

SHRA's Response to EBC Consultation on Eastbourne Local Plan 2022-2042

Sovereign Harbour was originally designed as a beautiful and distinctive place to live, with open views, coastal character and a sense of space that residents and visitors still value deeply. Over time, however, parts of the Harbour have lost some of that natural softness and visual appeal due to a lack of greenery, planting, and thoughtfully landscaped public spaces.

We believe the future vision for the Harbour should focus on enhancing what makes it special, rather than adding further built development.

1. Policy SA24: Land off Harbour Quay (aka Site 6 or Easter Island Place). It includes the 'Shingle Bank'

EBC say - The site is home to the Pacific House office block and the Community Centre. Previously earmarked for office space, reduced demand for offices presents an opportunity to consider 'Site 6' and the 'Shingle Bank' as a single allocation to provide a comprehensive mixed-use development incorporating residential development and a new open space to enhance the amenity of the area. The site should still provide some office space provision of around 2,000 sqm to complement the existing office provision in Pacific House. Considering the use of part of the site for employment use and open space, the capacity of the site for residential use is 231 homes.

It is also identified as an area that may be suitable for taller buildings. As such, it provides an opportunity to improve the presence and access to the Harbour, and has a role to play in creating a gateway to Eastbourne. It is expected that the residential use would be most appropriate in the form of flats, providing a mixture of 1-bed, 2-bed and 3-bed apartments.

A contamination assessment must be undertaken, including investigation of historic landfill and mineral extraction, and appropriate remediation measures must be implemented prior to development.

SHRA's View

We agree that any proposals must reflect the site's gateway location. Thought should be given to extending the existing tree belt that is protected by a Tree Preservation Order and incorporating it into a public green space bordering Pevensey Bay Road.

We are concerned about the remark that the area may be suitable for taller buildings. We would not wish to see high-rise apartment or office blocks on this site.

The draft policy proposes a minimum of 231 residential units and 2000 sqm of office space. That is a lot of development for the area unless the 'shingle mound' is included. However, there have long been concerns about disturbing the buried waste that may lie beneath the shingle mound. We would be concerned about any plans to disturb the shingle mound and to build on what may be contaminated land beneath it. If the shingle mound is found to be unsuitable for development, the number of proposed residential units and office spaces would clearly need to be reduced.

We are pleased to see that contributions will be required towards public transport improvements and enhanced pedestrian and cycle access. We would expect these

contributions to come from the developers under a Section 6 or similar agreement and to include the provision of public, environmentally friendly, green spaces.

2. Policy SA25: Land adjacent to the Waterfront (aka Site 4, Boat Display Area)

EBC say - It is considered that the site should accommodate 1,300 sqm of retail, food & beverage and commercial leisure floorspace, and a minimum of 30 homes in the form of 1-bed, 2-bed and 3-bed flats.

It is considered that development should be of a height that is appropriate in scale to surrounding buildings. In addition, the development should have regard to the curved shape of the site and reflect this element in the design.

The public open space provision should be located in the south-eastern corner of the site, which cannot be built on due to a foul sewer.

SHRA's View

The site is owned by Premier Marinas. As the draft plan notes, this is a uniquely shaped site in a very prominent position relative to the entrance to The Waterfront area, and which currently offers open views of the north harbour.

If the site were to be developed as proposed in the draft plan, we strongly believe that any development here should be low-rise and must protect the harbour views.

We welcome the suggestion that any development on the site include a public open space, noting that this would occupy the southeast corner; however, in our view, the whole site should be made into a useful public open space.

SHRA's Idea for Land adjacent to the Waterfront

Our vision is to ensure Sovereign Harbour remains a vibrant tourist and local destination. For example, and simply as an idea, a community-led, outdoor social hub with architectural sail covers could be located on this site (see AI-generated image below). The suggested sail-inspired design fits the harbour's nautical identity perfectly.

The space would become a premier social destination on sunny days, providing shade and being a high-quality community space suitable for outdoor markets, events and exhibitions. It would provide a focal point at the entrance to The Waterfront area.



3. Policy N14-A: Sovereign Harbour Neighbourhood Policy

EBC say - The vision for the Sovereign Harbour neighbourhood will be promoted by:

- Delivering a minimum of 466 new homes over the plan period.
- Increasing the provision of affordable housing.

- Increasing the importance of The Waterfront as a leisure and tourist destination.
- Enhancing the functioning of the Marina through appropriate measures including the provision of additional berths and associated boat storage facilities.
- Preventing the use of the marina for houseboats.
- Increasing the amount of appropriately landscaped, usable public open space.
- Encouraging active travel through the provision of infrastructure improvements to create safe walking and cycling routes.
- Enhancing the quality of public transport provision through infrastructure improvements, including a bus gate that connects the North Harbour and the South Harbour.
- Restricting the use of residential properties as short-term holiday lets or second homes where possible.
- Encouraging the retrofit of SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) to store surface water runoff.

SHRA's View

In principle, we mostly agree with the Sovereign Harbour Neighbourhood Policy.

We have some concerns about the number of proposed residential units, as local services like the health centre are already overstretched. We would oppose over-development, high-rise properties and high-density living sites. Sovereign Harbour has a unique character that is appreciated by residents and visitors and must be preserved.

Any development must seriously consider its ecological impact, pedestrian and road-traffic access needs, public transport services, parking spaces, cycle routes, flood risk, and the risk of contamination from the area's historic waste dumps.

We have concerns that further development in the North Harbour will inevitably increase traffic congestion on Pacific Drive. Another exit onto the A259 from the North Harbour should be considered to ease traffic using the Martello roundabout on the A259, which is soon to have a new road joining it from the residential development north of the A259, Pevensey Bay Road (see para 4.3.137 of the draft plan).

We agree that the amount of appropriately landscaped, usable public open space should be increased, and that houseboats in Sovereign Harbour should be prevented.

Any new planning applications should include the provision of seating, waste bins and include tree and shrub planting.

The bus gate connecting the North and South Harbours has been discussed for many years - it is time it was actually provided.

We would add that Eastbourne's main promenade, which currently ends abruptly at Langney Point, could benefit from being connected to the curved outer harbour walkway.

We also wish to see the two sloped access points from the car park area beside the locks at the end of Key West, leading up to the locks, and at the other end of the car park, leading up to the outer harbour promenade, greatly improved and made safer. The poor access problem is neatly captured by this image (right) from Google Street View, and the need for improvement was proved by an accident last year.



4. The Outer Harbour Peninsula

Although not mentioned in the Local Plan, the Outer Harbour Peninsula (approx. 1.8 hectares owned by Premier Marinas) is a “green lung” area popular with residents and visitors. It is a gateway site for visitors arriving by sea.

The 2013 *Sovereign Harbour Supplementary Planning Document* proposed that the site should remain a public amenity space with enhanced pedestrian facilities, such as seating and paths, and that opportunities to revert to a shingle habitat be explored. We are happy for it to revert to a wild shingle habitat as is happening now. Although there is scope to enhance the area with more accessible paths and seating, creating a safe, engaging space for the next generation to connect with our coastal environment. An impressive monument or statue could be installed as a focal point for visitors arriving by boat (a suggested concept (which is just an idea) is illustrated in this AI image).



We love living at Sovereign Harbour and want to see it reach its full potential while retaining its unique characteristics.

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