

Shoeburyness East Beach Area Action Committee (SEBAC) Parking Proposals for East Beach

Minutes of the Public Meeting held at 7.30 pm on Friday 15th May 2009
at Hinguar School Hall, Hinguar Street, Shoeburyness.

Present: Tim Gillett (Chairman), David Shindler (DS) (Chairman of SEBAC),
Cllr Roger Hadley (RH), Anne Chalk (AC), Chris Gasper (minutes).

In attendance: Cllr Derek Jarvis (DJ), Cllr Elizabeth Day (ED), Cllr Peter
Ashley (PA), Cllr Mike Assenheim (MA) and Cllr Tony Cox (TC).

DS explained that SEBAC is a resident's group created to raise local issues, particularly related to the environment, directly with Councillors.

RH described a survey and letters from residents complaining about East Beach. Of 117 returns 81 residents wanted to restrict the area for parking. These findings were verified by a meeting with the Shoebury Village Residents Association (SVRA). The council had budgeted £350K to address these problems with £110K on a new cycle pathway and £50K on toilet refurbishments. All the ward councillors had agreed these plans.

RH then detailed these plans and explained that 1.1 acres of grassland would be covered with grasscrete and used to provide parking space for 175 cars and 5 coaches which were summer time average usage figures. There would also be a further overflow area for 150 cars to park on the grass if required. Timber and rail fences would mark out the area and trees and shrubs would be planted as a barrier between the car park and nearby houses. Pay and display machines rather than pay on entry machines would be used for the car park as this would also allow season ticket holders, coaches and disabled to gain access. A new height barrier would be built to stop gypsies and traffic enforcement would be carried out three times each day with £80 fines for not displaying tickets. A dedicated area would be provided at the North end of the beach for the boatmen. Boatmen could use the Pay & Display on a daily basis or purchase a season ticket. The toilet refurbishments would include showers and a new coastal pathway from Rampart Terrace across the grassy headland to Blackgate Road would be built. This pathway would link up with a new illuminated pathway from the car park to the High Street and provide wheelchair access nearer to the beach.

DS then addressed the meeting to explain the residents proposal. He said he was not political but concerned about the area. He didn't trust councillors and was afraid their plan might turn East Beach into another Gunners Park. East Beach had been left by the Knapping family in perpetuity to the people of Shoeburyness and that the residents proposal was the best solution as it maintained the amount of open space. He said it was a 30 year plan that would not affect a single blade of grass. The plan had three parts

1) Car Park.

In the current gravel area which was shown as a blue hatched area on the map there would be room for 30 cars and 5 coaches to park. In a 5m space along the side of the road between the existing entrance to the car park and the Tingdene access road which is a distance of 300 yds there would be room for 112 cars to park. The road would be 16 ft wide and have 5 mph speed limiters. Cars would be prevented from getting on the grass by a metal shin fence. The remaining 212 yds on the other side of the access road would provide parking space for a further 80 cars and a shared parking space for Kite surfers and the boatmen. On a second map DS showed the distances between the houses and the cars would be much larger and that this would reduce noise nuisance.

2) Access

Access to the car park would be via automatic barriers and ticket on entry machines. Users would have to pay on exit and there would be no need for traffic wardens as users would have to pay to exit the beach. The barriers could also be programmed to prevent access before dawn and after dusk.

3) One Way System.

Entrance to the car park would be in through George Street and out a Blackgate Road. This would reduce traffic flow in the High Street and Rampart Street by 66% and reduce traffic at the dangerous junction between the High Street and Campfield Road. A risk assessment by a professional engineer has already been carried out and appropriate signage has been considered. DS concluded by asking why an illuminated pathway is proposed from the High Street to the beach as the beach will not be used after dark.

TG then addressed the meeting and asked the audience for any questions or comments.

Mr A agreed with the 1-way system and the spreading out of the cars along the beach rather than all stuck together. Didn't agree with a cycle pathway along the headland where children would be running across.

Mr B asked for the cycle pathway to go down Hospital Road and along the High Street with entrance to East Beach via George Street. He also asked why it couldn't go along the side of the road instead of along the top of the headland

RH said the government have provided the money for a coastal pathway and this had to run along the headland

Mr C said that the coastal pathway went behind the beach huts on West Beach so it didn't have to go along the headland

RH agreed to take this on board and look into the matter

Mr D was concerned with children running from car park across cycle path to the beach

DS said in his plan the cycle path would go beside the traffic down the beach road.

Mr E was concerned with cars reversing out along the beach road as this could be dangerous

DS said speed humps are effective at minimising this and control measures like mini zebra crossings could be used. He said people cooperate when reversing which minimises risk.

Mrs F was concerned about the thump thump of music and fighting between the different groups who use the beach.

DS said that cars would be 130m away from the houses and this would reduce noise nuisance. He also said parking linearly instead of in a group would help as well. The Council plan concentrates parking in a group and also the noise. The resident's plan separates them.

Mr G asked whether the council could use the unemployed as Park Rangers

RH said no but that enforcement would be easier with all the cars in one place. He also said that parking attendant would increase the patrol from twice to three times a day to keep a check on things.

DS said residents couldn't get hold of attendants when needed and that phone numbers don't work. There had been three fires close to the fence that he had reported and RH had refused to come down when asked claiming it was a police matter not a council matter. The police would not attend saying that it was a Council matter.

Mr H said we needed provision for more than 200 cars as well as cars in the middle as we have at present. Also there was a need for emergency access to East Beach. A child had been run over last year and speed humps hadn't slowed the drivers down.

DS said emergency vehicles had one access key between them and that RH needed more

Mr F said that the residents plan was designed to suit DS rather than the residents in general

DS said his house is the closest to the cars in the residents plan which is 35 yds

Ms G said that Seaways Coach Park was closing down to create green space in Southend and was concerned that they would now park on East Beach

RH said provision was for 5 coaches only. He said he couldn't influence where the coaches came from but that any more than this would have to buy a special ticket from the council and park on the road

AC said that at a council meeting Anna Waite (portfolio holder for traffic and parking) in answer to a question concerning the closure of Seaways Coach Park said that the coaches would be going in the direction of Shoebury or Rochford

Mr H said that Shoebury was the poor relation of Southend and that now the council were prepared to spend money on Shoebury, he didn't understand what we were all arguing about. He said that RH and DS should get together and come up with a plan that they could both agree on. Officers need to come and answer the technical questions.

MA said that Anna Waite and council officers had been invited but had refused to come to this meeting. Instead they had announced that they will be displaying their plans for the High Street, East Beach and other issues on the 28th May in the Wendy Owen Hall at Shoeburyness County High School. He said that this was not a consultation meeting but a meeting to explain the plans.

Mr I said that if the meeting on the 28th May was not a consultative one then the meeting that we were having was a complete waste of time as it had already been decided.

TG asked RH whether it had already been decided?

RH said that the council's plan had gone through all the committees and that it would be very difficult to stop it at this stage. However he would look into changes to the coastal pathway.

DS displayed two emails that he had received from Anna Waite concerning the residents plan indicating that she had refused to meet him to discuss the residents plan.

RH explained that because the council plan was an improvement it did not need to go through planning and out for public consultation.

Ms J asked RH to give those present a definition of the term "improvement"?

RH said we are improving the area and giving better facilities to residents and visitors.

Mr K said that the Shoebury watermen had existed for over 50 years and that nobody had been in touch with them to seek their views on this plan for East Beach. He didn't support either the council plan or the residents plan and neither did the Kite surfers.

Mrs F said that she had never had a letter or leaflet through her door about these improvements to East Beach and that they had only been delivered in the High Street.

RH said he had delivered 2000 leaflets but that he couldn't remember which door or letterbox he had put them through.

Ms G said that for the annual Hindu festival there would be a need for more than 5 coach spaces.

RH said that the overflow area would be used for special events like that.

DS said that the council plan turned a green field area into a brown field site which is ripe for development.

RH said that the car park would still look green as the car park is to be built on grasscrete.

DS said that using grasscrete would turn the car park area into a brown field area. Development would start with a single block of flats at one end of the beach and then at the other and then the space in between would be ripe for a full scale development.

Ms G said what was to become of Hinguar school playing field when the school moved into the garrison?

RH said that the field was earmarked to become a children play area.

Mr L wanted to know how 30 ft boats could be turned near the slipway.

RH said there would be no parking area in front of the slipway.

DS said the metal shin fence would have a gate with a key that could be opened by the boatmen and allow the boats to turn. He said there would be no charge to the boatmen for these keys.

RH said that the boatmen would have to pay £50 per year for a permanent parking place in the compound or get tickets from the machine on a daily basis. The boatmen lease the land in the winter.

Ms M said that RH had now betrayed the electorate because he had previously agreed to reject a commuter car park at a public meeting held on 24th August 2007 and therefore he should resign.

RH agreed that he was against the commuter car park and still is but that the new car park was not a commuter car park.

Ms G asked whether the car park fitted in with the councils green agenda as train and bus access to East Beach is available?

MA replied that he was not a councillor when this came in.

RH replied that three quarters of East Beach would be park area when the council plans were implemented and that the area couldn't be much greener than that.

DS said that one sixth of the area would become a brown field site if the council plan was implemented.

TC said that he was the council representative of West Shoebury and that residents in his ward also use East Beach. He said that he voted against the commuter car park at the public meeting held on 24th August 2007. However something needed to be done with the £400K available for development otherwise he would like it to go to Shoebury Common. He said that he had agreed with the council plan provided there was 100% enforcement by traffic officers.

MA said that he had agreed with the council plan when it had been discussed at the council but having spoke to residents he is against it and his views have changed.

DS said that Anna Waite was hiding behind everyone and that she was responsible for the council plan that nobody wanted.

Mr H said that he did not blame Anna Waite for deciding not to meet with DS to discuss the residents plan as he was too abrasive.

DS said that he had to be abrasive to be an activist and provoke responses from the councillors and their officers.

Mrs N asked RH what improvements had been provided to allow the disabled to gain access to the beach as to push a wheelchair across the grass was difficult.

RH replied that an illuminated pathway from the High Street to the headland would be provided but that there would be no disabled access onto the beach itself.

AC said why were lights needed under a footpath from the High Street to the car park as the car park will be closed at dusk.

RH said the lights are needed in the early morning on winter months so that mothers taking their children to Hinguar School can park.

AC said that the council plan was not an improvement and that the public should have been consulted properly. She said the meeting to be held on the 28th May was just for viewing the scheme and not a consultation exercise. The conversion of the caravan park into a village for mobile homes had been another example where residents weren't consulted. She said that creating a concrete car park, a new cycle pathway and permanent BBQ facilities was a change of usage and should go through planning.

Mrs S said that there was a very high risk of children being burnt by hot coals from the permanent BBQ facilities and that people would chop down wood from the nearby trees to light them. She also said that cooked meat would encourage the rats that are already in the rocks on the beach. Children could pick up Weils diseases from rats as her son had done that affected him for 3 years.

TC said the foreshore officer would be available for any emergencies in the summer months most of the day.

DS asked whether a safety assessment had been carried out.

RH said that one had been done but that it wasn't available for this meeting.

TG then closed the question and comment session and asked those present to vote on whether they were in favour of each plan. The results were as follows:

Those for the council car park proposal (27)

Those for the residents car park proposal (38)

Abstentions (20)

Thanks were then given to **TG** for kindly chairing the meeting.

Meeting finished at 9.19 pm