Development Management - Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/1079/23 Recommendation – Approve

Site: Watch Tower, Old Fort, Forthaven, Shoreham-by-sea

Proposal: Proposed 10 metre tall galvanised mild steel lattice tower within the grounds of the watchtower. A camera to be mounted on top which will be used by on duty watchkeepers, RNLI and Shoreham Port to see any potential dangers on the beach or in the sea by harbour entrance.

Date of site visit: 30 August 2023

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application relates to the Watch Tower sited between Shoreham Fort, a scheduled ancient monument, and the western breakwater to Shoreham Port. The existing building is a small, two-storey flat roofed building 3.5m wide, by 5.8m deep, by 5.4m in height. The building is rendered white with railings surrounding the perimeter. An external staircase with yellow balustrade and handrail sits off the north elevation to provide access to the first floor. There is a service gantry with railings around the exterior of the building to enable maintenance of the windows and shutters, and to provide access to the equipment on the roof.

Permission was granted in 2022 to install a new staircase from the first floor gantry to roof level. A deck was proposed over part of the existing roof, for access purposes, and for installation and maintenance of a proposed new, more substantial, radio mast. The mast was shown as being 4.3m high. New railings, 1.1m high, are proposed around the deck.

This application proposes to erect a steel tower with a controllable CCTV camera mounted at the top, on the western side of the building within the existing compound. The supporting letter submitted with the application advises that the camera:

"*has become a necessity to further support the capability of the Search and Rescue (SAR) efforts by the watchkeepers. In repeated events, HM Coastguard (HMCG) have called on NCI Shoreham if they have eyes on of an incident close in shore to the west. Due to the topography of the beach and buildings, NCI Shoreham have been unable to obtain eyes on and support the SAR efforts without leaving the station.*
It is believed that with the use of a controllable CCTV camera mounted at a height above the station, the capability of NCI Shoreham as a SAR asset can be drastically improved by improving response times and streaming live images to HMCG & the RNLI giving a better understanding of the developing events."

The application building occupies a highly visible site; however, other than the Old Fort, there are no immediately surrounding dwellings or other buildings. The site lies within a Local Wildlife Site and the Shoreham Harbour Regeneration Area.

Relevant Planning History

ADC/0415/08 - Boundary fence (2m high metal railings)

ADC/0741/07 - Change of use and refurbishment of Watch Tower (to east of Shoreham Fort) for use by the National Coastwatch

ADC/0034/11 - Erection of gantry around Watch Tower to enable maintenance of windows and roof equipment

AWDM/0797/22 - Proposed radio mast and external stairs from first floor to roof level with new deck over existing roof

Consultations

Public Health: No comments

Representations

1 letter of support received from the occupier of 2 Forthaven:

National Coastwatch provide an excellent service, and the camera will enhance the view that they have along the coast.

Relevant Planning Policies

Adur Local Plan 2017 Policy 2, 8, 15, 17, 31
Shoreham Harbour Joint Area Action Plan 2019 CA6 (Harbour Mouth)
National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

Planning Assessment

The approved scheme last year would have resulted in a taller building with mast on top to an overall height of 9.9m. The proposed camera mast will be 10m tall, so a similar height, albeit less elegant. It will be a noticeable structure at that height, particularly as the building is to remain at its existing height, but it will be a thin structure and will not have a harmful visual impact. There are similarly tall, or taller, lattice structures at Shoreham Port on the other side of the harbour mouth, as well as two wind turbines. Given the importance of the camera in supporting search and rescue operations for the coastguard, it is considered that the proposal can be supported in this context.

Whilst the site sits within the Local Wildlife Site the proposal is limited to within the existing compound and should not require disturbance of the beach shingle itself.

Recommendation

APPROVE

Subject to Conditions:-

1. Approved Plans
2. Standard 3 year time limit
3. Remove if not in use

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Case Officer: Peter Barnett Date: 21 September 2023

Authorised by: Gary Peck Date: 21 September 2023