

Reference Number: 21/02431/FUL

Description of application: Proposed relevant demolition of building

Site Address: Ryde Pier Cafe and adjoining Public Toilets, Esplanade, Ryde, Isle of Wight

Applicant: Isle of Wight Council

This application is recommended for: Conditional Permission

REASON FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

The application has been made by the Council and it is required for Council purposes as the proposed demolition of the building is part of the Ryde Interchange Project. The Council's Constitution therefore requires this application to be determined by the Committee.

MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- Impact on heritage assets, including Ryde Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings
- Impact on nearby designated SSSI and SPA/Ramsar sites

1. Location and Site Characteristics

- 1.1** The application site relates to an existing single storey building located adjacent to the entrance/exit to the grade II listed promenade pier, which is used to access Wightlink's Fastcat service, and Ryde Transport Interchange, comprising rail, bus, taxi and hovercraft services, to the east. To the south and west of the building, between the seawall and public road network, is an area of public open space known as Western Gardens, which comprises areas of hard surfacing and planting, including several trees, raised planters and public seating.
- 1.2** The application building currently provides public toilets and a café. To the south of the application building and the public highway (A3055) is the main built-up frontage of Ryde Esplanade, which consists of terrace buildings of three or four storeys, dating from the Regency/Victorian periods, most of which are grade II listed, and have commercial uses at ground floor level.
- 1.3** The application building is approximately 7.6m by 16.5m, single storey, with a felt-covered flat roof. The building has light painted rendered block walls, with artificial stone quoins, projecting plinth, cornice with corbels, as well as overhead window detailing, providing some decoration to the side and principal front (west) elevations. Around the southern half of the building are existing fascia signs projecting above roof level associated with the existing café use. The building

partly abuts a stone wall running southwards, and its rear elevation wholly abuts the roadway leading to the pier, with this road being at higher level to the application building.

- 1.4** The building is located within the designated Ryde Conservation Area, as well as Flood Zones 2 and 3, and near to Ryde Sands & Wootton Creek SSSI and the Solent and Southampton Water SPA/Ramsar. The southern extent of these designated sites is defined by the existing sea wall to the north of the application building.

2 Details of Application

- 2.1** The application seeks planning permission for relevant demolition of the building. 'Relevant demolition', as defined by Section 196D of Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), means demolition of a non-listed building situated in a conservation area.

- 2.2** Demolition of the building is required to facilitate a revised highway arrangement necessary to realise improvements to the adjacent transport interchange as part of the Council's Department for Transport (DfT) funded Ryde Interchange Project. This seeks to improve travel connectivity and enhance sustainable transport at Ryde gateway, to include enhanced facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users. Notwithstanding the scope of the wider project, this application is concerned only with the proposed demolition of the café/toilets building.

3 Relevant History

- 3.1** None.

4 Development Plan Policy

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1** The NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It refers to three interdependent social, environmental and economic objectives, which need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across all of these different objectives.

- 4.2** The NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). It adds that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification, and that where a proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (see paragraphs 199, 200 and 202).

Local Planning Policy

- 4.3** The Island Plan Core Strategy (CS) defines the application site as being located within the Ryde Key Regeneration Area, but outside of its settlement boundary. Relevant policies of the CS are listed below:

DM2 Design Quality for New Development
DM11 Historic and Built Environment
DM12 Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Other relevance guidance

- 4.4** Ryde Conservation Area Appraisal (Isle of Wight Council, adopted April 2011).

5 Consultee and Third Party Comments

Internal Consultees

- 5.1** The Council's Planning Ecology Officer has advised that measures identified within the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), to include a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) and timing of works outside of the overwintering bird season (October to March), should be secured to ensure potential impacts from demolition activities would not adversely impact overwintering birds or result in environmental harm.

External Consultees

- 5.2** Historic England (HE) has confirmed that it does not need to be consulted on the application.
- 5.3** Natural England (NE) has advised that provided adherence to a CEMP that ensured timing of the works outside of the overwintering period (October to March inclusive) and measures to prevent pollution (including dust) entering the SPA during works was secured by condition, then potential impacts on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA in terms of noise disturbance and pollution could be screened out as part of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process without the need to proceed to appropriate assessment. NE has also confirmed that visual disturbance would be unlikely given the busy nature of the area.

Parish/Town Council Comments

- 5.4** Ryde Town Council has raised no objections, subject to:
- Natural England's requirements would be met (HRA and CEMP).
 - Any potential heritage items should be protected and reused.
 - Continuity of service would be provided which would be equal in terms of accessible standard and size as those to be demolished.
 - New facilities to be provided would be at least equal in terms of size and accessibility and would be open for the same period during the day as the existing toilets.

Third Party Representations

5.5 Comments have been received from two interested parties/local residents who have objected and raised the following concerns:

- Existing toilets should not be demolished as they are used all year round and necessary in this area.
- Demolition not justified - no high-quality replacement proposed.
- Demolition without replicated provision would be discriminatory to the elderly, disabled, outdoor workers and homeless, and temporary portaloos may not be suitable for the elderly, infirm or parents of young children.
- Decline of public toilets a threat to health, mobility and equality.
- Seafront would be vandalised by removal of café/toilets.
- Effect on character of the conservation area – social space with civic facilities in good condition to serve the demand(s) of the area, loss of green “breathing space” and leisure seating for town would not be an enhancement.

6 Evaluation

Impact on the significance and setting of heritage assets, including Ryde Conservation Area (RCA) and nearby listed buildings

Ryde Conservation Area

6.1 Policies DM2 and DM11 of the Island Plan state that the Council will support proposals that positively conserve and enhance the special character of the Island’s historic and built environment and which preserve or enhance heritage assets and their settings. Furthermore, section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) places a general duty on the Council in the exercise of its planning functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the RCA.

6.2 The application building is located within Character Area 1: Esplanade, Pier and Seafront, of the RCA, the appraisal of which summarises the special interest of this character area and refers to it as the face of Ryde, easily read from the seaward approach, in particular from the pier, with views of the pier, the Solent and the mainland a permanent backdrop when viewed from the town. It adds that the town’s origin as a traditional seaside resort and transport interchange is inherent in the architecture and landscaping along the Esplanade. Open space, public gardens, sandy beaches and seaside stalls, as well as the hustle and bustle of the transport interchange, are all features/qualities that are mentioned as contributing to the creation of a distinctive coastal resort. Paragraph 9.1 of the appraisal explains that the pier is the dominant landmark from both land and sea, from which the best panoramic views of the area can be gained, the Esplanade appearing as a long continuous open space.

6.3 The RCA appraisal discusses development of the western Esplanade from 1900, including demolition of properties to make way for a road widening scheme, as

well as further investment in this area in the 1930s. It refers to the dominance of transportation in recent years, with the western end of the Esplanade nearest the pier developed into a transport interchange. Open space, uninterrupted views along the coast, as well as municipal horticulture and street trees, are mentioned as contributing to the special interest and character of this area.

- 6.4** It is understood that the café/toilets building was constructed as part of the improvements to the Western Esplanade Gardens in the 1930s, recognising the popularity of the garden during the inter-war period. The gardens are very different to their original composition, but they remain an important open space. The building too has been altered in association with the partial conversion and use as a café, including part infilling of the central recessed area on the west elevation to enlarge the internal space, and removal of windows and creation of a large single opening, both now secured with roller shutters.
- 6.5** The submitted Heritage Statement (HS) includes comments from Historic England and the Twentieth Century Society made during the public consultation on the interchange project. Although not made directly in respect of this application, but the wider project, elements referencing the loss of this building are considered appropriate to consider.
- 6.6** Within its letter of 03 August 2021 (appended to the submitted HS), Historic England (HE) comment that the current configuration of the esplanade is not ideal and that the landscape of the bus station and highways in particular make an indifferent to poor contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area. HE notes that the highway spaces and train station forecourt are important for understanding the history and use of the spaces and surrounding buildings, but are, in general, denuded of features that would be considered desirable to preserve. HE specifically mentions that for pedestrians, crossing this space is difficult, and that the large bend at the western end of the esplanade creates a largely traffic dominated area at the bottom of Union Street.
- 6.7** With respect to Western Gardens, HE advice is that this does provide a welcome area of publicly accessible open space, making an important contribution to the seafront's character and appearance. This space, HE adds, provides attractive views over the Solent, as well as to the pier and over the western sands, and back to the surrounding listed buildings. In relation to the current café and toilets building, HE comments that the building is not identified as a building that contributes positively to the conservation area in the adopted conservation area appraisal, although it does provide a visible link to the civic investments in the seafront of the inter-war era, as well as providing a focus of use and amenity and blocking views to the unattractive western elevation of the railway station. HE also states that (in its opinion) the loss of an area at the eastern end of Western Gardens (approximately the area added to the gardens in the 1930s - including the cafe/toilets building) would result in minor loss to the character or appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.8** The Twentieth Century Society, within its letter of 27 August 2021 (appended to the submitted HS), objects to the loss of the eastern, interwar part of Western Gardens, including the café and toilets block, as it considers the gardens make a

positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the area as a traditional seaside resort, the eastern landscape an important interwar addition and, referring to HE comment, consider that the café and toilets building is of significance as it provides a “*visible link to the civic investments in the seafront of the inter-war era.*”

- 6.9** Within the submitted HS the Applicant has referred to the Twentieth Century Society’s view as an “*interesting interpretation*” of the significance of the building given HE’s advice which notes that the building is not identified within the RCA appraisal as contributing positively to the conservation area. They also note that a recent application to HE to have the building listed was rejected. Furthermore, the applicant states that The Ryde Regeneration Group (comprising members of the Town Council, Ryde Society, and Ryde Business Association) has previously stated that the building obstructs views of the historic pier from Western Gardens and of the gardens and wider conservation area from the pier, and that removal of the structure would improve some views of the conservation area as approached from the pier, east to west along the esplanade, and views of the pier when approach from the south.
- 6.10** HE’s assessment report, dated 18 October 2021, which rejected the building for national listing, refers to its limited architectural interest, as well as incremental alterations and modifications that have resulted in depletion of the original external symmetrical design, changes to fenestration and the likely loss of most of the original internal arrangement. In terms of its historic interest, it considers this 1930s building is not an early or unusual example of a public convenience, and that in terms of group value, although it stands adjacent to the listed pier, this proximity is not of sufficient group value to compensate for the building’s level of architectural or historic interest. A copy of HE’s assessment report has been included as Appendix 1.
- 6.11** Having regard to the appraisal of the RCA, as well as comments made by Historic England and the Twentieth Century Society in relation to Western Gardens and the toilets/café building, it is acknowledged that the building does have some historic value in that it is a visual link to the investment and development of this area during the interwar period. However, it has been substantially altered over time and its removal would provide for enhancements to the character of the area and the views of the pier. It is for these reasons that it is considered that the existing building does make a limited positive contribution to the conservation area but that its removal would also represent an enhancement, for other reasons. As such, its loss would result in less than substantial harm to this designated heritage asset.

Listed buildings, including Ryde Promenade Pier

- 6.12** Western Gardens and the esplanade do afford an open and spacious setting for the listed buildings to the south of the site, as well for the pier, allowing for that open relationship of these buildings and the town with the beach, pier and the Solent. Western Gardens makes an important contribution to the setting of these listed buildings, not only in terms of open space, but also in terms of providing an attractive landscaped public realm. The existing café/toilets building however is of

limited architectural merit and does partially interrupt the open setting. Whilst the building does have some historic interest in terms of the development of this area, its demolition would not harm the setting of these buildings but would enhance the openness of this area and the open relationship of these listed buildings, including the pier, with Western Gardens, the beach and the sea. Therefore, it is considered by officers that the setting of these listed buildings, as well the pier, would be preserved in accordance with the aims of policies DM2 and DM11 of the CS, the NPPF, and the requirements of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended), which places a duty on the Council to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings and their settings when considering whether to grant planning permission.

Public benefits

- 6.13** The identified harm to the RCA must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. As mentioned earlier in the report, demolition of the building is required to facilitate a highways realignment scheme (including new pier entrance) as part of the wider Ryde Interchange Project. This DfT funded project seeks to improve travel connectivity at Ryde gateway, with the scheme prioritising pedestrians and cyclists over motor vehicles, and providing enhanced facilities for these highway users, as well as public transport users, to make it a better, safer place for people to pass through, visit and enjoy. Removal of the existing building would also open up views between the listed pier and Western Gardens.
- 6.14** Policy DM17 of the Island Plan states that the Council will support proposals that increase travel choice, provide alternative means of travel to the car, and improve accessibility for pedestrian, cycling and public transport. Demolition of the building would facilitate planned enhancements to sustainable travel options and travel connectivity, which would help address some of the key issues affecting the conservation area, as identified within the RCA appraisal and by Historic England, including poor quality of public realm (in some areas), and the effects of heavy vehicle traffic through the town and along the esplanade. The RCA appraisal states that through traffic dominates the area making roads difficult to cross, the esplanade interchange is heavily trafficked by vehicles and people and severs the town from the beach. The appraisal states that the Council will continually seek improvements to both vehicle and pedestrian movements whilst respecting the character of Ryde.
- 6.15** Although the existing café concession and toilets would be lost, it is understood that the applicant intends to provide replacement temporary public toilets as part of the works prior to decommissioning and demolishing the toilet block, and that these temporary facilities would continue to operate until new permanent public toilet facilities are in place (to be situated in the train station). It is also understood that concessions would be expanded at the train station as part of the wider project.
- 6.16** Demolition of the building would not only provide an opportunity to reimagine the pier entrance and highway arrangement in this area, but it would also remove the interruption caused by the existing building to the clear views across Western

Gardens/the esplanade towards the Solent and pier. Whilst it is appreciated that there is some positive benefit to the building in that it affords screening of the train station and directs views seaward, the special interest of this character area of the RCA is more importantly derived from its open relationship with the beach and sea, with the open space affording clear views across the Solent. Enhanced openness of this area from removal of the building would also be a public benefit of demolition.

- 6.17** Therefore, having regard to the special interest of this part of the RCA, which is primarily derived from its origins as a traditional seaside resort and transport interchange, as well as its open and leisurely character and relationship with the beach and sea, and taking into consideration the limited positive contribution the existing café/toilet building makes, it is considered by officers, that even affording great weight to the conservation of the designated heritage asset (the RCA), the public benefits of the proposal which would enable a wider enhancement of Ryde gateway would outweigh and justify the less than substantial harm to the conservation area.
- 6.18** Consideration has been given to the requirement to record the building prior to its loss. However, the Council's Archaeological Officer has advised that this is not necessary given the building has not been added to the local Historic Environment Record and is not considered to be of enough merit to warrant recording.
- 6.19** The applicant has advised that the construction programme for the wider project is likely to be approximately 12 months duration, to begin in spring this year. It is understood that Government funding through the DfT requires the project to adhere to tight timescales and that the go ahead for implementation of the scheme has been given by the Council's Cabinet in October 2021. Therefore, it is highly likely that should permission for demolition be granted, the public benefits of the wider project would be realised in the short term, delivery of which would be within the control of the Council as the Local Highway Authority.

Impact on the Solent SPA/Ramsar and Ryde Sands to Wootton Creek SSSI

- 6.20** The application site is in close proximity to the Ryde Sands and Wootton Creek SSSI, as well as the Solent and Southampton Water SPA/Ramsar. The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Arc, 18 November 2021) which concludes that in the absence of mitigation measures there is the potential for adverse impacts to these designated sites through noise and visual disturbance to overwintering birds, as well as through pollution from run-off and/or dust if sensitive construction (demolition) methods are not employed. It recommends a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) is produced to outline the measures to be undertaken to ensure no impacts via air or water pollution or visual and noise disturbance to designated sites, including timing of works.
- 6.21** Natural England (NE) has advised that the main concern with the demolition is that its right on the seafront and that this area of beach is considered SPA functionally linked land under the Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy as a

roosting and feeding site, so there's high potential for disturbance of the SPA birds. NE has confirmed that if the demolition works were to be undertaken outside of the overwintering period (October to March inclusive), this would appropriately mitigate for potential noise disturbance. NE has also confirmed that it agrees with officers that given the busy nature of the seafront, visual disturbance is unlikely. Again, undertaking works outside of the overwintering period would ensure visual disturbance would be avoided. There is also concern with pollution entering the SPA and damaging food sources for SPA birds, but NE has advised that provided a CEMP covered pollution prevention, as well as timing of works, then it would agree that a likely significant effect on the SPA could be screened out.

- 6.22** In response the applicant has submitted a CEMP, which states that the demolition works are envisaged to take approximately two weeks and would be carried out outside of the overwintering period, with works likely to start in spring 2022. The submitted CEMP also sets out measures to avoid pollution, including fuelling of plant/vehicles remote from the site, use of a dust suppression system, waste removal/management, and biosecurity measures. Adherence to the CEMP, including limiting timing of the demolition works to outside of the overwintering period, can be secured by planning condition. Provided this is conditioned (see recommended condition 2), it is considered by officers that the proposed demolition of the building would not be likely to have a significant effect on the designated SSSI and SPA/Ramsar, with the integrity of these sites protected in accordance with the aims of policy DM12 of the CS, the NPPF and the requirements of Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

7 Conclusion

- 7.1** For the above reasons, it is considered by officers that less than substantial harm to the Ryde Conservation Area would result from demolition of the café/toilets building, but this harm would be outweighed and justified by the public benefits of the wider Ryde Interchange Project, with proposed demolition of the building enabling a Government-funded, Council-approved, highway modification scheme, including new pier entrance, as well as other enhancements for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. Whilst the existing toilets and concession would be lost, these facilities would be re-provided within the train station as part of the wider plans for this area, although these aspects of the wider project fall outside of the scope of this planning application. With regard to the settings of nearby listed buildings, including the promenade pier, these would be preserved and potentially enhanced.
- 7.2** Potential adverse impacts to the designated (SSSI and SPA/Ramsar) sites near the building, discussed above, can be avoided so that they would not have a likely significant effect on the SPA/Ramsar but would protect the integrity of these designated sites.
- 7.3** Therefore, subject to the recommended conditions the proposal would comply with the aims of policies DM2, DM11, DM12 and DM17 of the CS, the NPPF, and the requirements of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation

Areas) Act 1990 (as amended), as well as the requirement of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

8 Recommendation

- 8.1** That planning permission for relevant demolition is granted, subject to the conditions set out at the end of this report.

9 Statement of Proactive Working

9.1 ARTICLE 31 - WORKING WITH THE APPLICANT

In accordance with paragraphs 38 of the NPPF, the Isle of Wight Council takes a positive approach to development proposals focused on solutions to secure sustainable developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Where development proposals are considered to be sustainable, the Council aims to work proactively with applicants in the following way:

- The IWC offers a pre-application advice service;
- Updates applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and, where there is not a principle objection to the proposed development, suggest solutions where possible.

In this instance the application was considered to be acceptable as submitted and therefore no further discussions were required.

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Development hereby permitted shall only be carried out in complete accordance with the submitted Construction Environment Management Plan, dated February 2022.

Reason: To ensure the integrity of the Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) would be protected and conserved in accordance with the aims of policies DM2 (Design Quality for New Development) and DM12 (Landscape, Seascape, Biodiversity and Geodiversity) of the Island Plan Core Strategy, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the requirements of Section 40 of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended) and Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Appendix 1

Historic England

Reject at Initial Assessment Report

18 October
2021

Application Name: Single storey Cafe and Public Conveniences on Ryde Seafront

Number: 1477409

Type: New

Heritage Category: Listing

Address:

Ryde Pier Cafe & WCs, Western Gardens, Esplanade, Ryde, PO33 2HE

County	District	District Type	Parish
	Isle of Wight	Unitary Authority	Ryde

Recommendation: Reject

Assessment

Historic England has received an application to assess for listing the public-convenience block on the north side of Esplanade, Ryde, Isle of Wight, understood to have opened on 26 March 1932, as part of improvements to the C19 Western Gardens. The block was later partially converted for use as a café. The toilet facilities were most recently upgraded between 2012 and 2014. The building stands within the Ryde Conservation Area.

The applicant makes reference to various features near to the single-storey building, including Ryde Promenade Pier (Grade II, List entry: 1239551), and the seawall and railings. These are separate structures which do not form part of the 1930s public-convenience building. The applicant also makes reference to the remains of earlier structures underneath the building, including an earlier docking area for vessels, and the possible remains of stabling for horses used for the horse-drawn phase of the pier tramway. Very little information has been provided on the nature of these remains or their extent of survival. Based on the available information, these may comprise foundations of earlier structures on this area of land, but do not form part of the later building under assessment.

Based on the information provided and with reference to the Principles of Selection for Listed Buildings (DCMS, November 2018), and Historic England's Infrastructure: Utilities and Communication Listing Selection Guide (December 2017), the public-convenience block on the north side of Esplanade, Ryde, Isle of Wight, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

Degree of architectural interest:

* it is a modest single-storey structure with limited architectural interest;

* incremental alterations and modifications have resulted in the depletion of the original external symmetrical design, changes to the fenestration and the likely loss of most of the original internal arrangement.

Degree of historic interest:

* this 1930s building is not an early or unusual example of a public convenience.

Degree of group value:

* although it stands adjacent to the listed Ryde Promenade Pier (Grade II), this proximity is not of sufficient group value to compensate for the building's level of architectural or historic interest.