

Hayling Seafront Masterplan 2012

1. Introduction

This brief aims to explore the development potential of the Hayling Island seafront by understanding the constraints and opportunities of the area as previously examined in the draft Hayling Seafront Masterplan.

Once a popular holiday destination, changing tourism trends have caused tourist facilities on Hayling Island to fall into a state of decline. While the island's natural environment continues to be a significant attraction for water sports enthusiasts, the wider tourist offer requires significant improvement to restore it to its former quality and to establish Hayling Island as an attractive tourist destination for the 21st century.

2. Site Location

Situated within the county of Hampshire, Hayling Island lies between the Portsmouth and Langstone harbours on the South coast of England. Covering just under 12 square miles of low lying land, it is home to almost 17,000 people and is connected to the mainland by a single road bridge. The majority of the island is open countryside or farmland however there is a concentration of urban development in the south.

3. Site Context

In order to establish an effective masterplanning strategy for the regeneration of the Hayling Island seafront, it is necessary to undertake a detailed analysis of the opportunities and constraints presented by the existing seafront offer. Subsequent sections explore these in further detail.

3.1 Constraints / Challenges

To facilitate the transformation of Hayling Island into a key tourist destination within the 21st century, the following challenges must be considered;

3.1.1 Environmental Designations

Hayling Island is covered by a variety of environmental designations intended to protect and conserve the valuable landscape and environmental features along its coastline. These include;

- Sinah Warren SSSI – A location of importance for rare shingle flora. This is currently managed by Havant Borough Council on behalf of Natural England.
- Beachlands SINC.
- Local Nature Reserves – The Kench and Sandy Point. Both currently managed by Hampshire County Council.
- Langstone and Chichester harbours – SPA, SSSI and Ramsar status. Managed by the Langstone Harbour Board and Chichester Harbour Conservancy respectively.
- The water itself is protected by a European SPA designation.
- Gunner Point Countryside Heritage site.

While these designations play an important role in conserving the natural environment for future generations, it must be recognised that they can also act as a significant constraint on future development. In order to make the most of these features, it is necessary to strike the right balance between development of new tourist facilities and conservation of the natural environment.

3.1.2 Flood Risk and Climate Change

The Hayling Island coastline is at a significant risk from both flooding and coastal erosion. This risk is likely to increase considerably with projected climate change in subsequent years. The East Solent Management Plan aims to manage this threat by employing appropriate coastal protection techniques in strategic locations along the coast. For example, the coastal management strategy at Eaststoke utilises a combination of techniques including beach nourishment, timber groynes and revetments to protect against both flooding and erosion. In contrast, the western section of the coastline is simply left to the natural processes of erosion and deposition. Clearly, this is likely to have implications for development along the seafront in the future and will therefore need full investigation before the proposals of this masterplan can be finalised. Consultation with the Coastal team will be required to discuss the implications of projected climate change and associated sea level rise in full.

3.1.3 Inconsistent Pattern of Development

Existing development along the seafront is sparse / patchy in character resulting in an uneven distribution of uses or activities that are poorly connected to each other. The majority of these clusters are however underdeveloped and unattractive. Existing focal points along the seafront are as follows;

- West Beach. Located within the SSSI, this section of the coast is home to the Par 3 Golf Course, Inn on the Beach, the Eco Café, a number of beach huts, car parking facilities and a substantial coastal revetment. It is also a key focal point for extreme water sports activities. The distinct lack of high quality facilities however, prevents this from becoming a successful and attractive location. Significant improvements are required to transform this area into a key attraction for tourists.
- Beachlands hub. Visitors to this key arrival destination are presented with a negative first impression due to the dated and degraded nature of the existing facilities, notably the Funlands and Beachlands amusement areas. Significant improvements are required to transform this into a striking arrival destination for visitors to Hayling Island.
- Central stretch. Over 1km in length and extending from Beachlands to Eastoke, this section consists predominantly of car parking facilities and beach huts. There is some amenity grassland and protected open space within the SSSI however this is relatively featureless and lacks any sort of destination appeal. The Hayling Island Light Railway runs through this central stretch however there is little else of interest for tourists here. Groynes at the eastern end are the predominant coastal defences utilised in this location however this area is ultimately falling into the sea.

- Eastoke Hub. This area has more of a local community feel with shopping facilities, a play area, railway station and car park. Revitalisation of this area has already begun with the establishment of a pedestrian viewing platform. A second phase of regeneration will reduce the road width and prioritise pavement areas with additional tree planting also enhancing the public realm.
- Eastern Beach – Coastal defences in the form of a sea wall, groynes and beach nourishment measures are concentrated here to protect nearby residential buildings from coastal flooding. This part of the coast has a more private feel to it however there is good access to beach here. Greater integration with the Eaststoke Hub is required.

The fragmented nature of activities in addition to insufficient signage along the seafront means that Hayling Island is lacking a 'joined up' seafront experience. The respective 'hubs' require greater integration with one another to enhance their performance. In addition, the owners of the Beachlands / Funlands amusement facilities have indicated that they may vacate their premises in the next 5 years as they are struggling to perform in the current market. This site would therefore become a prime location for new development. This site is currently being considered in the Allocations Plan. Havant Borough Council owns the tourist office that is located in this area and there is potential to fully develop a key tourist destination here.

3.1.4. Poor Transport Links

Transport links both within the island itself and from the island to neighbouring areas are significantly underdeveloped. Signage from the M27 and A27 is poor and having a single access road onto the island is likely to raise transport and congestion implications when future development does arise.

The lack of an integrated public transport network on the island makes it difficult to travel between the established 'hubs' as outlined in section 3.1.3. For example, the lack of adequate public transport makes it difficult to travel from the main arrival point at Ferry Point to other areas of the island. There is the Hayling Light Railway however there is considerable scope to improve this as the current service is seasonal and travels only a very short distance.

3.1.5 Changing Tourism Trends

The current tourism offer has not evolved in line with changing tourism trends, largely due to a lack of investment in recent years. The existing tourist offer is dated and subsequently unappealing in the current market. A 'destination appeal' must be created to enable Hayling Island to perform well in such a competitive market.

3.1.6 Competition

There are many other attractive seafront destinations also within a 2 hour drive of London. These include; Littlehampton, Selsey, Worthing and the Witterings. These locations have already established a destination appeal and Hayling Island needs to establish a unique selling point to enable it to compete effectively with these.

3.2 Opportunities

While there are a series of challenges to be addressed, the Hayling Island seafront does present some opportunities for future development;

3.2.1 High Quality Natural Environment

A diverse range of landscapes can be enjoyed along the Hayling Island coastline. Shingle beaches, sand dunes, maintained grassland, municipal planting and wild natural vegetation are all present at various points along the seafront. Award winning beaches in addition to the high quality natural environment, particularly areas protected by landscape and nature designations, provide an attractive natural environment that can be enjoyed by both tourists and residents of Hayling Island. Parts of the seafront are peaceful and tranquil and provide opportunities for relaxing walks along the coastline.

3.2.2 Attractive Views

The accessible landscape and open beaches provide easy access to attractive views of the Spinnaker Tower and the Isle of Wight.

3.2.3 Watersports

The original home of windsurfing and home to the Hayling Island Sailing Club, a European Centre of Excellence, the Hayling Island coastline offers excellent conditions for extreme water sports activities all year round. Capitalising upon this key asset would raise the profile of Hayling Island as a destination for watersports, enabling it to compete effectively with other nearby destinations such as the Witterings, Selsey, Littlehampton and Worthing. Concentrating on extreme watersports would also overcome the issue of seasonality, continuing to attract visitors throughout the year and not just during the summer.

3.2.4 Historical Value

The presence of a number of key historical assets including the Mulberry Harbours which were used during World War II for the D Day Landings, gives Hayling Island an additional asset that can be utilised to attract increasing numbers of tourists.

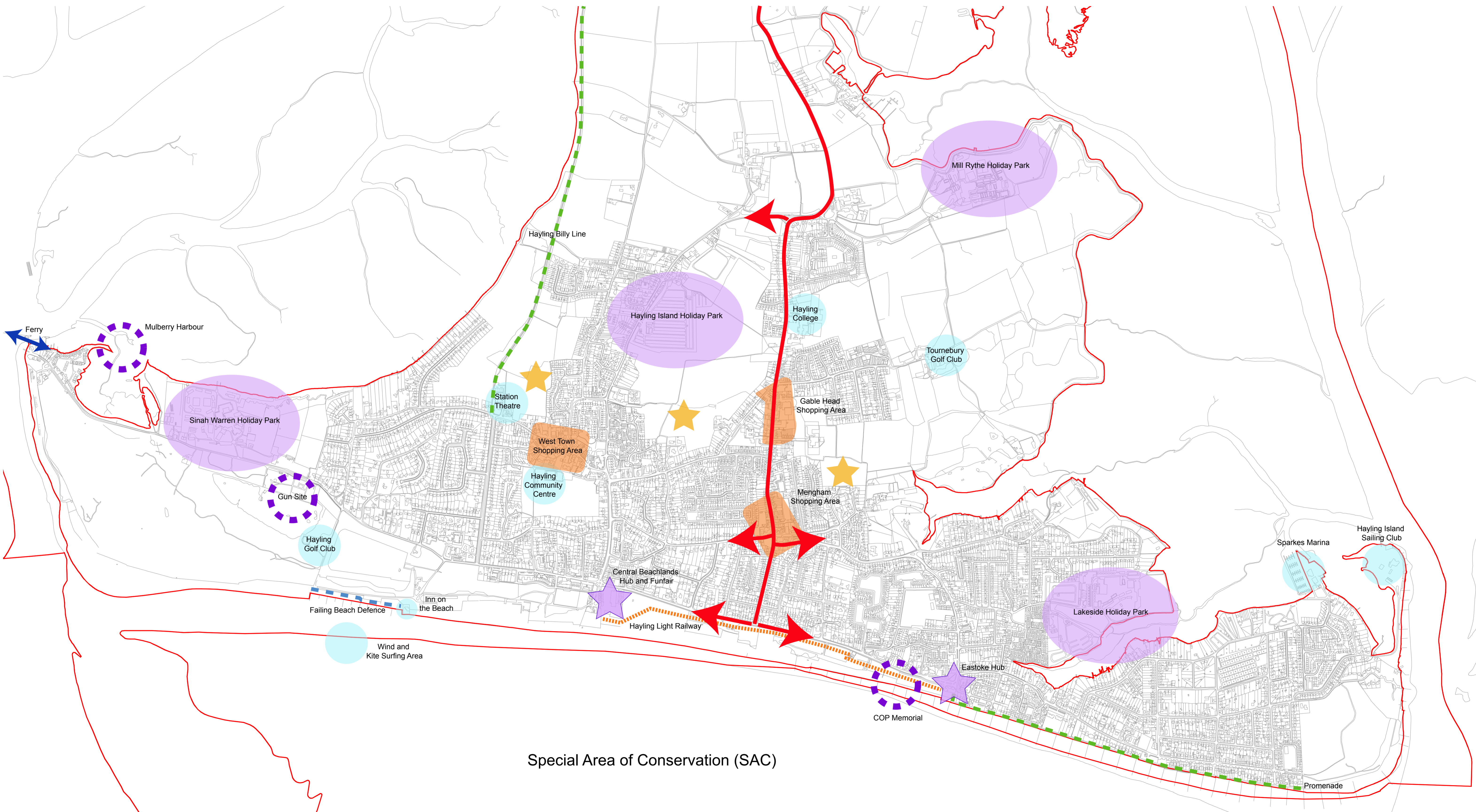
3.2.4 Good Car Parking Facilities

There is significant capacity for car parking on Hayling Island meaning that it is able to accommodate significant tourist numbers. Car parks are distributed along the seafront throughout the island, providing adequate space for visitors to park.

4. Conclusion

A thorough review of the challenges and opportunities presented by Hayling Island will inform the development of an effective masterplan for the Hayling island seafront. This will result in the creation of an attractive and exciting tourist destination that is fully utilised throughout the year.

Hayling Island Context Map



Hayling Island Opportunities Map

