxholes Café. It is considered that while such attenuation can be achieved with the use of purpose built temporary noise screens erected at site, this is best at mitigating against higher frequency sounds and that lower frequency noises such as generators will continue to pose a nuisance.

It is considered that such noise which is noted within the ES as being difficult to mitigate against, is typical of any construction site and owing to its temporary nature is not considered significantly harmful. However in order to limit the potential complaints and in accordance with conditions that were imposed on the grant of permission for works to the sea wall in 2005, it is proposed to impose time working conditions.

Through the ES it has been demonstrated that impacts from vibrations are unlikely to cause harm or perceived threats to the nearest residential property. However the proximity of the café to the site has caused concern. In the best interests of all parties concerned, the report has recommended that prior to the works commencing, a dilapidation survey is carried out on the Café including a photographic record. Further that vibration monitoring should be undertaken by the contractor in accordance with best practice. This is good practice and although not enforceable by specific conditions should be drawn to the attention of the applicant.

Commercial Fishing

The ES has concluded that the main commercial fisheries within the Exe Estuary relates to shellfish. These areas are located 1.5km from the Maer Rocks off Cockwood and immediately off The Point adjacent to the harbour entrance up to 500m between Exmouth and Lympstone. The ES also recognises the importance of bait collection and limited salmon fishing but none of these are likely to be affected by the development.

Tourism, economy and beach safety

Tourism is vitally important for the economy of Exmouth (the ES estimating the total visitor numbers to Exmouth between June and September 2002 was 30,500) and the beach is one of its main assets as it supports a range of recreational and sporting related activities as well as the traditional holiday maker enjoying sand and sea. The effects that the current scheme has on this aspect has drawn the most criticism as there is grave concern about the impact that the development and in particular the slipway would have on the prime bathing beach for Exmouth. Further affecting safety, are concerns raised by the Beach Rescue Team, who believe that the

building will limit their views along the beach and therefore limit their ability to provide safe and meaningful surveillance of the beach with associated rescue ability.

The proposed slipway runs across and ends to the west of the outfall channel and in so doing dissects the edge of the bathing area. Concern has therefore been voiced regarding the health and safety of the beach and water users and the potential conflict between these and the need to launch a lifeboat at speed in an emergency. The ES highlighted this aspect as having a moderate adverse significance thus this aspect needs careful consideration. However the ES makes further recognition of the RNLI's working practice and their interest in operating a safe and well drilled rescue launch procedure. The ES recognises that a number of other busy beaches have Lifeboat launches across them including Skegness, St Ives and Bude. These sites have safe operating procedures which it is considered can be modelled for Exmouth.

It appears that a number of the representations imagine the Lifeboat crossing Exmouth Beach at speed, however the statement makes it clear that while speed is important, the launch procedure while crossing the beach is undertaken at a walking pace to allow safe and accurate manoeuvring. With regard the Beach Rescue surveillance, it is not considered that their operations will be so fundamentally limited as to devalue their work. It is considered that visibility should be maintained, and this aspect is therefore not considered sufficiently harmful to warrant refusal on this basis.

Balanced against these concerns, (albeit that it is considered that safety can be sufficiently demonstrated by the RNLI working practices) is the need for the RNLI to have easy access to the water at all states of the tide. This is currently limited at spring low tides and therefore to have a launching position and mechanism for launching (i.e. tractor pushed lifeboat) that is more flexible is a significant benefit. Concern was expressed within the representations received that the siting of the station still did not overcome the position of the current sand bars and areas that are silting up or potential future changes to these. However the tractor unit associated with the Fast Carriage boat (proposed ALB) is partially submersible and has the option therefore of pushing the boat sufficiently far out as to overcome any sand bar obstacle thus providing the flexibility required. This benefit is significant and forms an important and material consideration for the current application.

In terms of tourism and the economy there is also an added benefit that the scheme will bring in terms of the high profile and potential iconic style of and prominence of the development. Such a building and associated retail facility together with the public viewing platform and the draw of the nationally recognised facility has the ability to attract members of the public. The site is within an area where there are limited 'other' facilities which can draw members of the public along the beach and in so doing this proposed development can be considered to extend the beach frontage and its use and benefit to the tourist economy. Such considerations are in accordance with Policy T06.

Design

In terms of design the application lies within an area where there is little defined character in terms of existing built form. The architectural design and style of the nearest building (the Foxholes Café) is of limited quality and therefore not a style that should set limits or be used as a precedent.

The current scheme is for an extremely well articulated contemporary building with high quality materials evolving from random rubble giving the building a defined and well grounded base, to timber boarding which provides a lighter and airier upper section to a roof with deep overhanging eaves and a patinated copper roof which will mellow to an attractive and varied blue green colour that reflects the vibrancy and colours of a seaside location. The contemporarily designed boathouse is reflective of its function (i.e. a boathouse) but with articulation and design that provides interest as a building in its own right. This building has come through a number of

incarnations with revisions to the finished form of the building particularly in relation to the retail element. To provide the viewing platform within the retail and public area is of significant benefit which is also considered to assist in the balance of the massing and form of the resulting building. Such a building is entirely in accordance with policy both nationally and locally and should therefore be fully supported in this location.

Of greater concern in terms of design is the material and form of the slipway. This is currently proposed as pre-cast concrete and therefore largely functional in nature. While the principle of the slipway and visual appearance will be considered further in terms of the character of the area, the materials appear somewhat utilitarian. They are however functional and often form slipway access across beaches. It is considered that no objections should be raised to this point although a condition should be imposed to ensure further details and consideration of the material is given particularly with regard to the finish of the edging detail.

Impact on the character of the area

Coupled with the design issues, the impact on the wider character of the area, is also important particularly in light of the presence that the building will take on an area of beach frontage with few other site constraints. A thorough visual impact assessment was carried out as part of the Environmental Statement. This was achieved through the use of a range of photomontages which show the building in its setting and in context. While private individual views are not material to the consideration of a planning application, the visual impact on public views are. In this case the building is set back on the seafront and will be seen as a dominating building with significant presence. Such dominance and presence is not necessarily objectionable as it depends on identifiable harm that results. In considering this application careful consideration has been given to the change in the visual appearance of the seafront of Exmouth particularly in light of the objections that have been received which considered this part of Exmouth beach as the least spoilt.

Whilst there is a degree of subjective consideration with regard to this aspect, it is considered that the presence of an extremely well articulated and well designed building should be seen as being of benefit to the area. From the sea, the building will sit in below the far horizon and landscape while from the east and west, it will terminate views along the esplanade area, but not of the beach or cliffs/hills beyond. This modest degree of 'view termination' is not considered harmful in terms of urban design, visual impact or layout, as there exists views around it that encourage pedestrian exploration with new views opening up beyond. Approaching from the north along Maer Lane, the building will terminate the existing view of the bay however this should not be regretted. Exmouth beach is a large expanse of open area and the partial enclosure of this view is only of limited significance. The enclosure is caused by a building that appears primarily as one belonging to the beach environment which will not result in the loss of character to the area. While any further development has the potential to clutter the seafront, key buildings well located can add interest. This building is considered to be such a development and no objections are raised on the grounds of character of the area or visual appearance.

As noted within the design section above, the impact that the slipway would have on the character of the area is also significant. This can be seen to break up the beach and divide access along it. However access should be maintained at all times apart from the highest spring tides and the applicants are further proposing the addition of new steps from the beach to the esplanade level adjacent to the existing footpath edge to address this issue. The impact on views and use of this slipway is therefore limited to a single point and not considered harmful.

Highway Access and Parking provision

In terms of access and parking the application uses part of the existing footway which is owned and managed by Devon County Council. There are no objections forthcoming to the use of this land for development purposes, although the applicants will need to achieve a stopping up Order prior to the development commencing. This is up to the applicants to achieve but can be obtained from the Government Office for the South West under Section 247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Such an Order can be made after the issuing of Planning permission and does not preclude the Local Planning Authority from determining the application.

In terms of parking and access associated with the development, this is limited to the provision of 10 private spaces, split between two groups of 5 either side of the main boathouse. It is proposed that these will not be marked out in order to prevent their usage by parties other than RNLI crew when on a shout. Further the applicants have given an undertaking that the spaces as proposed will not be used by permanent staff manning the retail element. This is in order to limit the visual clutter that could surround the building which should be read as a landmark building without such clutter. Additional clarification has been sought by the Local Highway Authority concerning the visibility that can be achieved from the location of the parking spaces. Although, this has been sought, it is not considered as an over-riding issue for which planning permission could be withheld. Vehicle movements close to the junction will be slow anyway and therefore harm and impact on safety will be limited. No objections are therefore raised.

Flood Risk

The development lies within a Flood Zone 3a which is considered by the Environment Agency as high risk. In such locations, development is usually restricted unless it can be demonstrated that it is water compatible or that following a sequential test the development is less vulnerable and there are no other more suitable sites. As the current development proposal is for an RNLI boathouse, the Environment Agency have agreed that the scheme is water compatible and therefore no objections are raised. Such consideration is in accordance with national guidance and policy and no objections are therefore raised.

CONCLUSIONS

The Environmental Statement that has been produced for this application is considered to sufficiently demonstrate that in most instances, only minor adverse impacts will result for the full range of parameters. The impact on the economy and beach safety has been carefully considered and while there are a range of concerns that have been voiced, the benefits that are considered to accrue outweigh any harm. The RNLI have provided significant assurance in the application that their working practices are there to securely and safely manage the public beach during operations and that these will be implemented at all times.

In terms of design and impact on the character of the area, the scheme represents a bold development with significant prominence. However it is well designed with good articulation and appropriate use of materials. In this regard it is considered to represent a potential landmark development that will enhance this area of Exmouth seafront that is currently dominated by open tarmac surfaced pavements and significant space leakage. No objections are raised regarding parking access and flood risk and it is therefore considered to accord with policy.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission and shall be carried out as approved.
(Reason – To comply with section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.)
2. No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
(Reason - To ensure that the materials are sympathetic to the character and appearance of the area.)
3. Details of any external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the building is occupied. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details
(Reason - In the interests of the character and appearance of the locality.)
4. The 10 car parking spaces hereby permitted shall be limited to use by Lifeboat personnel only and shall be used immediately prior to, during and for the recovery period of either vessel involved in a shout. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a scheme of measures to control the use of the parking spaces shall be submitted to the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be fully implemented prior to the building being brought into use and the approved measures shall remain in place thereafter unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - To prevent the proliferation of parking facilities on a footway where such a use would not normally be permitted.)
5. Prior to the commencement of development, typical detailed drawings at a scale of not less than 1:20 shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority for aspects of the proposed development pertaining to the fenestration, access doors, eaves detailing, roof junctions, junction of the external cladding material, rainwater disposal and surface treatment for the edge of the slipway. The development shall be undertaken in accordance with the agreed details.
(Reason - To ensure that a high quality well detailed finish is achieved for the permitted development.)
6. No development shall take place until a landscaping scheme for the hard surfacing around the building has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority; The scheme shall be carried out within 6 months of the completion of the development in accordance with the agreed details.
(Reason - In the interests of amenity and to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area.)
7. All mitigation measures identified in chapter 16 (Findings and Conclusions) of the submitted and agreed Environmental Statement shall be complied with at all times before during and after construction unless the written agreement to any variation is first obtained from the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - To ensure that the identified environmental impacts are suitably contained and mitigated against.)

8. In accordance with the submitted Environmental Statement, details of the maximum working area together with the location of all site protective fencing and boarding shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. The site compound and associated boarding shall be erected in accordance with the agreed details unless any variation is first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - To ensure that the working area is kept as small as possible to limit the impact on the ecological resource and to ensure that the site is appropriate in terms of the visual appearance views both into the site and of the beach environment.)
9. Prior to the commencement of development, details of the sound barrier required to meet the noise and vibration assessment within the Environmental Statement and to be employed on the northern side of the development site shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The barrier shall be in place at all times during the construction phase.
(Reason: To protect the amenity of neighbouring properties.)
10. There shall be no use of pile driving equipment between the hours of 1800hrs and 0800hrs unless previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - To protect the amenity of neighbouring property.)
11. Prior to commencement of works an Environmental Action Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include a detailed Method Statement of Works, mitigation methods and indicate how such works will be implemented. The development shall proceed in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
(Reason - To protect the environment from pollution.)
12. Prior to the commencement of development hereby permitted, details including elevations shall be submitted to and agreed by the Local Planning Authority which show the location and design of access steps from the beach to the esplanade. These shall be located to the immediate west of the boathouse and be implemented prior to the first operation of the new slipway.
(Reason - To improve access to the beach at periods of highwater.)
13. In accordance with the aims and objectives contained within the Environmental Statement, full details of the signage board and its associated explanatory text that will be located within the adjacent stone bastion, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The board shall be erected within 6 months of the first opening of the new boathouse and be maintained
(Reason - To ensure that the boarding is of a good quality design and finish.)

Informatives

The developer must apply to the Local Authority for a Section 61 consent to determine the noise requirements before work commences. All noise and vibration mitigating measures must be detailed and agreed with the Environmental Health Officer (Pollution) before consent is given. - to protect the amenities of occupiers of nearby premises from unreasonable noise levels.

You are advised to involve the Authority's Environmental Health Department when producing the Environmental Action Plan, as required in Condition (11) above.

As noted within the Environmental Statement, the applicant is reminded of the on going Exe Estuary Study. In this regard, suitable representation should be made to this study to ensure that information obtained during the EIA is shared and best practice can be achieved in the coastal management.

The applicant is advised that in the event that any archaeological artefacts are discovered all work should cease and the County Archaeologist informed.

Reasons for approval

1. The proposal complies with the Devon Structure Plan 2001 -2016, policies CO3, CO6, CO10 and CO13.
2. The proposal complies with the East Devon Local Plan, Revised Deposit, September 2003, policies S4, D1, EN1, EN4, T06 and LEX4.
3. The design and external appearance of the proposal does not harm the visual amenity of the site and surrounding area.
4. The proposal does not harm the natural beauty of the landscape designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
5. The proposal does not harm an identified archaeological site or deposit.

Approved plans

05-041-PL01F, 02F, 03F, 04F, 05E, 07

5535(A1)10

List of Background Papers

Application file, consultations and policy documents referred to in the report.