

Sven Latham
on behalf of
Lee Business Association

Attn Planning Policy Team
Gosport Borough Council
Town Hall
High Street
Gosport
PO12 1EB

Delivered via Email

2 December 2021

Dear Mr Grygiel,

Thank you for your letter via email of 27th September 2021, inviting the Lee Business Association to provide comments on the Council's draft Local Plan.

The Lee Business Association is a community membership group, comprising businesses in Lee-on-the-Solent, both in the high street area and the wider community, and we are proud to deliver events and initiatives to drive economic prosperity for our businesses and the wider community.

I note with pleasure that Lee-on-the-Solent features heavily in the draft Local Plan, and is recognised in various ways, alongside the Daedalus development, as a Principal Centre, and twice in Areas of Special Character.

Our response to the draft Local Plan reflects members' views and thoughts. We have grand ideas for Lee-on-the-Solent, both to benefit Lee itself and the wider Gosport Borough, and put forward multiple suggestions and ideas with the hope these can be considered.

Moreover by submitting this response, we intend to highlight the various opportunities within Lee-on-the-Solent to contribute to the Borough's Local Plan; its ambitions and goals, and welcome discussions on the individual points made when the time is right.

I look forward to engaging with your team further in the coming months, and thank you again for the opportunity to contribute.

Yours Faithfully

Sven Latham
on behalf of
Lee Business Association

In reply to Local Plan Objectives (1.9)

Points raised in the Local Plan Objectives [1.9] include “promoting local distinctiveness...”; “..developing the tourism and leisure sectors.”

Lee-on-the-Solent has a strong history as a seaside frontage town. Its layout, history of attractions and frontages are all reminders of the area’s close relationship with the sea, and many of these features are identified in Gosport’s plan as being of special character.

The former pier - land still owned by Gosport Borough Council - and associated buildings gave remarkable views of the Solent, the Isle of Wight and our beautiful coastline as a whole.

The proximity of the Hovercraft slipway and museum, Stokes Bay and Daedalus airfield add to the strong, important local narrative about our borough and its relevance in many events in history.

Lee-on-the-Solent may have lost many of the physical artefacts of its seaside history, but the local community of residents, visitors and businesses continue to engage well with the location and, for many, living ‘on the Solent’ is still a very important feature of the local area.

The increase in resident populations, both in Gosport and more broadly in South Hampshire, mean that there are more people than ever before for whom Lee-on-the-Solent could be an ideal tourism and leisure destination.

Improvements to road links, such as Newgate Lane, the A27, and nearly complete Stubbington Bypass, as well as regional bus routes, cycle and even air travel mean Lee-on-the-Solent is ever more accessible to a wider population.

We encourage the concept of Lee-on-the-Solent as a tourism and leisure centre, as part of a wider initiative to improve the attractiveness of the area and strengthen community participation and wellbeing.

We believe this will lead to increased footfall for our physical businesses, access to a wider potential audience for local businesses of all types, and improve the appeal of the local area for settlement and growth of businesses within the borough, Daedalus and surrounding commercial/industrial spaces.

In short, we see great value in making Lee a better place to live, learn, work and set up business.

Alignment

These outcomes are, we believe, aligned with Gosport Borough Council’s objectives:

“Regenerate Gosport through the delivery of high quality sites and enhance a sense of place”

Through the strengthening of Lee-on-the-Solent’s identity as a seaside destination, including high quality leisure and tourism facilities, and encouraging community cohesion & positive local participation.

“Create successful places where people choose to live and work”

By improving the attractiveness of Lee-on-the-Solent as a great place to live, a healthy and active working environment, and offering amenities close to local commercial sites (such as Daedalus) making these places more attractive locations for employees.

“Deliver an economy that capitalises on the Borough’s coastal location”

We want to make the most of Lee-on-the-Solent’s geography, with its extensive sea frontages both for residents and visitors, offering uninterrupted views of the Isle of Wight and the Solent [1.6.17], as well as a strong portfolio of complementary shops, local services and leisure facilities that cater to and benefit from the strong association with the seaside.

“Improve transport and accessibility”

Our contribution is based on the fine balance between vehicular and pedestrian access, exploring ways in which we can make the locality more accessible for pedestrians, offer more space for activities and community events, whilst ensuring road users are not discouraged.

In reply to SS11 Daedalus development

The redevelopment of the space at Daedalus brings potential for new businesses and facilities, and limited increase in dwellings within the Lee-on-the-Solent area. We note this potentially includes the development of a modest amount of additional retail floorspace [3.13.8], presumably to fulfill the convenience needs of local residents and businesses.

Should this development proceed in a similar fashion to Antice Court, serving Cherque Farm and the neighbouring dwellings, we can only see this as complementary to existing neighbourhood areas and Lee’s District Centre.

In reply to Policy C1 (“Centres”)

With respect to Policy C1, the Local Plan draft encourages the support of a greater mix of uses, including responding to (5.20.17) new dynamics and trends, with (5.20.18) a wider range of retail, leisure, cultural, heritage, employment, tourist and other amenities/attractions.

In response, we certainly support the observations and plans made. Undoubtedly Lee-on-the-Solent, as with many locations, sees shifts in its retail and other offerings, and the balance of these types of premises continues to change.

To be able to best support and provide for the full mixture of offerings, we request a review of parking across the area local to Lee-on-the-Solent. On-street parking is due imminently, and the parking enforcement now in place along Lee High Street has garnered feedback and opinions of all types, from residents, business operators and visitors.

With all these changes in a period of 2 years, the continued dynamics shift of retail, leisure and other properties, and consumer habits in light of Covid, we would like to see a comprehensive review of parking in the local area, to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose and serves the community well.

This includes charges, availability, maximum stay limits and types of restrictions (delivery; disabled, etc.).

In reply to Areas of Special Character DE4

Both Areas of Special Character (Marine Parade and Lee West) identified in the Local Plan are, of course, local to Lee-on-the-Solent, and it is in acknowledgement of the *opportunity* of preserving & capitalising upon these areas that we make our proposals.

The seafront of Marine Parade - to quote the Plan's own text - "...forms one of the most distinctive stretches of urban coastline on the Solent"

This areas has long been at the heart of residents' minds, with Gosport Borough Council's own documents on the area¹ noting a campaign "...to establish a determined policy to protect the special character of Lee-on-the-Solent seafront" resulted in 614 responses of support.

While much of the documentation naturally concerns the preservation of the area through building planning policy, we note the emphasis on quality, character and appearance of Marine Parade.

Gosport and the surrounding area has experienced a significant increase in resident population. The peninsula itself has become much more accessible thanks to improved transportation links and options.

The current configuration of Marine Parade demonstrates the changes over the years, and the refocus on the private motor vehicle. Two car parks occupy what could potentially be prime leisure and activity space, despite further substantial parking available just a short distance away.

In keeping with Gosport's renewed interest in its promotion of tourism, leisure and distinctiveness, we believe the Marine Parade frontage offers incredible opportunities:

To reallocate seafront space to leisure activities and multifunctional usage, effectively creating an attractive 'plaza'; a dedicated space for hosting events in Lee.

Events are often held in Lee High Street, often necessitating road closures and disrupting businesses and residents. Creating a plaza on Lee Seafront would allow many more popular events to take place with reduced or no road closure, save for those that warrant it, such as parades.

This space would, for instance, accommodate pitches for seasonal market stalls, fairground rides, music and other activities. It would significantly increase the space available for events and activities run by and for the local community, protected and without undue disruption.

This may be accomplished through a paved area ('plaza') and/or a fixed facility, such as a bandstand, providing an attractive, all-year opportunity for performance events and activities.

¹ Marine Parade Area of Special Character (SPD) May 2007. Page 4.
https://www.gosport.gov.uk/media/682/Supplementary-Planning-Documents-SPD-for-the-Marine-Parade-Area-of-Lee-on-the-Solent/pdf/Marine_Parade.pdf?m=637267917625970000
https://www.gosport.gov.uk/media/682/Supplementary-Planning-Documents-SPD-for-the-Marine-Parade-Area-of-Lee-on-the-Solent/pdf/Marine_Parade.pdf?m=637267917625970000



Above: Current layout
Below: Suggested layout
A modest reduction in available car park spaces may open prime seafront space for events, temporary and permanent fixtures.



We propose that serious consideration is given to reinstating a landmark attraction, such as the bandstand, a tower or sea-front structure, or even rebuilding the pier. The latter potentially supported by and supporting greater leisure usage, if it were to include boat/marina type facilities, for instance, and may even form part of a future transport strategy across water.

In order to do this we propose that a review of parking facilities be carried out. The existing Marine Parade and Flowers car parks occupy prime leisure & retail space, and we question whether these could be better used for leisure space, with parking displaced to on-street and/or Beach Road parking accordingly.

We note that it will be interesting to observe how Hampshire Highways' plan to commence on-street parking across Marine Parade East/West will affect the use of these car parks in any case.

Finally, we are keen to **see improvements to the pedestrian flow between the High Street, Pier Street and the seafront**. We expect a seafront plaza and other activities along Lee seafront would increase pedestrian movements throughout Lee's Principal Centre, and believe improved access for visitors would only enhance the location's prosperity and appeal.

To mitigate these factors, and to encourage the free pedestrian movements between the areas discussed, we suggest the following are evaluated:

- Reconfiguration of parking spaces within Marine Parade Car Park, reducing the number of movements in this area, regaining space for community leisure and development. Perhaps this space could be restricted to blue badge holders and/or electric vehicle parking (in respect of 5.17.9), thus providing a dedicated installation for the latter in favour of Gosport's environmental ambitions;
- Partial pedestrianisation of Pier St, to open up space for continental-style outdoor eating, events and full pedestrian movement. This naturally has to be balanced with access for residents, deliveries and customers;
- A review of waypoints and movements between Lee seafront, Marine Parade area, Pier St and the High St, for instance relocating the pedestrian crossing to a more central position; clear signage for all ingress points (including Milvil Road);
- Consideration for shared surfaces, either in specific areas or throughout, to encourage all users to treat the area as a shared space without specific priority.

In further keeping with the special character designation, we offer for consideration:

- Re/introduction of distinctive, ornate lamp posts and signs across the designated area, providing a characteristic 'Lee-on-the-Solent' identity and drawing from the area's historic and cultural identity;
- In combination with above (shared surfaces) further attention to the paving used throughout the area, again to provide attractive, consistent design and wayfinding throughout;
- Plans to consider significant local attractions, such as a pier, to continue to pursue Lee's identity as seafront village with historical and local importance.