Expires 30/1/08

# Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

**Application Number: ADC/0741/07** **Recommendation – Permit Application**

**Site:** **Watch Tower Old Fort Forthaven Shoreham-by-Sea**

**Proposal:** **Change of use and refurbishment of Watch Tower (to east of Shoreham Fort) for use by the National Coastwatch, with 2.4m high enclosing fence**

## The Application

The application site is the disused Watch Tower sited between Shoreham Fort and the western breakwater to Shoreham Port. The building as current is in a state of disrepair with the graffitied walls crumbling and windows bricked over. This application seeks to restore the Watch Tower so that it can be used by the National Coastwatch Institution. The brickwork is to be rendered with a textured waterproof finish, the south facing window is to be re-instated and covered in a galvanised steel mesh, and new double doors are to be installed into the northern elevation. A new external staircase will sit off the northern elevation serviced by a gravel path that will link to that which surrounds the Fort. A 2.4 metre high pale metal fence will surround the site measuring 13m by 14m whilst new signage will be added to the eastern and western elevations and a flag pole erected.

## Consultations and Representations

### Consultations/Comments

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|---|---|
| Environment Agency | No Objection. |
| English Heritage South East Region | Are supportive of the proposed new use for this building but are concerned that the fencing will detrimentally impact on the setting of the adjacent scheduled monument. It is requested that the fencing is removed from this application. Further details are required on the proposed pathway and drainage and how these will impact on the monument. |

**Third Parties**

No representations have been received.

**Contributors**

No representations have been received.

## Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005): DEV1, CH5, ERA3
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved until adoption of the new Adur Development Plan): AG1, AN1
PPG15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (DoE 1994)

## Planning Assessment

***Policies***
Structure Plan policies seek to protect, and where possible, enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area, requiring high standards of design, layout and construction (DEV1). In cases that will impact on listed buildings or scheduled monuments, development should not be permitted unless the statutorily listed buildings of special architectural or historic interest, and their settings, will be preserved and, where possible, enhanced (CH5). Policy ERA3 requires development in coastal areas to conserve, and where possible enhance, the distinctive character and resources of the County's coast and coastal waters, taking into account the impact on, amongst others, landscape, heritage, the environment and conservation. As the site is located within a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI's), local plan policy AN1 states that development which is harmful to SNCI's will only be permitted in compelling circumstances.

***Visual Amenity***
The Watch Tower as current sits on a shingle embankment on the western breakwater at the entrance to Shoreham Harbour. It is in a highly visible location adjacent to Shoreham Fort and can be seen from the Brighton Road upwards of 400 metres away to the north and 700 metres to the northeast. It currently forms a run-down eyesore that is clearly detrimental to the setting of the Fort and the Adur estuary. Its re-instatement for permanent use with rendered walls and new glazing would thus serve to enhance its appearance and that of the character of the area, corresponding with Structure Plan policies CH5 and ERA3. The staircase providing first floor access off the existing northern elevation bricked-up doorways, combined with the new signage and flag pole (maximum height 7.3 metres), are standardised

additions that will serve to emphasise that the structure is in permanent new usage. A gravel footpath will connect the building to the existing footpath that surrounds the Fort allowing access for the limited number of people (two-three at any one time).
The proposed fencing however is deemed to be an unsympathetic addition that will create an incongruous feature in a highly visible location next to the scheduled monument. The applicants state that it is required to provide additional security to the site, particularly as the Watch Tower contains several of the Port Authority's electrical switches. These are currently contained on the ground floor behind a padlocked steel door. The fencing proposed is 2.4 metres in height and will surround the site 14 metres by 13 metres. It is identical to the grey pale fencing with three pronged spikes that is used to secure other Port Authority sites on the eastern side of Shoreham Harbour. English Heritage have stated that the proposed fencing is inappropriate, will have a detrimental impact on the setting of the ancient monument and its setting adjacent to the river channel, and have requested that it is removed from the application. This Authority is in agreement that the fencing is inappropriate and will serve to create a highly visible forbidding and militaristic feature detrimental to the character and open plan appearance of the surrounding ancient monument and SNCI.
In light of this issue, the applicants have stated that they wish the fencing to be retained for security purposes and have not suggested a more sympathetic alternative for consideration. Whilst it is acknowledged that the electrical switches require adequate security, it is considered that this can be achieved without the need for such drastic fencing. In order to secure the re-instatement of the Watch Tower, permission for the fencing is removed from the approval by condition.

***Residential Amenity***
The nearest residential units are sited 130 metres to the west and as such will not be impacted by this proposal.

***Site of Nature Conservation Importance***
The site is located within the SNCI, however as the proposal is to restore the existing building to its former use with minimal additional work, it is not considered that there will be any adverse impact on the surrounding ecology.

## Recommendation

APPROVE for reason that :-

The proposed development would serve to re-instate the disused Watch Tower and can take place without detracting from the character and setting of the adjacent scheduled monument and without detriment to the surrounding Site of Nature Conservation Importance. It would consequently not conflict with the policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AN1) and the West Sussex Structure Plan (DEV1, CH5, ERA3).

Subject to:

1. C1Ci
2. C12Ai '...walls, roof and external staircase...'
3. C18N '...proposed drainage, means of disposal, and their proximity to the ancient monument have been...'
4. Notwithstanding the details submitted with this application, no gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure shall be erected or constructed on any area surrounding the Watch Tower unless permission is granted by the Local Planning Authority on an application in that behalf.
   Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to maintain the 'open plan' character and to comply with policy AG1 of the ADLP and policies DEV1, CH5 and ERA3 of the WSSP.

Case Officer:.....

Date: 29/1/08

PB 29/1/08