

4. Seafront Strategy

The seafont is the town’s most important asset and provides a major attraction for visitors and an amenity for local residents. The economic and social significance of this area make it vital that the Masterplan includes a clear strategic framework to guide the future development of the seafront area.

Although there has been some investment in the seafont in the form of recent environmental enhancements, the appearance of the seafont is diminished by the generally poor quality of street furniture and by the underutilisation of the area. Basic facilities such as toilets, signage, information provision and street furniture need to be maintained in good condition and working order so that the overall visitor experience is not prejudiced by impression of neglect. Apart from the general appearance of the area, the seafront also suffers from a lack of vibrancy / vitality and visitor facilities for informal recreation, specifically for children and higher spending visitors. This issue must be addressed as a priority given the proposed closure of the Aquarena and relocation of the swimming pool from the seafront.



Lack of activity along the seafront

Opportunities for enhancing visitor activity on the seafont will be key to the future economic success of the seafont as a visitor destination. There is a need for a coherent strategy and action plan for the seafont as part of the overall Worthing Masterplan. The objective must be to develop the seafont as a high quality visitor destination and as a valued local resource.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Worthing seafont is an important public space and is the primary tourist, recreational and leisure focus for the town. A clear strategic framework is needed to guide the development, maintenance and management of the seafont in a coherent and sustainable manner.

The principal objective is to transform the seafont into a distinctive destination – a destination that is exciting, dynamic and successful whilst retaining what’s good and traditional. Key objectives for the seafont are to:

- Re-establish the seafont as a high quality visitor destination and local leisure and recreational resource, with an improved range of facilities and environment to meet local and visitor expectations;
- Improve the range and quality of the visitor/ user experience by promoting new facilities and attractions that create year round activity and vitality;
- Encourage activities and investment that broaden the appeal to new market segments and higher spending visitors as well as the local community;
- Balance the needs for commercial facilities with protection and enhancement of the natural environment and public areas;
- Expand current marketing activities, making optimum use of an expanded events programme and rebranding of the town;
- Improve connectivity and linkages, specifically between the seafont and the town centre in particular, the new cultural quarter and station; and
- Strengthen coastal and flood protection.

The Seafont Strategy is required to take into account future maintenance, management and coastal defence considerations.



Example of seafont activity

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The overall objectives will be taken forward through the designation of five distinctive zones of activity. This approach seeks to:

- promote the coherent development of the seafont
- eliminate potential conflicts
- provide a range of activities and experiences to attract a wider visitor market
- establish an economic basis for investment in infrastructure and facilities

The zones of activity are illustrated in Figure 4.1 and comprise:

- Western Gateway- informal area for relaxation
- Zone 2: Visitor and Entertainment Hub- central focus of commercial activities on the seafront
- Zone 3: Fishermans Quarter- distinctive quarter based on heritage of seafront
- Zone 4: Active Leisure and Sports-range of more active leisure and recreation activities
- Zone 5: Seafront Eastern Gateway- improved gateway and facilities

Table 4.1 sets out further details of the functions and potential activities in each of the zones of activity. The strategy should provide the basis for a management programme and monitoring strategy for accommodating a full range of activities and uses on the promenade, beach and in the water.

Area	Core Function	Proposals
West Promenade – The Lido	“Western Gateway”.	Quiet, informal area for relaxation to enable people to enjoy the unique environment. Proposals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhance landscaping and external seating on promenade - improve signage and information provision - improve visual appearance of beach huts - enhance measured distances for walking along the promenade - improve accessibility for disabled people on the beach - provide new quality catering facility through creative re-development of seafront shelter opposite Mayfair Hotel
The Lido – The Pier (opposite the Dome)	Visitor and Entertainment hub	Central hub of visitor activities and entertainment facilities. Proposals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - restore the Lido as a quality seafront attraction providing a café and retail experience and improved outdoor events space linked to the Grafton Centre re-development - develop new all-year tourist information centre / beach office - improve pedestrian connectivity with town centre at key nodes (Montague Place, South Street and as part of redevelopment of Grafton Centre) - promote Pavilion Theatre as a major visitor and cultural landmark in the town and as a central location for events and indoor and outdoor performance space - provide new day-time attraction/ venue (e.g. new signature seafront restaurant/ cafe) at the end of the Pier - expand the appeal and sales potential by providing new and improved catering / crafts facilities on the promenade and Pier
The Dome – Warwick Street	Fisherman’s Quarter	Develop distinct Fisherman’s Quarter to cater for a range of activities. Proposals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - retain existing fishing activities with potential for improved supporting infrastructure (eg: electricity and water) - create fishing museum/ interpretation facility through sensitive re-development of existing shelter - improve links between seafront and Steyne Gardens as a stimulating garden environment - central location for “art on the seafront” to use public art to improve links to the eastern promenade - improve appearance of promenade through landscaping and improved planting and external seating
Beach Promenade – Merton Road	Active Recreation	Integrated tourism and leisure facilities to support a range of leisure and sporting activities. Proposals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provision of themed/ adventure play facilities such as children’s play equipment and Adventure Golf - development of water-splash feature/ paddling pool - provision of new modern toilet block - up-grading of refreshment kiosk - establish active beach zone - improve access between seafront and green space around Denton House /Beach House Gardens - create an improved garden environment through development of a new sensory park - provision of new water-based recreation - Provision of new seafront hotel within Aquarena re-development
New Parade – the Esplanade	“Eastern Gateway”.	Improved “gateway” and up-grading of fisherman’s boat pound. Proposals include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhance seafront planting and external seating - improve signage and information provision - improve facilities for boats - consider potential for further seafront development as part of a seaward extension subject to financial, environmental and engineering feasibility

Table 4.1: Seafront Zones of Activity

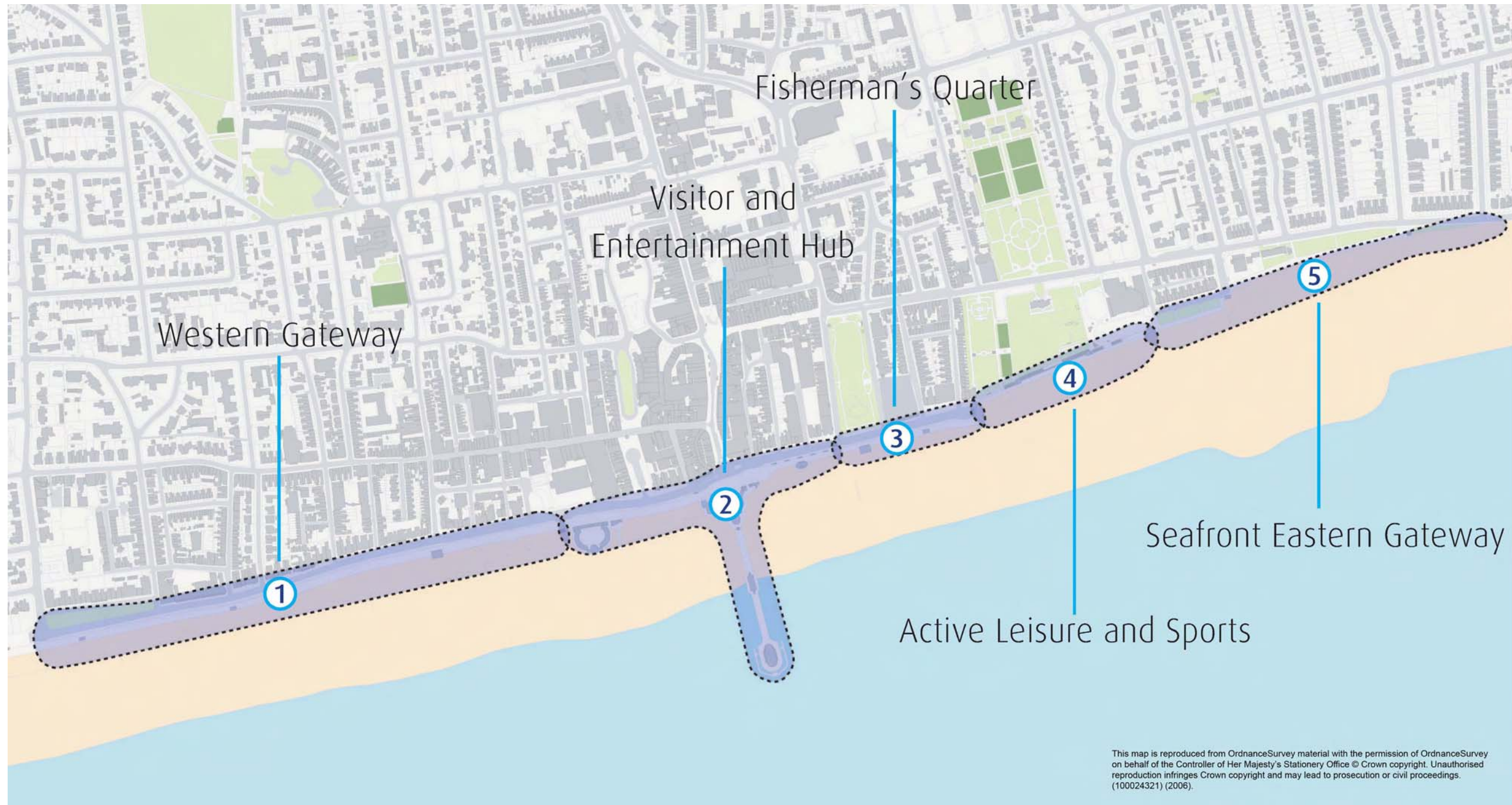


Figure 4.1: Seafrost Activity Zones

Each of the zones of activity will require the preparation of a detailed action plan and implementation programme [shown in Section 8].

The physical environment is the visible expression of the seafront and goes much of the way in determining its image and local pride of place, especially amongst visitors. Improving the quality of the physical environment is key, specifically through a programme of creative and innovative public realm. Design standards should be established along the whole length of the seafront to set out a clear design direction that will ensure the development of a strong sense of place for each of the proposed zones of activity.



Creating a Design Identity: Blackpool

BRANDING

A distinctive design identity needs to be developed for the Worthing seafront to brand and create a unique sense of place. This will need to be implemented through:

- improved signage
- information provision
- external seating

- lighting
- public art
- planting / greening strategy

A co-ordinated plan will be required for the use / potential development of seafront shelters and the provision of sympathetically designed purpose built facilities to provide quality kiosks and catering outlets in partnership with the private sector. Any re-development / change of use will need to reflect the proposed “zone designations” and the desire for quality and excellence on the seafront. New structures will be required to respect the seafront setting and provide a range of new activities on the seafront. Such a strategy has the potential to drive up the quality of some of the existing operations on the seafront.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

The seafront is already the focal point for a range of activities and events. This activity should be built upon to expand the events programme, including new visitor products, festivals and arts and cultural activities. New destination points, including provision for events and performance space and catering facilities will be provided along the seafront. Seafront recreational activities will need to be managed carefully in order to minimise potential conflicts between different seafront user groups.

FUTURE PRIORITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Although a distinct destination within the town, the future of the seafront cannot be seen in isolation and is an integral part of the overall masterplan for the town centre. The level and timescale for intervention will be determined by a number of factors. Key considerations include:

- Consolidation of theatre provision - potential for the development of a new “iconic” theatre within the proposed new cultural quarter. This would require a review of the role and function of the Pavilion Theatre;
- The need to use the re-development of the Grafton Centre site as an opportunity up-grade the Lido site as a location for niche retail /

catering and events space and the potential for improved linkages between the town centre and seafront;

- Redevelopment of Aquarena site and potential for new hotel and associated facilities as part of comprehensive site development;
- Transport and movement, specifically the potential to reduce traffic on the seafront and provide a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists;
- Improving connectivity between the seafront, town centre, station and key “gateways” into the town;
- Ensuring adequate coastal protection / defence against the sea will be a key factor in determining future development opportunities along the seafront.



Improved quality of public realm and use of public art along seafront

In addition, improvements to the seafront will be determined by funding opportunities both in terms of the commitment of the private sector to drive forward major development plans and the ability of the public sector to secure adequate funding for improvements and future management and maintenance of this important asset.