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23rd May 2013

Reference:  
Shoebury Common Proposed Flood Defence

Dear Sir,

I write on behalf of the Burges Estate Residents Association. We represent 1000 households on the Burges Estate, Thorpe and surrounding area. Therefore this is a collective response to the above proposal.

The committee have attended the public meetings and viewed the proposal in Thorpedene Library and have instructed me as chairman to write and object to these plans, I will deal with this in a number of parts.

- Taking the proposed new sea wall and increase in height from Shoebury Common to a point between Barrow Sands and Marcus Avenue, this proposal is completely out of character with the existing sea defences at this point and will have a detrimental effect on the amenities of the area by way of its appearance and reducing the existing promenade which has already been reduced with the introduction of the cycle path in previous years.
- The proposed embankment which is planned to run the whole length of Shoebury Common to the edge of the Coast Guard Station behind the beach huts is without doubt a poor design and ill thought out scheme. There is nothing to recommend its attractiveness and the walls and gates make it look cumbersome especially around the Uncle Tom's cabin area.
- The proposal is against the Councils and Environment Agency Policy of 2010 in **holding the Line against any flood risk**. Therefore the overall intent of management for Southend-on-Sea is to sustain and support the viability of the seaside town and their communities, tourism and commercial activities. This means a continuation of the current management approach of holding the current alignment where there are defences. Although these current defences are under pressure, holding the line is necessary to sustain the seafront which is essential to the viability of Southend-on-Sea as a seaside resort.

- Effectively with this current proposal the council will be abandoning one of the most valuable assets of the town which is the beach and promenade in this area. Therefore it is against its own policy of aiming to provide sustainable coastal defences which provide social and/or economic benefits to people whilst taking account of natural processes and which avoid committing future generations to inappropriate defence options;
- All dwellings and infrastructure must remain protected. The footpaths on top of the existing sea banks will be maintained. Heritage assets and landscape will remain protected and largely unchanged. Shoebury Common is a heritage asset for the people of Shoeburyness and of Southend-on-Sea by building on the common the council will effectively be destroying a natural asset.

Finally in this part of my appraisal of the Councils planned proposal, I believe the Council will be failing in its duty;

- To balance flood and erosion management with the assets and benefits that it intends to protect.
- To seek opportunities for managing the shoreline through natural coastal processes and take full account of long shore and cross-shore impacts.
- To support communities and sustainable development for the people living around the Southend-on-Sea shoreline by managing the risk to community activities, infrastructure and promote the social and economic values of Southend-on-Sea.
- To support and enhance people's enjoyment of the coast by maintaining and enhancing access.
- To support protection and promotion of the historic environment and its value for the heritage, culture and economy of Shoebury Common.
- To develop policies appropriate to the diverse character of the Shoebury Common and its coast and its dynamic interaction of land and sea.
- To contribute in maintaining and enhancing the evolving character of the coastal landscape.

Having raised the association's objection to the Council's current proposals we are now in a position to formulate our own preferred option. I will point out that we have sought advice from numerous people and concerned residents and our own advisors.

It is the associations' belief that the best way forward to preserve the shoreline in the area of Shoebury Common and Thorpe Bay is to seek to manage the shoreline through natural processes; this will include in part an off-shore defence to protect the current hard defence line from wave pressure.

Having examined the area closely, it is the opinion of the Burges Estate Residents Association that the foundations of the existing sea-wall are more substantive and robust than at first realised by the council officers and as such could be raised by 300mm without causing further strain on the foundations as the weight load will be evenly spread over the extreme distance of the current defence wall.

It is also apparent that it is necessary to re-charge the beach, because in failing to do so would cause undermining of the current sea-wall from Shoebury Common Promenade going west towards the Thorpe Bay Yacht Club. Therefore the council's own preferred option of strapping a new wall to the existing wall would be undermined anyway without this re-charge taking place.

Therefore we recommend that wooden groins should be put in place/repared where necessary at approximately every 50 metres from the yacht club to the slip way at Shoebury Common coast guard station to enable a re-charge to take place and these groins to extend some 50 metres out from the shore to help hold the re-charged beach in place.

As an additional precaution to wave pressure, the recommendation is to place a concrete/boulder groin at Shoebury Common slip way in a crescent form and at a height that is deemed sufficient to take the wave pressure away from the current sea-wall. This will also aid in the retention of the re-charged beach.

The slip way at Shoebury Common to be raised in height equal to the new height of the sea-wall with a table top and then slope back to the road.

The above recommendations are not required to be done at the same time, but of course the groins and beach re-charge are paramount in protecting the foundations of the sea-wall and the wall itself and on that basis should have priority. The other measures to be undertaken as and when required by the rising sea levels.

It must be understood by the council which has aspirations of being a city of culture that the beach and foreshore is part of the natural culture of Southend-on-Sea and as such is also part of the town's heritage. To abandon this part of the town's foreshore to the sea will be neglecting its duty of care to the residents of the town.

Finally, while inspecting these defences it seems in our opinion that the greatest risk to flooding at this point in time is the lack of maintenance to the groins around the Garrison site unless these are repaired/maintained then the foundations of the sea-wall at the Garrison point will become undermined by wave pressure in the future. Our understanding is that this has already occurred close to the officer's mess.

In conclusion, The Southend-on-Sea seafront has important recreational and tourism value with attractions including the beach, therefore to effectively put in place a proposal that will in time destroy the very thing the council in its cultural policies has identified as the future for the town is committing economic suicide and the council must take a more pro-active approach to the need in protecting these resources. It is clearly obvious that cost should not enter into the councils thinking and policies when it comes to the protection of our sea-front. There is a growing resentment by residents of the council's preferred options and as such should realise that it is there to serve the views of the residents, not the other way around.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Woodley', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ron Woodley

Chairman

Burges Estate Residents Association