HEARING STATEMENT

Project Title: Southend Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP)

Date: 2 May 2017

MATTER 3: THE LOCAL ECONOMY, EMPLOYMENT, RETAILING, BUSINESS AND TOURISM

RESPONSE BY STOCKVALE GROUP

3.4 Should the evening economy be specifically addressed in a policy?

1 We do not consider it necessary to specifically address the evening economy in a policy. The evening economy will be boosted by increasing day visitors (and by encouraging them to stay longer) and by increasing overnight stays. The two are linked because attracting day visitors to stay longer will encourage them to 'convert' a one-day stay to an overnight stay.

2 This point is already covered in the 'Context and Issues for the Southend Central Area' (page 8 of the SCAAP), specifically point e: 'Tourism, Culture, Leisure and Recreation'. This sets out the need to maximise Southend's potential as a visitor destination, one element of which is its evening economy, by creating a "positive experience of the central area by visitors".

3 It is also referenced in Paragraph 82, in the section on 'Tourism, Culture, Leisure and Recreational Facilities', which discusses the vitality of the evening economy, and how provision of restaurants, enhanced evening attractions and improved management can achieve this.

3.7 Does the SCAAP provide a sound framework for the development of tourism? In particular, how realistic is the aim in the SCAAP to improve and diversify the tourism offer to increase overnight and longer stays, as set out in paragraph 80 (and also set out in Topic Paper 3 under Tourism)? Does this aim complement or conflict with what is widely seen to be the principal tourism sector of serving the day visitor market?

4 The second Domestic Tourism Industry Snapshot Survey, completed before and at the British Tourism & Travel Show in March 2017 by operators, DMOs, visitor attractions, destinations and hotels, which was released in April 2017 (see Appendix A), showed continued positive growth for the domestic tourism sector and upbeat opportunities ahead.

5 The survey found that 67% of respondents saw an increase in domestic visitor numbers and bookings in 2016, and 57% of the attractions, destinations, hotels and other suppliers who completed the survey think that customer spending habits will improve over the next year, and 78% are feeling either very or fairly optimistic about the future of the domestic travel trade. This shows rises in day visits and overnight stays.

6 In terms of overnight stays, the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) has also forecast growth in domestic tourism in 2017. In its Travel Trends Report 2017 (see extract at Appendix B), ABTA said that 2016 had been a strong year for tourism in the UK and, in particular, domestic tourism drove up the overall increase in the average number of holidays taken per person.

7 The Report also states (page 6): “According to VisitEngland, domestic beach and countryside holidays are growing in popularity with a variety of accommodation options such as glamping making this type of trip increasingly appealing. Families remain key to the domestic market” (our emphasis).

8 Young families were the most likely group to take domestic holidays in 2016, with the research from ABTA finding an average of 3.3 domestic holidays per person for this group, compared to a national average of 2.0.

9 The Tourism Alliance also recently reported increased bookings at accommodation and attractions and a recent Visit England survey shows more than half of accommodation providers expect increases in visitors in 2017. This is against a backdrop of year-on-year decline in domestic tourism spending (the Great British Tourism Survey showed a 3% drop year-on-year to 2014).

10 It is therefore our view that there is great potential to grow day and overnight visits to Southend, and we set out our views on this question in our representations. We supported the opportunities to maximise Southend’s potential as a visitor destination and resort, and encouraging overnight and longer stays. However, we requested specific recognition of the proportion of visitors who visit Southend on day trips. Given its proximity to London, Southend has always been a day trip resort to an extent that is not really reflected by any other resorts in the country. The seafront is also primarily a family destination, which is the fastest growing sector (see ABTA Report).

11 Topic Paper 4: Employment, Business and Investment references the strength and importance of Southend’s tourism industry:

12 “Southend’s distinctive visitor offer, with the iconic pleasure pier at its heart, draws close to 6 million day visitors a year. The tourism sector accounts for 12.3% of the Borough’s economy (LEA 2013) and has a wider positive impact upon retailing, catering, entertainment and transport industries.”

13 This is a point that we made in our representations.

14 Policies in the Plan do not respond adequately to this issue, primarily aiming to increase overnight stays without having an equivalent requirement to retain – and grow – the day visitor market, which is the foundation of the resort’s tourism industry. It is essential that the day visitor tourism economy is placed right at the heart of the plan’s policies for the seafront, or (as can be seen in policies currently drafted) they will simply be causing and then managing decline, not planning positively for growth.

15 This does not mean that we are asking the Council to remove its aim to increase overnight stays. We consider it to be commendable that the Council is attempting to increase overnight stays and support the provision of accommodation. But it is a very dangerous strategy to ‘side-line’ the day trip market, which the Plan does, specifically in the areas that we pointed to in our representations. Also many of the policies do not actually support increases in overnight visits either because there needs to be sufficient infrastructure to support this increase in visitors.

16 Some proposals within the Plan would be more damaging than others. Clearly loss of (and lack of provision for any growth in) seafront car parking will be the biggest factor. Here, it appears that the Council is willing to grow overnight stays by the creation of hotels and evening economy at the expense

of day visitors. For example, proposals for the Seaways car park (Policy CS1.2) demonstrate this very well. The Council appears to be willing to lose (either directly through loss of spaces or indirectly through lack of provision for development or cars displaced by other car parks where there has been a loss of spaces) day visitors in order to increase overnight visitors (albeit those staying overnight require parking spaces too, so it could be argued that the Council's approach supports neither). The anchor for the proposed redevelopment of the Seaways car park is a cinema and a hotel. This development will not provide any additional reason for day visitors to travel to Southend. Most people who visit Southend will be from towns that have cinemas and restaurants. This type of leisure development primarily serves local residents, but has little impact on the attractiveness of a tourism destination for day visitors. It would, however, provide an 'evening economy' facility for those who are staying overnight, although it is doubtful that it would be a primary reason for visiting Southend. But the development will be damaging to the day visitor industry (which is the primary basis on which the town's tourism economy currently operates – and as set out above – this is a strong and resilient base, and one that has potential to grow significantly) as it will remove car parking provision. The development is unlikely to provide for the full requirements of the development on the site itself (for the reasons set out in the Council's own Topic Paper on Parking and Access) and will provide no additional spaces to allow for growth in visitors. Due to the quality of survey data, it may even result in fewer car parking spaces than are on site at the present time. Seaways is the main car park serving the seafront and it is essential to the ability of the seafront tourism industry to operate. Without it – and coupled with other issues elsewhere in the town that we raised in our representations – Southend will be a less attractive place to visit for the day.

17 In our view, if Southend becomes less desirable as a location for day visitors, it will become more difficult to increase overnight stays. This is because day visitors – or word of mouth from day visitors – is one of the ways in which the overnight market increases. If a seaside resort cannot adequately accommodate its day visitors, then it will undermine the attractiveness of overnight stays.

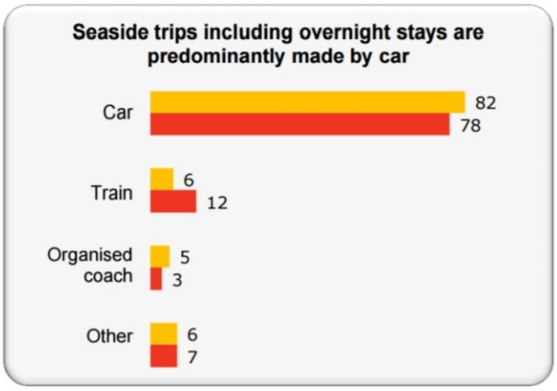
18 The biggest issue identified by Stockvale, and other organisations in Southend, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Seafront Traders Association, is the lack of parking, and the proposed policies within the SCAAP that will have the effect of reducing car parking spaces. Even the highly flawed Steer Davies Gleave Parking Study, that forms part of the evidence base for the SCAAP, identifies issues with the car parking in the seafront area: "…there is a clear imbalance in the Southend Central Area parking network at periods of peak demand with car parking to the south of the central area experiencing overcapacity issues, while car parking to the north has available spare capacity."

19 In our representations, we discussed the need to be able to accommodate visitors to Southend at peak times. One of the reasons we gave was a business need to capture all visitors at peak times to ensure that tourism businesses can operate at quieter times of year – we called this a subsidy. But one of the other reasons why this issue needs to be addressed is the simple fact that it is on the peak days, when the greatest amount of people want to experience Southend and all it has to offer, where the town must be at its best. If it is not at its best, people will not return. This will significantly undermine attempts by the Council to secure an increase in overnight visitors, and will potentially reduce the number of day visitors over time.

20 These problems do not only affect peak Bank Holidays and school holidays. A good example of this occurred in early April 2017: Sunday 9th April. Not a holiday period and away from the Bank Holidays, but a day when good weather was experienced. The town proved itself to be unable to satisfactorily accommodate the visitors that wanted to come to Southend. This caused significant queues in the town, with visitors unable to find parking spaces, and long delays in reaching their destination. This is set out in more detail in Matter 4, and Appendix G1/G2/G3. In addition to the queues and waiting times to arrive

at Southend, there was a significant level of illegal parking, disturbance to residents and – perhaps most damaging of all to the image of the resort – a large amount of negative feedback on social media. This situation will have done nothing to improve the ability of Southend to increase overnight stays, and will undoubtedly result in visitors choosing to visit other resorts in the future where access and parking is easier (certainly some of the comments on Facebook suggest that this will be the case – see Appendix G3 of our Matter 4 statement).

21 Note that the Great British Tourism Survey – an annual survey of tourism visits in the UK – shows that all visits to seaside resorts, whether for day visits or overnight stays, largely rely on the private car.



Seaside trips in yellow, all trips in red. (Source: GBTS annual survey, Visit Britain)

22 Therefore the points that Stockvale make elsewhere about the importance of accommodating visitors applies equally to overnight visitors as it does to day visitors (and it also shows that the Stockvale survey on visits to Adventure Island, which found that 85% of visitors to the park used the private car, is broadly in line with national statistics, and the SDG survey is highly unrepresentative).

23 In summary, Stockvale's view is that the desire to attract a greater number of overnight stays does not necessarily have to conflict with the day visitor market as long as policies are drafted in a way that ensures that one sector is not seen as replacing another. In our view, with carefully drafted policies and a strategy to protect and build on the existing day visitor market, the two can and should complement each other.

24 Our representations set out the amendments needed to policies to ensure that this is delivered and we do not repeat this here.

APPENDIX A: DOMESTIC TOURISM INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT SURVEY APRIL 2017

Industry Snapshot Survey 2017: All Results

Are you a:

Hotel/accommodation provider	12%
Attraction	19%
Destination	7%
Tour Operator	44%
Other	18%

Have you seen a rise in domestic visitor numbers / bookings over the last year (compared to 2015)?

Yes	67%
No	15%
Same	18%

If yes, by what percentage have you seen a rise?

Average percentage	19%

Have you seen a rise in visitors/bookings from any of the following groups?

	Yes	No	Same
Seniors	45	6	21
Groups	49	15	11
Individual travellers	49	9	13

Luxury	18	30	13
Business	21	24	10
Families	24	19	15
Accessible tourism	13	20	18
International	36	18	8
Other	1	5	7

Over the last 12 months have you seen a rise in online/app bookings?

Yes	60%
No	27%
Same	13%

If yes, by what percentage have you seen a rise?

Average percentage	19%

What do you think are the top 3 things your customers look for in an outing?

Accessibility	13%
Value for money	82%
Experience	68%
Relaxation	7%

Culture	42%
Family friendly	13%
Educational	14%
Sustainable/green	5%
Location	49%
Pet friendly	5%
Catering	10%
Other	6%

Looking ahead, compared to the past 12 months, how do you think customer spending habits will change over the next 12 months?

Significant improvement	11%
Some improvement	46%
No change	22%
Some deterioration	20%
Significant deterioration	1%

How optimistic do you feel about the future of the domestic travel trade?

Very optimistic	29%
Fairly optimistic	49%

No change	17%
Fairly pessimistic	4%
Very pessimistic	1%

Do you think the Brexit vote has had a positive or negative impact on your business?

Positive	28%
Negative	33%
No change	39%

What key trends do you see emerging over the coming 12 months?

- Rise in domestic tourism – development of more upmarket domestic offers – emerging joint offers to save consumers time and money
- More digitisation (electronic ticketing and social media advertising) – rising quality expectations – focus on value for money
- Hopefully more experienced based group travel. Greater day trips and greater need for itineraries and suggested tours.
- Staycations
- More visitors to cities outside London
- People going to more local destinations and spending less money except for food.
- Continuing recovery in domestic and international economies but some pressure on UK customer.
- Exploring the lesser known locations that are outside London.
- Weddings are down, Meeting & Events enquiries are very last minute and our transient market has dipped quite considerably vs Q1 2016.
- Possible increase in overseas visitors given weakness of the Pound v Dollar/Euro.

- French and German markets will continue to strengthen US market will remain steady unsure of UK market.
- Earlier booking for groups. Larger numbers. More varied tour programmes
- FIT market growing with short breaks
- More away days and an increase in self catering short breaks.
- People will be more cautious about spending and booking holidays later.
- Long 4 day weekends
- Quality to triumph over price
- Higher turnover but reduced profitability. Increasing labour shortages as a result of Brexit.
- Transport issues – rail strikes, coaches stuck in traffic in cities especially London. Image of UK as a welcoming destination being further compromised. More tourism beyond the traditional central London gateway..
- More short stay holidays in UK and a move away from euroland holidays until the dust settles.
- Soft adventure, curated experiences, soft educational/ study tours
- Continued increase in domestic tourism Increase in visitors from China, America & Canada.
- Less people travelling abroad, increase in British based holidays, price increase for hotels in UK
- More Holidays being taken in the UK. Later than ever last minute bookings. More Premium product holiday being taken.
- Optimism as our exit from Europe starts to take effect with positive results
- Short lead time bookings. Less breaks.
- More experiential holidays and breaks Immersive tourism – repeat visitors wanting to stay longer in one area eg several nights rather than brief one night and off We’ve had enquiries regarding hands-on experiences eg conservation tours of our churches, begin the scenes tours – something a bit different to the usual touring groupss
- If the visa policy will be smooth it should be enhance the tourism in United Kingdom

- Group Travel is strong.
- Although we ensure all our hotels have good Internet connections we are hearing more of our clients discussing the desire to be out of contact, a wish to be undisturbed whilst on holiday and enjoy more of the dark sky areas of the UK.

APPENDIX B: ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH TRAVEL AGENTS (ABTA) TRAVEL TRENDS REPORT 2017

2017 MARKET OUTLOOK: DOMESTIC HOLIDAYS

With uncertainty around Brexit and currency fluctuations expected to continue throughout 2017, it seems likely that domestic tourism may see a boost next year.

Domestic holidays drove the overall increase in the average number of holidays taken per person in 2016 and in the number of people taking a holiday. The number of domestic holidays increased to 71% in 2016, up from 64% in 2015, signalling a return to the numbers seen during the Olympic Summer of 2012. VisitBritain announced a record-breaking January to April 2016 with 11 million trips taken in England.

2017 will celebrate some of Britain's greatest writers and their books and has been declared by VisitEngland as the 'Year of Literary Heroes'. It is 125 years since the first Sherlock Holmes story was published, 200 years since the death of Jane Austen, and 20 years since Harry Potter made his first appearance in the Philosopher's Stone. Events in the planning to celebrate these anniversaries include special Jane Austen exhibitions, tours and 'Big Picnics' taking place across Hampshire with special performances and Regency food; special live screenings of the Harry Potter films accompanied by a full orchestra; and a major exhibition dedicated to the magic of Harry Potter which will include previously unseen material from author JK Rowling. Austen fans may head to Chawton, in Hampshire where Jane Austen wrote novels including Sense and Sensibility and Mansfield Park or to Bath which will be celebrating its most famous resident.

In 2017, Hull will be the UK City of Culture and is likely to see increased visitor numbers, with an exciting programme of theatre, music and art taking place across the year. The city has secured £32 million in funding for the celebrations[6] which will be invested into events, community engagement and the programme's legacy.

The Edinburgh Festival is celebrating its 70th year and there will be enhanced celebrations at this already popular month of festivals. Expect special anniversary events at all of the main festivals which began in 1947 as a way to bring people of the world together through the arts.

London theatre breaks are expected to remain popular in 2017 with David Tennant returning to the West End in Patrick Marber's *Don Juan* in Soho, Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Hamilton* opening in October 2017 and *School of Rock – The Musical* extended until April.

According to VisitEngland, domestic beach and countryside holidays are growing in popularity with a variety of accommodation options such as 'glamping' making this type of trip increasingly appealing. Families remain key to the domestic market.

Young families were once again the most likely group to take domestic holidays in 2016, with research from ABTA finding an average of 3.3 domestic holidays per person for this group, compared to a national average of 2.0.

[5] www.visitbritain.org/more-five-million-brits-holidaying-home-august-bank-holiday-weekend

[6] www.hull2017.co.uk/discover/article/fundraising-support-massive-vote-confidence-hull

"The Edinburgh Festival is celebrating its 70th year"

"Young families were once again the most likely group to take domestic holidays"

2017 MARKET OUTLOOK: CRUISE

New additions to fleets and exciting destinations look set to make 2017 another good year for cruise.

Over one in ten holidaymakers (13%) are planning a cruise in the next 12 months. The chance to see multiple destinations, the quality of the food and drink on board and the quality of accommodation are the main factors drawing people to cruise.

The Mediterranean was the most popular choice for Brits in 2016[7], whilst the Canary Islands, the Norwegian Fjords and the Caribbean continued to see increases in passenger numbers. People are also becoming more adventurous, with the Arctic proving to be one of the fastest-selling destinations for cruise in 2016 and its popularity set to continue into 2017.

Several investment projects are due to go live in 2017, in particular in the Middle East. This area is predicting record numbers of passengers over the coming years, and investment into projects such as the Abu Dhabi Cruise Terminal is providing capacity and access to this increasingly popular cruise destination.

ABTA Members have also reported an increase in the numbers of group bookings for cruise. Event-led cruises are proving popular – for example, several companies are offering cruises to the America's Cup in Bermuda.

Activity and experience-led cruises are also expected to be popular in 2017, while festival style cruises with on-board music and DJs are attracting younger holidaymakers.

Cruises on which the on-board currency is the pound may be a popular choice in 2017, as holidaymakers seek certainty over their budgets following our vote to leave the EU; Fred. Olsen has reported that this is a popular factor with their customers. All-inclusive cruises may see similar interest.

After a strong 2016, the river cruise market continues to grow. Traditional routes such as the Danube remain popular and Asia is now a favourite destination, while in Africa the Zambezi river is attracting cruisers. The recent ITV drama, Tutankhamun, has helped to boost enquiries for Nile cruises.

[7] www.cruisecritic.co.uk/news/news.cfm?ID=6884

"After a strong 2016, the river cruise market continues to grow"