

Weymouth Seafront Masterplan

January 2033

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01

“When the sun shines there are few happier places to be than the former royal resort of Weymouth.”

(Rough Guide)

Weymouth is a great coastal resort, with a great beach. The Which Review gave Weymouth 5* for both its beach and seafront, whilst the Rough Guide stated that “It’s worth a visit for the fine sandy beach alone”. But surveys suggest that for holiday makers, a great beach is no longer enough. They are looking for places with ‘authenticity’, places which demonstrate their heritage, nature, culture, and wider sustainability. The public survey highlights that this is also what residents of Weymouth want from their seafront. Fortunately, Weymouth seafront’s royal heritage, together with its proximity to the harbour, historic town centre, marina, nature reserves and other attractions means it is well placed to benefit from these trends.

This report considers ways in which Weymouth seafront can make the best possible use of these assets, to attract visitors, support local businesses and provide the best possible social and leisure facilities for local residents.

The report has been commissioned by Weymouth Town Council and is focused very specifically on the seafront and promenade. It is however clearly impossible, and counterproductive, to consider the seafront in isolation from the harbour and town centre, car parking, bus and rail station, country parks, nature reserves, and other attractions that surround it. Some of the recommendations in this report do therefore relate to areas outside the direct control of the Town Council and to deliver these more strategic projects, and the seafront’s full potential, requires ‘partnership delivery’ between the Town Council and other key stakeholders.



Objectives

The emerging proposals have been benchmarked against six objectives. These objectives have been developed based on priorities established through the public and stakeholder engagement process, findings from the initial site appraisals, and are factors that are increasingly important in driving seaside tourism.



Sustainability



Wellbeing



Heritage



Authenticity



Connectivity



Broadening Appeal

A key objective for Weymouth is to move more of its activity to the less busy parts of the seafront.

Activity and Popularity

There are a number of reasons why the seafront becomes more ‘popular’ and more crowded as you head south from Overcombe to the Pavilion. These include:

- Sand. The beach is wider at its southern end, and there is more sand and less shingle which makes it more popular.
- Parking. The southern area of the seafront is located between the two ‘main’ car parks, The Swannery and The Pavilion. It is also adjacent to the bus station and closest to the rail station.
- Leisure Activities. There is a concentration of leisure opportunities, including pedalo hire, donkey rides, beach volleyball and funfair rides in this area.

- Food & Drink. The southern area is close to the Harbour and Town Centre, as well as having a concentration of cafés and restaurants on the beach itself.

- Toilets.

Whilst crowded beaches are obviously a sign of popularity and ‘success,’ there are indications that pictures of crowded beaches deter tourists. Given that for the majority of the summer only a certain section of the beach becomes crowded, a key challenge for Weymouth seafront is to spread this popularity further north so that it can accommodate more visitors and attract more expenditure to support local businesses. This report therefore considers ways in which this can be supported.



Lodmoor / Natural Beach



Greenhill Beach



Greenhill Beach / View from seating area above Victorian beach huts



Greenhill Gardens



Pier Bandstand



Jubilee Clock Tower



Sandy beach / Victorian Royal Hotel



Town centre connections / Bond Street



Esplanade / Restaurants



Sandy Beach / Rides



Alexandra Gardens / Promenade



Sandy Beach / Pavilion end

Three distinct character areas, each approximately 1km in length. Each area showcases different qualities of Weymouth's seafront and should be considered as a visitor destination in its own right.

Character Areas

Weymouth has over 2 miles of beachfront which vary considerably in character. A walk along the promenade from Overcombe is to experience the seafront becoming gradually more 'urban'.

Natural 'wild' beach

It starts at the 'wild' and natural beach adjacent to the Lodmoor RSPB reserve with long views in all directions, north to Bowleaze Cove, east over the bay, west over the nature reserve and south towards Portland.

Greenhill Beach

At Greenhill Beach the promenade becomes more enclosed, with buildings of a residential scale and character, green front gardens, beach huts and Greenhill Gardens itself giving it a more 'local' quality.

Town Beach

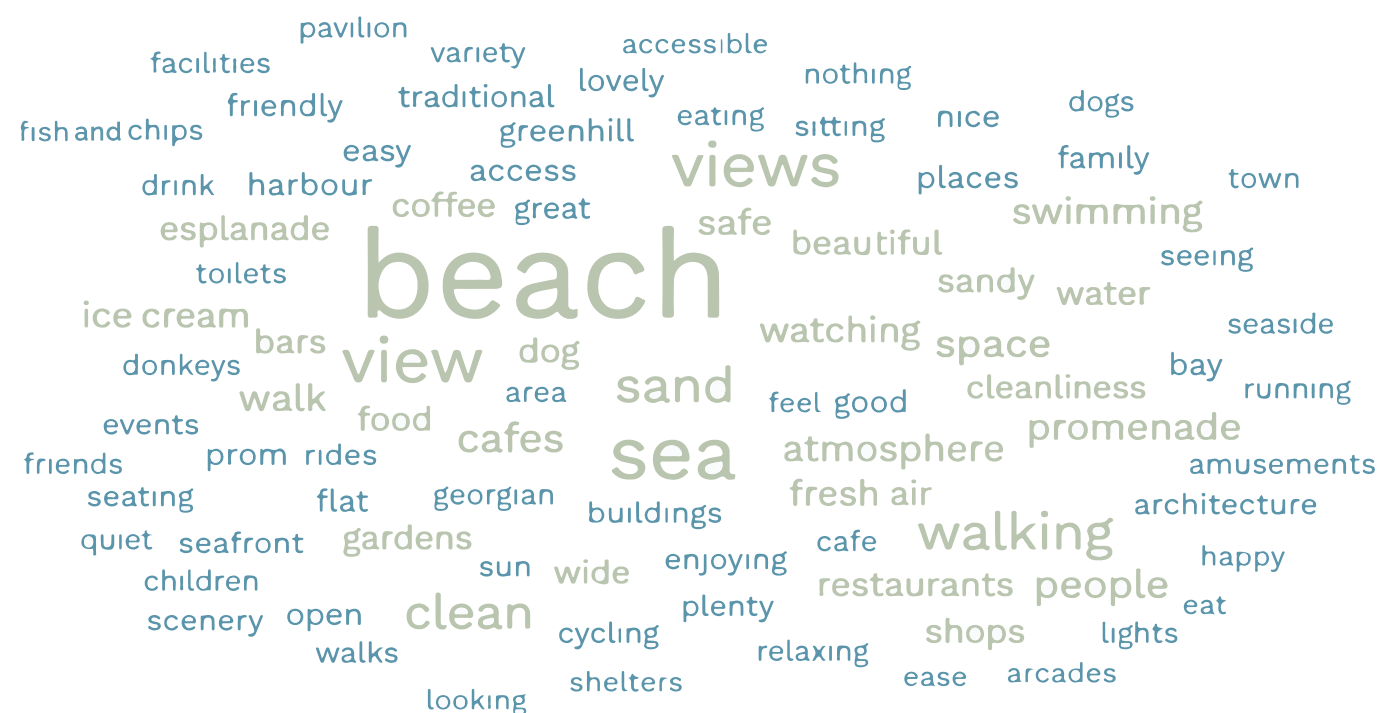
From Brunswick Terrace the buildings along the promenade become grander in scale, and are set further back from the seafront. The cafés and buildings on the promenade itself also become larger. The promenade is still pedestrianised but the traffic along the Esplanade becomes more intrusive.

South of the Jubilee Clock the seafront has a much stronger 'town centre' quality, with shops, cafés and leisure uses at ground floor of the buildings along the Esplanade and more commercial activity on the beach itself. This activity reaches a peak in the funfair location and bars/restaurants towards Alexandra Park and the Pavilion Theatre, which are the busiest and most crowded areas of the seafront.



Public Survey

02



Word cloud - Respondents asked to name three things they enjoy most about Weymouth Seafront

Perceptions

The online public survey received over 2200 responses from residents of Weymouth and visitors to the town.

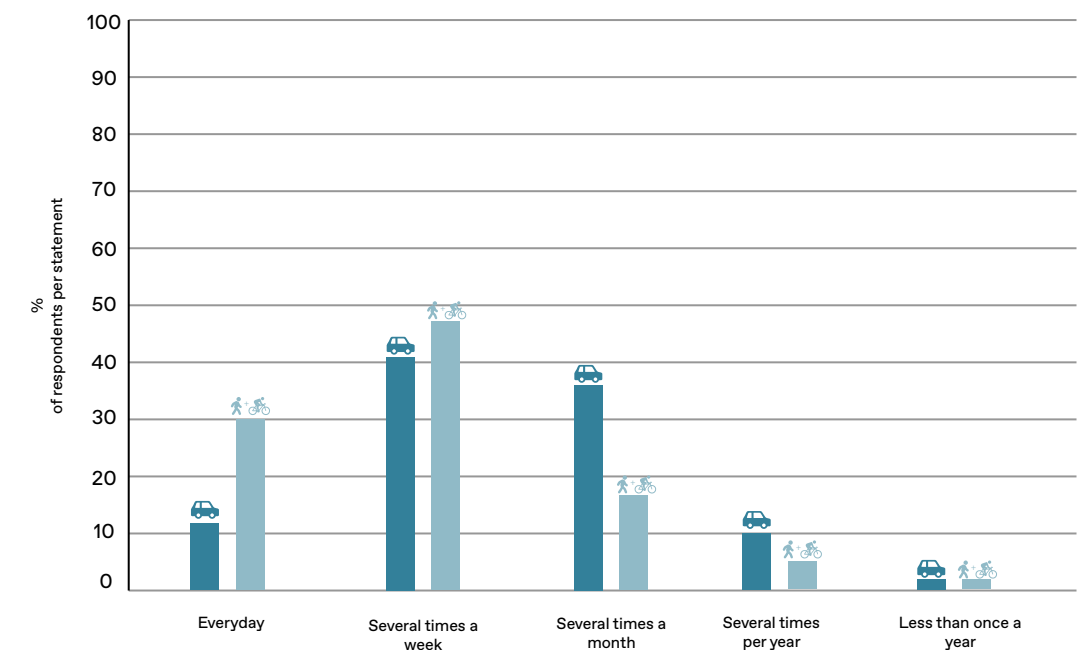
Results highlight that the seafront is utilised by a wide range of users at various times. All age groups say they visit the seafront at lots of different times, demonstrating the importance of the beach/seafront to the entire community. At least 30% of respondents visit the seafront in groups of 3 or more, and 70% of local respondents state they visit the seafront 'several times a week' or 'everyday'.

The survey shows that perceptions of the seafront are, overall, high. Positive associations predominately relate to the natural environment - the views scenery, sandy beach, sea, and public open space. Physical activities such as swimming, walking, and cycling, as well as eating, drinking, and socialising are also amongst what visitors enjoy most about the seafront.



■ Weymouth Residents
■ Visitors
■ Under 25s

Survey results show that residents who visit the seafront on foot or bike visit almost three times more per week than those that drive and park.



Graph: Visits and mode of transport

Visits

There is clear evidence, from this survey and from similar surveys in other towns, that by encouraging people to walk or cycle, it results in more frequent visits and increased spend with local businesses.

Many of our proposals are therefore centred on improving pedestrian connections, to and from the town centre and harbour, as well as to the rail station and along the promenade itself.

Building on the success of the recent Harbourside public realm works, proposals will also put focus on public realm improvements, including the reallocation of car parking spaces, to create space for more events, social activity, greenery, and to increase opportunities for existing and start-up independent businesses along the seafront.



Town centre / Promenade connections

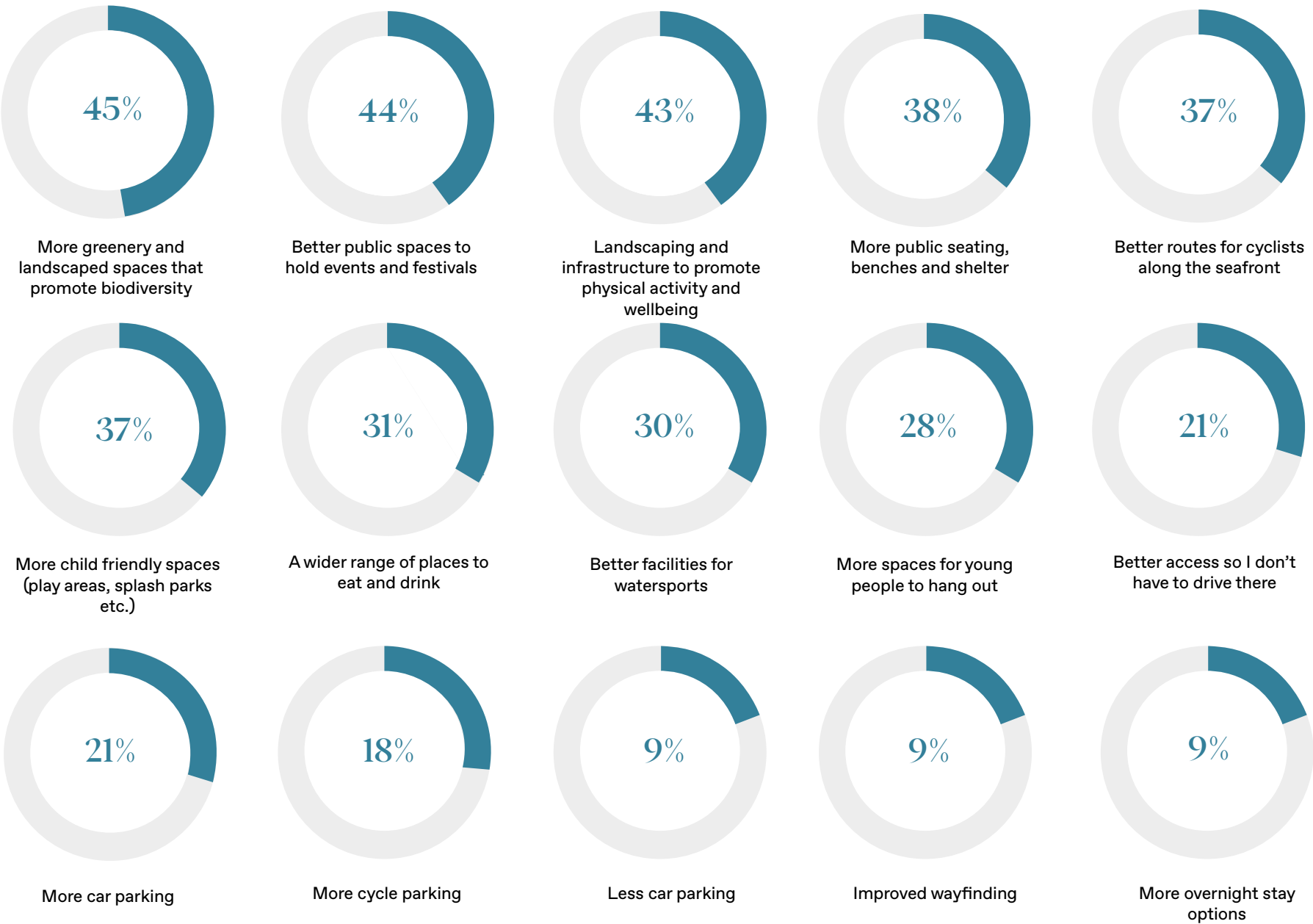


Harbour public realm improvements

Local & Visitor Priorities

The public survey asked what residents and visitors felt Weymouth Seafront needs to make it a better place to visit, and spend time on.

Priorities are for more greenery, landscaped spaces that promote biodiversity, physical activity and wellbeing; increased provision of spaces to hold public events and festivities; an increase in provision of public seating; improved seafront cycle routes; and more child friendly spaces.



- U25's priorities:

 1. Better public spaces to hold events and festivals
 2. More spaces for young people to hang out
 3. More greenery and landscaped spaces that promote biodiversity
 4. More public seating, benches and shelter
 5. Better facilities for watersports
- Priorities for those visiting with families:

 1. More child friendly spaces (play areas, splash parks etc.)
 2. Better public spaces to hold events and festivals
 3. More greenery and landscaped spaces that promote biodiversity
 3. Landscaping and infrastructure to promote physical activity and wellbeing
 5. More public seating, benches and shelter
- Local priorities:

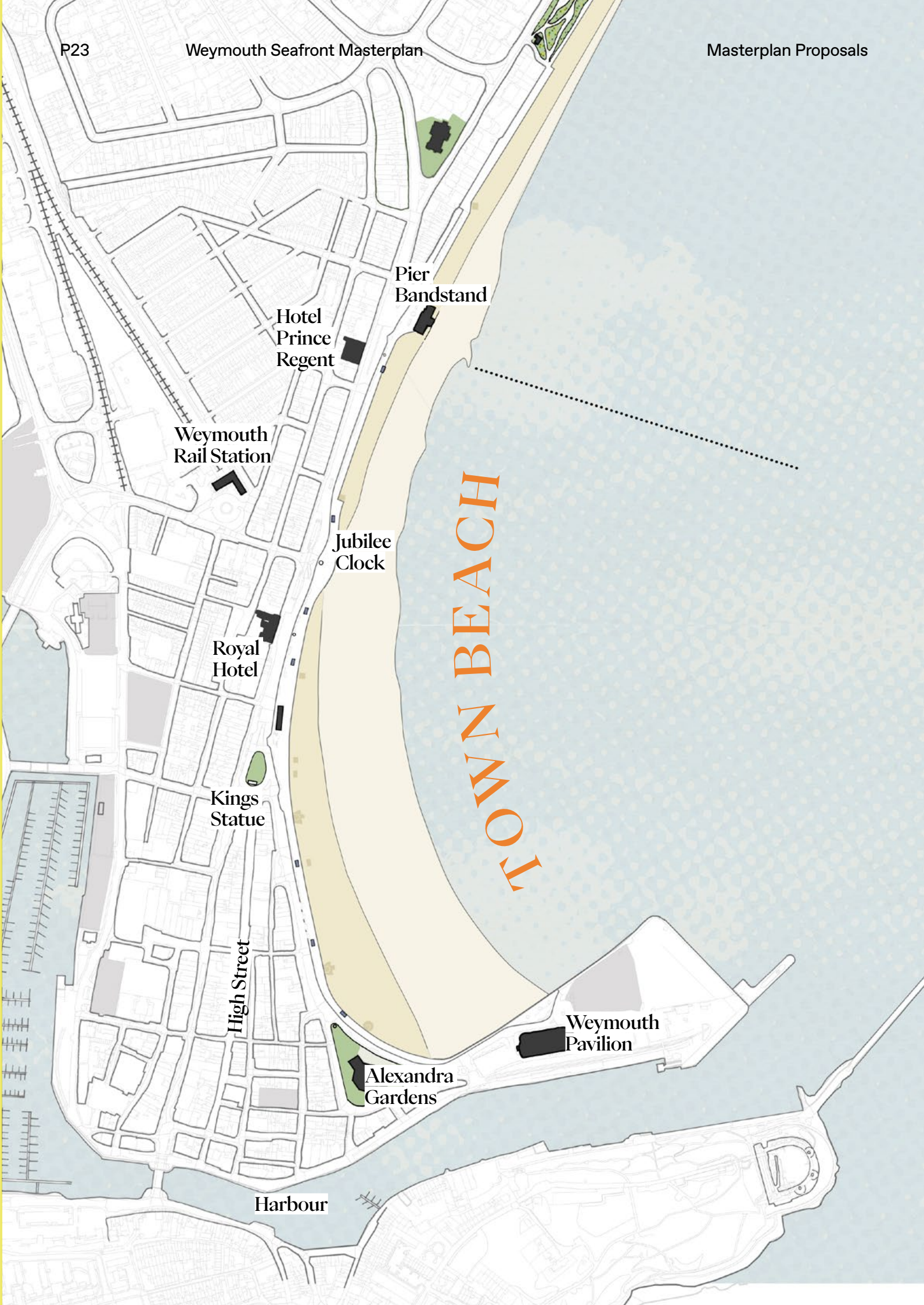
 1. Better public spaces to hold events and festivals
 2. More greenery and landscaped spaces that promote biodiversity
 3. Landscaping and infrastructure to promote physical activity and wellbeing
 4. More child friendly spaces (play areas, splash parks etc.)
 5. Better routes for cyclists along the seafront
- Visitor (non Weymouth resident) priorities:

 1. More public seating, benches and shelter
 2. More greenery and landscaped spaces that promote biodiversity
 3. More child friendly spaces (play areas, splash parks etc.)
 4. Landscaping and infrastructure to promote physical activity and wellbeing
 5. Better public spaces to hold events and festivals

Masterplan Proposals

03

Town Beach



Town Beach

As noted earlier in the report, this is the most ‘popular’ area of the seafront. The survey results have shown that many visitors to the seafront also visit Weymouth Harbour and Town Centre. Maintaining the vibrancy of this part of the seafront is therefore important for local businesses across the town centre.

We have considered how this can be achieved in the following ways:

- Maximising the amount of sandy beach,
- Concentrating the ‘funfair’ activities,
- Increasing trading opportunities for existing businesses,
- Creating opportunities for new traders not currently represented, and
- Improving physical and visual connections between the seafront, the harbour and town centre.

Delivering these improvements cannot be achieved just on land within the Town Council control. It requires coordinated activity between Weymouth Town Council and Dorset Council, as landowners, planning authority and highways authority.

Masterplan Proposals

Projects within Town Council control:

- 1 Sandy Beach & Funfair
- 2 Jubilee Clock & Kings Street
- 3 Jubilee Clock to Pier Bandstand

Projects that require partnership delivery:

- 4 Royal Beach
- 5 Esplanade
- 6 Kings Statue
- 7 Pier / Bandstand area



1. Sandy Beach and Funfair

It is our recommendation that certain elements of the funfair could be removed from the beach area. Focusing the funfair on the ‘vintage’ elements, such as helter skelter, with a more coordinated and connected offer would create a stronger ‘heritage’ brand for the funfair. This would have the added benefit of creating more space on the sandy beach which is the most popular area for visitors.

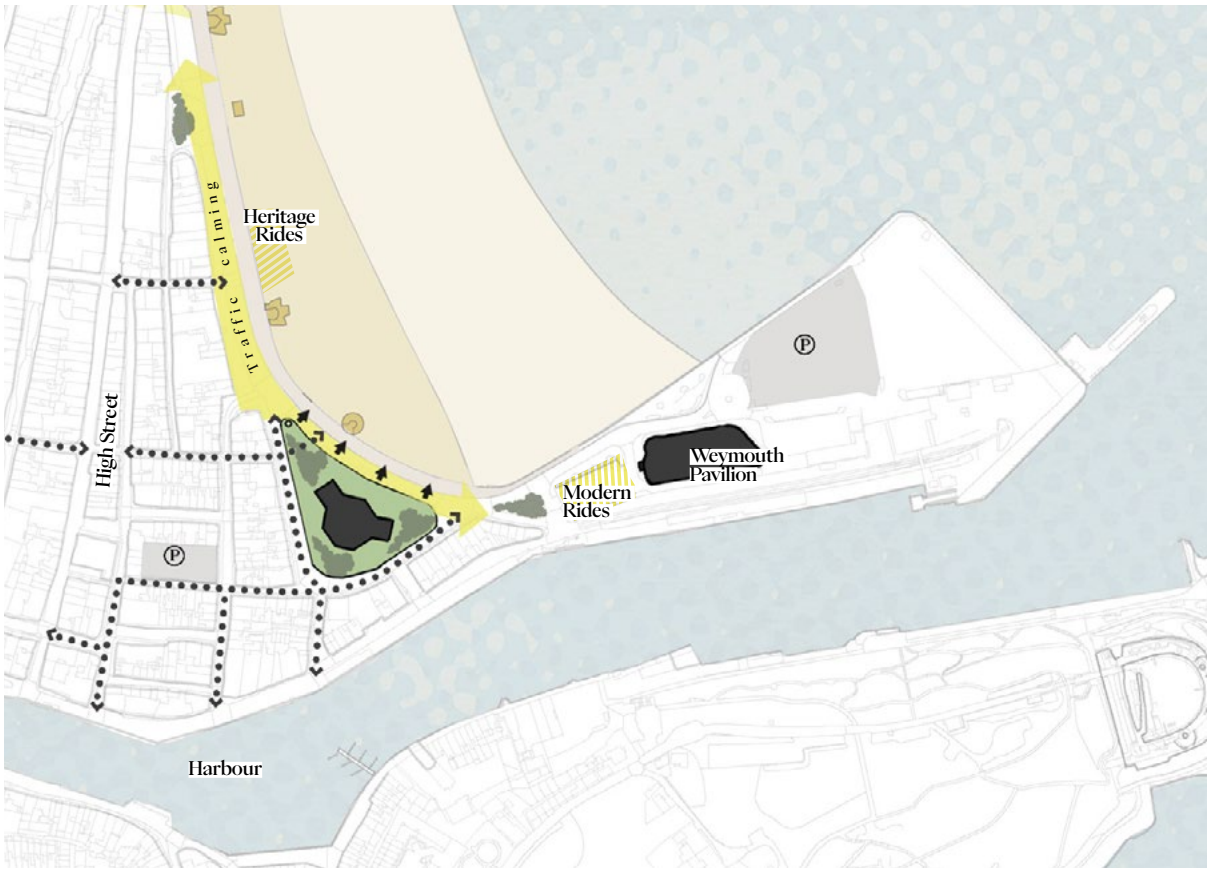
The potential could be considered for the more modern attractions to be permanently located on the Pavilion car park.



Heritage rides - Weymouth Helter Skelter



Heritage rides - Weymouth Super Snails

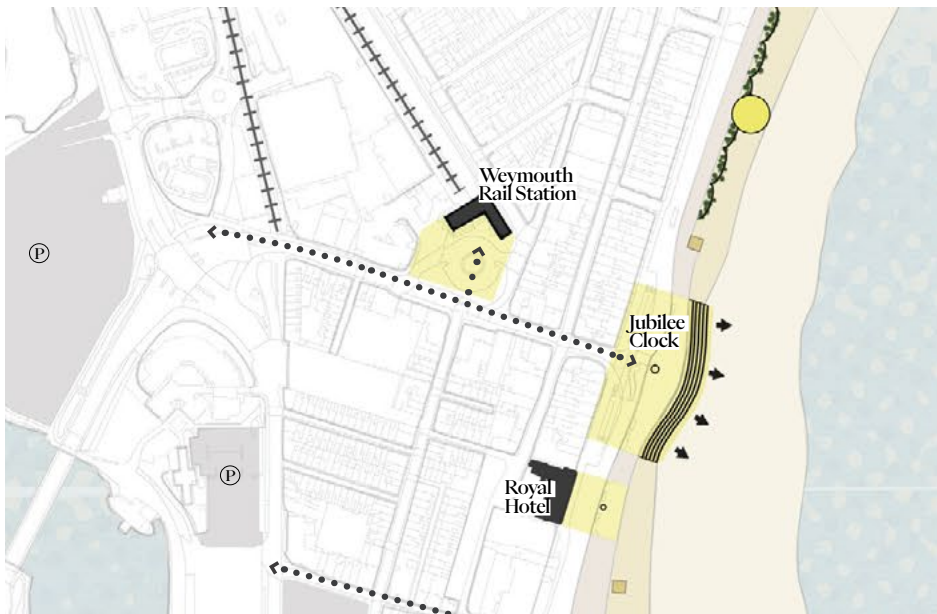




Precedent: Cleveleys, Lancashire



Precedent: Margate, Kent



2. Jubilee Clock & King Street

King Street is one of the most important arrival streets to the seafront, connecting visitors from the rail station and Swannery car park. Encouraging arrival from these points helps with more sustainable travel, reduces traffic on the esplanade, and can spread activity further north along the seafront. The Jubilee Clock creates a strong visual landmark guiding visitors towards the seafront, but accessing this area from King Street is complicated, and there is then no direct access from the Clock area to the beach itself.

Creating an improved public space around the Clock Tower would help create a focal point to draw visitors further north along the seafront.

Creating wide steps would create more seating areas, and improve direct access to the beach. It could be combined with additional facilities, such as small scale (pop-up) cafés/restaurants in this area. The beach at this point is less sandy and facilities could therefore be provided on the shale/shingle area.



Existing



Proposed



Precedent: Promenade extension - Dover, Kent



Precedent: Distinctive cafe - East Beach Cafe, Littlehampton



Precedent: Hacckels Sauna, Margate



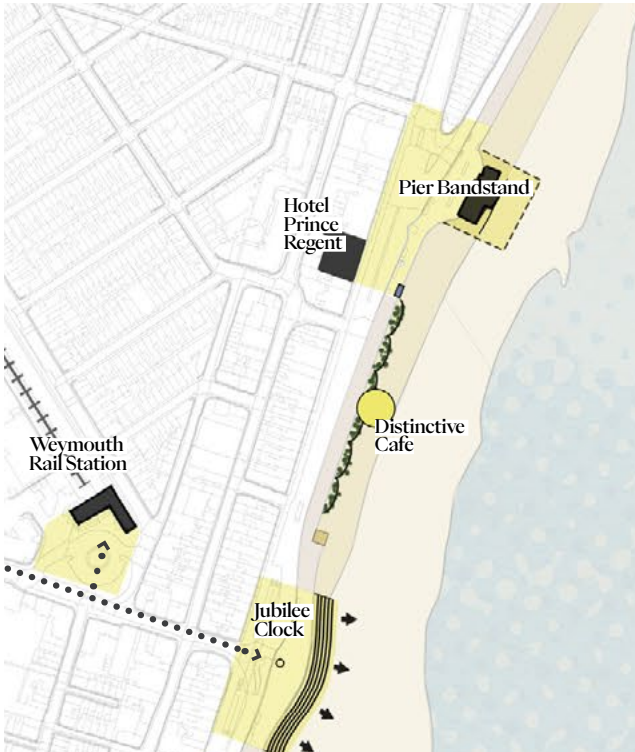
Bathing Machines, Weymouth Seafront 1800s

3. Jubilee Clock to Pier

North of Jubilee Clock, as the beach becomes shingle, the promenade significantly narrows, and with this the impact of traffic along Esplanade becomes more apparent. Extending the promenade, improving access to the beach, introducing more greenery and planting for biodiversity net gain, can make this stretch of seafront more accessible, greener, and a more attractive area to visit, as well as providing opportunity to deliver environmental and ecological improvements.

Introduction of a 'statement' cafe in this area can create a 'destination' and help draw visitors up the beach.

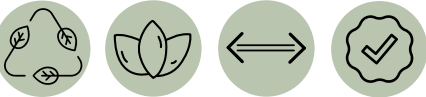
This area is also a potential location to explore seafront saunas, modelled on the Victorian bathing machine.



Existing



Proposed





Royal Hotel



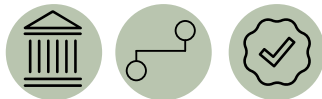
Hotel Prince Regent

4. Royal Beach

Weymouth seafront’s Georgian heritage is concentrated between the Kings Statue and the Pier. The terrace of listed buildings is a grand feature, with Prince Regent and Royal Hotels as stand out elements. The public realm and highway layout detracts significantly from the setting of these buildings, which are positioned literally a stone’s throw from the beach.

There is the opportunity to connect the hotels much more strongly to the seafront, recognising their importance in defining Weymouth as a seaside destination, and creating a regal backdrop for users of Weymouth’s seafront. Such improvements, together with improvements around the Jubilee Clock, would create a distinctive seafront destination for Weymouth, differentiating it from the busier area to the south and creating a unique gateway into the seafront from the north and the west.

Additional public realm improvements along this stretch of ‘royal beach’ should ensure a coordinated approach to the provision and design of essential infrastructure. This could include planters, seating, signage, refuse, cycle parking and lighting to ensure that they strengthen the connection between the seafront and the built heritage. While improvements to the highway would need coordination with Dorset Council, slowing the traffic, narrowing the highway and improving pedestrian connections by creating a stronger civic space along this ‘Royal Beach’ would significantly enhance the Conservation Area and setting of the Jubilee Clock and War Memorial.



5. Esplanade (Bond Street to New Street)

Bond Street and New Street are potentially important connections between the town centre and the seafront. Bond Street is an attractive lane, with interesting independent businesses, but the entrance from the Esplanade is easy to miss as a visitor. New Street, and the rear entrance to M&S, is a poor quality space which detracts from the high quality buildings which generally front the street. Improving this space (which currently has a ‘service yard’ quality) could help to create a more enticing entrance into the store and help advertise the town centre.

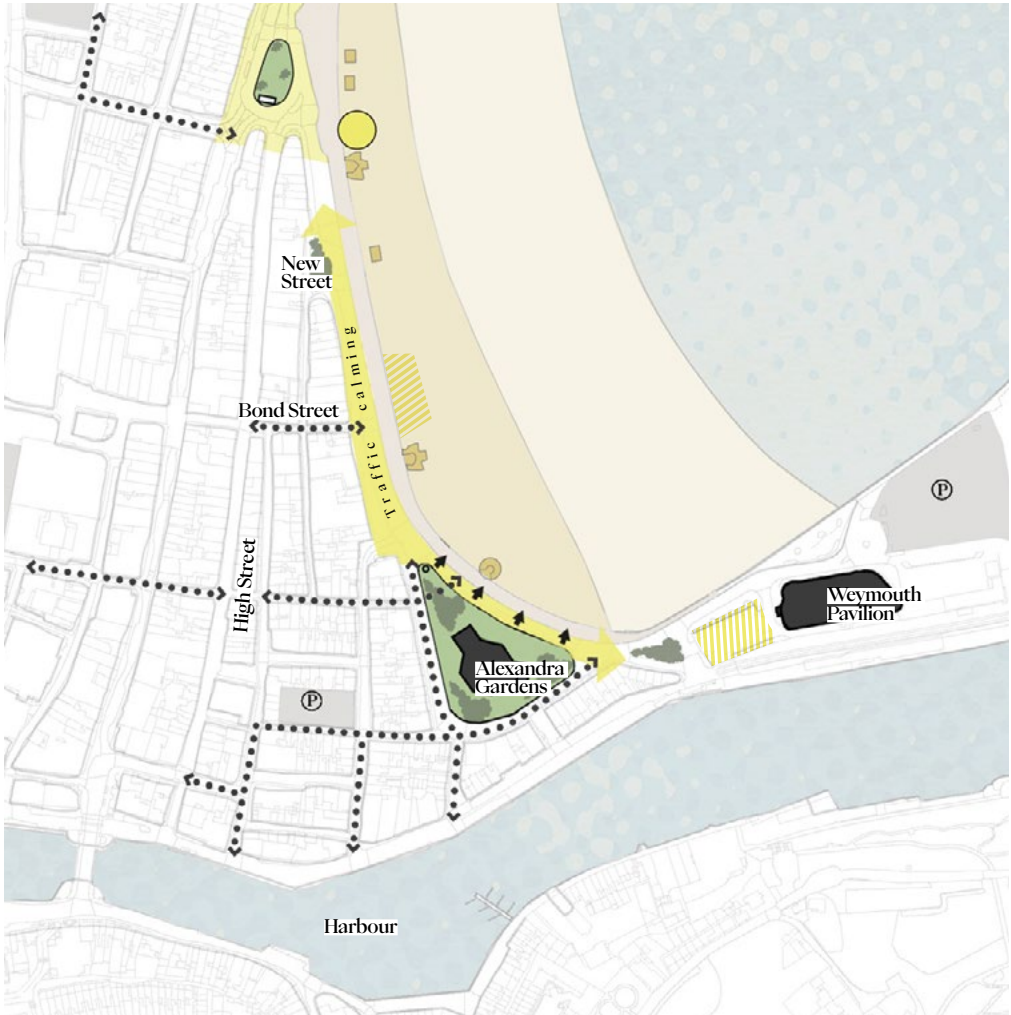
There is a vibrant range of bars/restaurants on this section of the Esplanade. They use much of the pavement for outdoor dining, making the area for pedestrians relatively narrow. We are aware that pilot projects to encourage additional seating within the promenade were halted over the summer. If there is demand for additional outdoor space for these businesses (without removing traffic completely from this section of the street) there would seem to be two options.

The first option is to widen the pavement by removing on-street parking from this section of the street. This would provide more space for seating immediately outside the restaurants. Removing the on-street parking would also create a more attractive setting for outdoor seating,

improving air quality, reducing noise and providing a stronger visual connection to the seafront. It would also improve the environment for those using the seating on the promenade.

The second option is to provide the additional seating areas closer to the promenade, as tested during the brief pilot scheme. Again, space could be created without encroaching into the promenade by removing the on-street parking and redesigning the planting areas as part of the longer term need for improvements to the flood defences. This could also help address the fact that the planters for the palm trees now need replacing.

The options would need to be discussed with the local businesses as each option has different strengths and weaknesses. It would also need to be undertaken in partnership with measures to reduce traffic speeds along this section of the Esplanade and improve pedestrian connections to the town centre (as noted above). Ideally it could also allow for potential closure of the Esplanade for special events.



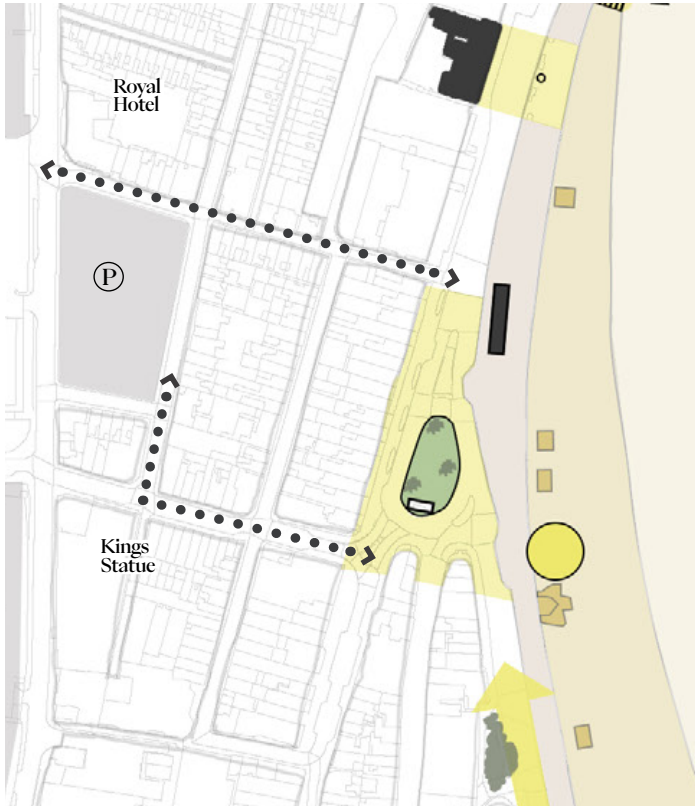
Precedent: Improving pedestrian connections to town centre



Precedent: Widening pavements / Increasing outdoor seating opportunity for cafes, restaurants & bars

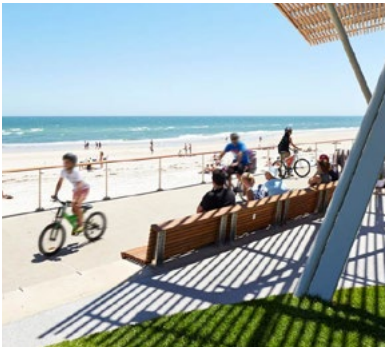
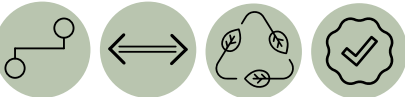


Precedent: Reduction in parking spaces / Creating additional seating areas adjacent to the promenade



6. Kings Statue

The barrierred statue and ‘roundabout’ currently acts an obstruction to natural movement between the town centre and seafront. This could be addressed through the relocation of buses (potentially to the rail station), and introduction of traffic calming/reducing measures along the Esplanade in the direction of the Pavilion. This would strengthen pedestrian permeability between the town centre and seafront, and potentially create opportunity for a substantially sized ‘town centre meets seafront’ public square, with space and infrastructure to hold public events and festivals, additional public seating and areas of shade, family activities, as well as providing commercial opportunity.



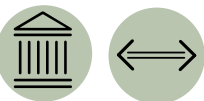
Precedents: Seafront public space



7. Pier/Bandstand area

This was historically a key landmark along the seafront and should be an important focal point. In the short term more could be done to reflect the heritage quality of this location, opposite the Prince Regent Hotel and terrace of listed buildings. Removing some of the parking and reconfiguring the exit from Brunswick Terrace would create the potential for a high quality public space and arrival point to the Esplanade from the north. It would announce the historic and architectural importance of Weymouth but also create a focus for more high quality restaurants and facilities to support the Al Molo restaurant and bring more visitors towards this part of the beach. Improving the area beneath the restaurant/ pier along the water’s edge would also help encourage use of this area.

In the longer term consideration could be given to restoring some element of viewing platform and public seating on the pier’s former location.



Greenhill Beach



‘Greenhill’ Beach

The heritage of this area is clearly less grand than the Royal terraces to the south, but it retains a distinctive ‘vintage’ quality with the gardens, the beach huts and the attractive buildings which front it. It is approximately 800m (10 minute’s walk) from the Pier/Bandstand to the Groyne/Sea Life Centre with Greenhill Gardens and associated facilities providing a focal point at the centre.

It is considered that this area could benefit from:

- broadening the appeal of Greenhill Gardens retaining its Victorian heritage,
- enhanced/additional café offer and,
- considering a new use for the underutilised tennis courts, bringing more life in to the gardens, and celebrating the amazing views from this location.

Projects:

- 8

Greenhill Gardens
- 9

Tennis Courts





8. Greenhill Gardens

Greenhill Gardens is a much-loved asset for Weymouth Seafront. Whilst the Victorian heritage and physical characteristics of the gardens should be retained, there is opportunity for modernisation including removing fencing and barriers to make it more accessible, enhancing plant biodiversity, and creating opportunities for visitors of all ages to explore, play, and learn about the natural environment.



Precedent: Informative signage



Precedent: Informative signage



Precedent: Biodiversity planting



Precedent: Biodiversity planting



Precedent: Natural play elements



Precedent: Insect habitats

9. Tennis Courts

The tennis courts appear to be underutilised, and in relatively poor condition. If sports provision is considered a priority, there is opportunity incorporate younger facilities within this area such as multi-use games area, consolidating this to the area alongside Greenhill Rd. or adjacent to the bowling club.

The remaining courts could be repurposed, providing an alternative offer to the traditional Victorian gardens:

- Community garden – informal/wild planting
- Flexible space for ‘pop-up’ markets and events
- Seasonal Café offer (semi-permanent structure) maximising some of the best seafront views available.



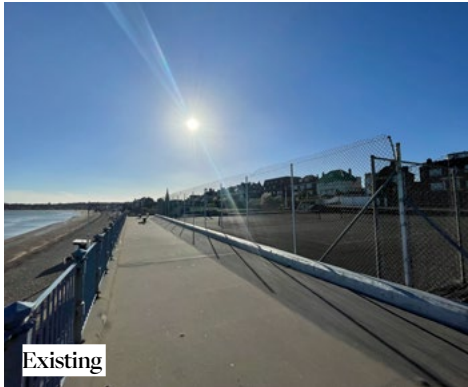
Precedent: MUGA court



Precedent: Community garden



Precedent: 'Pop-up' markets & events



Existing



Proposed

Natural Beach



‘Natural’ Beach

We have considered how more people can be encouraged to visit this area, and to spend longer in this area. It is an attractive natural area of Weymouth and the objective is to make it feel more comfortable to spend time in without impacting on the qualities which differentiate it from the rest of the seafront area. It is considered that this area could benefit from:

- Natural play features to make the area more attractive for families,
- A natural ‘boardwalk’ style planting area to extend the promenade, and potentially create space for additional facilities,
- Viewing areas to promote the RSPB nature reserve,
- Creating more sheltered seating areas,
- Low level, sustainable lighting to encourage use in the evenings,
- A distinctive café, potentially with toilets, to encourage longer visits,
- Facilities to support kite-surfing and other activities which encourage visits outside the peak holiday season,
- ‘Beach hut’ style facilities to support activity when the weather is less favourable, and
- Improving physical and visual connections between the seafront, the nature reserves and the parking areas.

Town Council led projects:

- 10

Natural Beach Proposals:

 - Boardwalk Promenade Extension & Natural Planting
 - Natural Play Elements
 - Beach Huts/Bird Hides
 - Natural Beach Cafe
 - Watersports Facility
 - Lighting Improvements
 - Seating & Shelter
 - Promoting links to Lodmoor RSPB and wider 'country park'

- 11

Rock Groyne

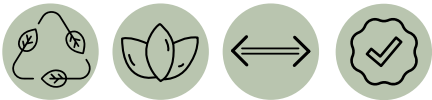
Projects that require partnership delivery:

- 12

Sea Life Centre & The Front Skatepark



10. 'Natural Beach' proposals:



Precedent: 'Boardwalk' promenade extension



Precedent: 'Boardwalk' promenade extension



Precedent: Natural play/ exercise features



Precedent: Natural play features



Precedent: Vegetated Shingle



Precedent: Viewing areas to promote Lodmoor Reserve



Precedent: Facilities to support watersports



Precedent: Distinctive cafe



Precedent: Modern 'beach hut' facilities



Precedent: Wayfinding signage to promote RSPB and wider 'country park'



Precedent: Seating and sheltered areas



Precedent: Low level lighting encouraging evening use



Additional Precedents:



Precedent: Esbjerg Beach Promenade, Hjerting, Denmark

Natural promenade enhancements create opportunities for social interaction, exercise, play, and contemplation Pole clusters are provided with grips for climbing, others become the markings for official beach volley games. When the weather permits, hammocks are hung between them and become immensely popular amongst younger visitors.



Precedent: The Long Bench, Littlehampton, West Sussex

Funded by Arun District Council and CABI's 'Sea Change' capital grants programme, the Long Bench is thought to be the longest bench in Britain and one of the longest in the world. The structure sinuously travels along the promenade, meandering around lampposts, bending behind bins, and ducking down into the ground to allow access between the beach and the green.



Precedent: Milford-on-Sea Beach Huts

Milford-on-Sea beach huts is a multi-award winning project, providing 119 beach huts that form a new seawall and that is designed to resist a 1-in-200 year storm event.



Precedent: Tidal Pool, Esbjerg Beach, Denmark



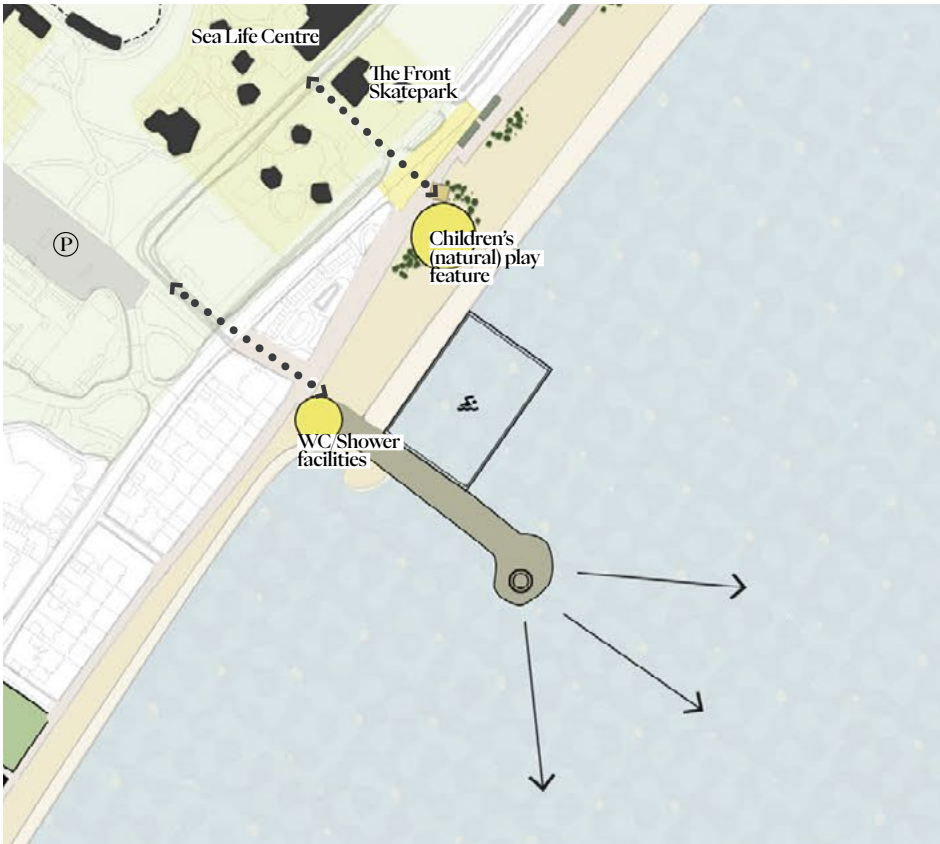
Precedent: Walpole Tidal Pool, Margate



Precedent: Amager, Copenhagen

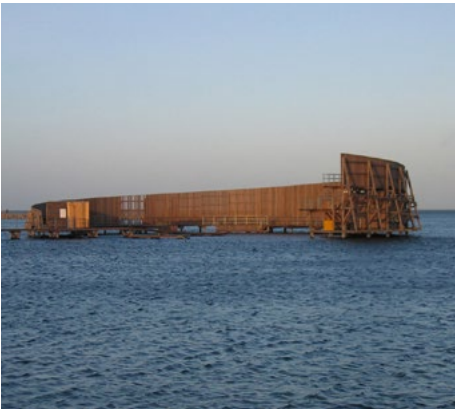
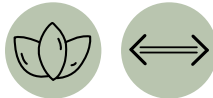


Precedent: The Bands Sauna, Loftan, Norway



11. Rock Groyne

Sea swimming is already popular in this area of the beach, partly due to the shelter created by the groyne. This could be promoted by extending the stone area further into the sea, and by creating a safe swimming area (or 'tidal pool'). This would be an attractive facility for local swimmers but in conjunction with other facilities (WCs, showers & storage) could also attract more visitors to this part of the beach, including out of season.



Precedent: Kastrup Sea Baths, Copenhagen
Kastrup Sea Baths is an architectural public jetty that offers good swimming opportunities with protection against the wind. Facilities include changing rooms with showers and lockers. For those interested in taking the plunge, there are 3 as well as 5-meter diving boards on the platform. A continuous bench runs along the pier, whilst ramps, and other features and facilities ensure the pier is accessible to all.



Precedent: EFFEKT, Lemvig, Denmark

EFFEKT is a transform an empty industrial lot on the city's harbour front into an area of leisure and recreation. The introduction of the Stake+Park park has created a new social space in Lemvig, attracting skaters and families from the region. Skate+Park has become a social gathering space attract people of all ages and interests.

12. Sea Life Centre and The Front Skatepark

This is a key destination for visitors to Weymouth and an important arrival point onto the seafront from these attractions and from the associated car parks. We recommend discussing with The Front how the skate park can be integrated more effectively into the promenade, encouraging more visits to both areas. Provision of a boardwalk to widen the promenade could allow space for skateboarding/scooters to be encouraged without impacting on pedestrians. Designing such activity into the edge of the sea wall, and potentially using the poor quality public space (between The Front and the paddling pool areas) could also raise the profile of this area of the seafront which is currently characterised by a featureless concrete wall.

