

## 13. APPENDIX C

### FELIXSTOWE - PUBLIC REALM PROPOSALS

See also Public Realm in Felixstowe Sheet (EED001 / 10)

– *attached separately as fold out A3 sheet.*

#### Ref. “Public Realm Improvements for Felixstowe”

This sketchbook of proposals, in the form of a presentation “poster”, depicts ideas for environmental improvements relating to Felixstowe town centre. They range from modest changes to the streetscape, which could be implemented relatively easily and quickly, to more daring long-term interventions, which have the potential to transform Felixstowe’s regional, if not national status as a tourist destination. All the proposals are primarily designed to improve the amenity of the town for local residents and workers. However, if some of the more ambitious ideas are championed and realised, the commercial benefits to the town, and therefore local people as well as visitors, could be huge.

The brief asks for ideas to improve the environs of Hamilton Road, including “The Triangle”, as the central public open space, and refers to the challenge of improving the presently poor connection between Hamilton Road and the seafront. David Lock Associates addresses these issues by proposing a sequence of public realm enhancements, from Felixstowe Station to Bent Hill and the seafront, as follows:-

### **Felixstowe Station and Sir John Mills Place**

The railway station's current relationship to the town centre is unsatisfactory. Its failure to deliver visitors to Felixstowe's "front door" is tentative if not apologetic. We propose that the platforms are reinstated to their original location so that visitors are delivered directly onto Hamilton Road, Felixstowe's commercial spine.

The pretty period station building deserves a much more attractive setting. Hence we propose an upgrade for the forecourt, which we suggest should be named after one of Felixstowe's famous and hitherto uncelebrated sons, namely the late actor, Sir John Mills. A statue of Sir John is suggested as a centrepiece, set within good quality paving and street furniture. Boxed trees would give the plaza a distinct identity and architectural lighting, (e.g. station building and tree up-lighters), would add to its attractiveness 'after hours'.

### **Hamilton Road – streetscape improvements including in-line parking**

We propose a co-ordinated improvement scheme for the whole of Hamilton Road from, (and including), the roundabout junction with Beatrice Avenue, to Bent Hill and the seafront. The improvements would reconfigure existing road and footpath widths to maximise convenience and comfort for pedestrians whilst maintaining existing access arrangements for vehicles. Street furniture, including signage, traffic barriers and lighting, would be rationalised to minimise street clutter and contribute to a consistent, safe and legible public realm. A new high quality surface treatment and a rhythmic layout of trees of one species between pairs of in-line parking bays, would reinforce the clarity of the street's identity and add to its pleasant, hospitable character.

Felixstowe's Edwardian shop fronts are one the town's great architectural assets. Visitors' perceptions of the town centre's quality depend greatly upon the visual integrity of the high street and the degree of charm the shop fronts provide. This character is sensitive to intervention and therefore the graphic interpretation of shop front design, including colour, lettering style etc, needs to be handled with great care. An incentive scheme to improve fronts

that fail to contribute positively to the aesthetic harmony of the street elevation should be considered, and we recommend that a single source professional design advisor is “on call” to guide future change.

### **The Triangle**

The Triangle is the town’s principal civic space. It conveniently lies midway between along Hamilton Road and currently accommodates a public convenience, which we understand must be reinstated in any new layout.

Our sketch design shows a shared surface treatment which permits existing vehicular access to continue. The public conveniences are rebuilt and integrated with a new cafeteria building and associated sitting-out space. The latter could be set slightly below pavement level and partially wrapped with screen planting to provide a sense of shelter and protection from passing pedestrian and vehicular traffic. We propose that a sculptural lightweight canopy should over-sail the building, celebrating the status of The Triangle as Felixstowe’s principal civic space.

### **Trinity Square**

We suggest that the setting for Trinity Church could be vastly improved. The church and its neighbouring buildings have great character and the creation of Trinity Square would celebrate their presence, thereby enriching Hamilton Road. Although the proposal allows existing vehicular access to continue along the high street and Orwell Road, Trinity Square would transform a mere road junction into a public space of quality and create a welcome incident on the “processional route” from the railway station to the seafront.

The sketch design proposes a shared surface, re-laid with high quality paving materials. We advocate traffic calming measures that would allow for the removal of conventional traffic barriers, thereby creating a calm, uncluttered space. Improvements include architectural lighting of the church as the focus for the space, and the introduction of a single large growing specimen tree, (evergreen oak?), as a local landmark of great beauty and offering for posterity.

### **Connection to the Seafront, Felixstowe Winter garden**

Upon arrival at Bent Hill, visitors are presently offered a choice of two routes to the seafront. The first is via Bent Hill itself, a steep, winding street which pedestrians share with vehicles. The second is a footpath with a very discreet entrance leading into one of Felixstowe's heritage seafront gardens. Again the route is steep, though at least sheltered and traffic free. We understand that current studies for improving pedestrian access to the beach favour Bent Hill, with a rationalised and enhanced surface treatment, and existing vehicular access maintained.

Our alternative approach is bold and radical. The feasibility of the proposal has to be determined but we believe it has the potential to raise Felixstowe's profile as a coastal visitor destination to one of national significance. It would solve the problem of town centre/seafront severance at a stroke, provide an all-year-round amenity for local people and visitors alike, and offer opportunities for revenue earning that would be of huge benefit to the town as a whole.

The proposal is for a new Winter garden that would take convenient advantage of the level difference between Hamilton Gardens and the Undercliff Road West seafront. For visitors arriving from Hamilton Road, the existing ramped footpath into the pleasure gardens would be replaced by an elevated, level, (or gently sloping), weather-protected corridor leading to an open terrace offering outstanding panoramic views out to sea and over Felixstowe's colourful seafront. An adjoining lift would provide immediate access to beach level. Midway along the corridor an access would be provided directly into the Winter garden. Within the

Winter garden this could lead to escalators taking visitors to the lower level and/or deliver them to an upper level walkway.

The building, (possibly an iconic architectural structure which in itself might become a great visitor attraction), could offer many amenities and opportunities. The character of these would need to be determined by the Council and associated sponsors but successful precedents like the Eden Project at St Austell in Cornwall, the new Sheffield Winter garden, and two recently completed winter gardens at Canary Wharf, (all shown here), illustrate the scientific and educational, as well as the commercial potential. It would provide an effective means of connecting the town centre with the beach, an all-season amenity for local people, and additionally draw the adjoining Spa Pavilion back into Felixstowe's cultural, recreational and commercial fold.