

Report : Head of Communities and Place
To: Community and Resources Committee
Subject: High level feasibility study on the viability of using a cruise ship for temporary accommodation at Middle Dock, Appledore.
Date: 23rd January 2023

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To update members on the high-level feasibility study of using a cruise ship moored at Middle Dock to provide temporary accommodation for citizens in need of housing.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the December 2022 Full Council Meeting, Councillor Brenton presented a Notice of Motion regarding the possibility of using a cruise ship moored at Middledock as a quick solution for accommodating people requiring emergency or temporary housing. Officers have undertaken a high level investigation into the feasibility of providing this facility with estimated costs.

The exact Notice of Motion that was approved by Full Council was:

With the large numbers of cruise ships being scrapped or laid up due to a fall in demand following Covid. I propose that TDC explore the feasibility of forming a partnership with our neighbouring authorities i.e NDDC, Exeter CC etc. with a view to leasing or renting a vessel to accommodate emergency or other housing list people. Cruise ships have a high standard of habitation and self-contained servicing and a suitable craft which would fit into Middle Dock could provide a quick solution for some of our desperate citizens needing housing.

2. REPORT

Berth Length – The length of the berth at Middle Dock is 98m which will immediately limit the length of the vessel to be berthed there to a maximum of about 100m. In order to safely berth a cruise vessel of this size at Middle dock, the dock wall, bollards and shore facilities would need to be significantly upgraded. We have already seen the bollards being recently pulled from their foundations by the crane barge Bristol Giant – so in essence a complete redesign and refurbishment of Middle Dock will be required. Quay wall repair and stabilisation has been investigated and costed as part of the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre project and within the Levelling Up bid a sum of £1.5M is sought for that.

Vessel Hire - Middle Dock length makes the maximum vessel size to be something of the Fred Olsen “Balmoral” Class - 710 cabins (<https://www.fredolsencruises.com/our-ships/balmoral>).



BALMORAL



Picture and website link included for illustrative purposes only. This vessel is not under consideration as a possible acquisition or lease.

Economies of scale have meant that most smaller cruise ships have long since been scrapped and the remaining small survivors are vessels such as the “Hebridean Princess” (72m loa) which are now fitted and crewed for the luxury bespoke cruise market and carry 49 passengers (<https://www.hebridean.co.uk/cruise-calendar/hebridean-princess-cruises/>).



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Picture and website link included for illustrative purposes only. This vessel is not under consideration as a possible acquisition or lease.

Leasing a vessel of this sort of specification, even one already laid up, for accommodation purposes is likely to be difficult and expensive. The long term hire of a vessel removes it from sea service but the vessel machinery must still be kept functional if the ship is to maintain her certification and tickets, critical to the value of the vessel – so she will also require a crew, even it if is only chefs and engineers - all of which comes at a cost.

A rough estimate is about £25,000 a month hire figure – the final sum will depend on the vessel and the negotiating powers of TDC.

Berth Depth – Middle Dock and the navigational channel up to Middle dock “dries out” at about 2 hours either side of high tide. Their charted depth is about 0.5m above chart datum and any proposal to bring sea going ships into the river must account for this. There are 2



solutions; either make the channel deeper and maintain that depth or bring vessels that are capable of “taking the ground” with each tide.

Cruise Ship Design – Cruise ships are ocean going vessels which are designed with “fine lines” for long sea passages and fuel economy in mind. Simply put, the hull design tapers down from the waterline to the long narrow keel and at no point in their design life are they considered suitable for taking the ground – they would quickly sag and break up under their own weight. So, if the intention is to bring a cruise ship into the river up to Middle Dock, then a channel and a berth deep enough for the vessel to stay afloat at every state of the tide would need to be dredged and maintained to the depth of the target vessel + at least 2m – so probably at least 8m below chart datum. The distance from deep water at Appledore is approximately .75nm and the navigational channel would need to be at least 75 m wide. Given the depth of water at the berth, the new foundations of the quay wall would need to go down to a depth to guarantee its stability – probably in the region of at least 12m below the present surface level (This will need to be checked as it is a rough estimate made by the Harbour Master). The capital dredge campaign to achieve this work would be significant and aside from the licences and permissions necessary, would likely cost in the region of at least £300,000 for plant and disposal of dredged material alone.

Other Options – an alternative option might be to lease / purchase an accommodation barge which would be strong enough and designed to take the ground at Middle Dock. There are examples of numerous variants that have been used in the UK and abroad – as military accommodation or as prisons. See **Appendix 1** for examples ([Accommodation Barge for Hire \(220 cabins\) - Harmony Marine Shipbrokers \(hmsbroker.com\)](#)) or ([Accommodation Work Barge for Charter - AWB International \(accommodationworkbarges.com\)](#))

We do not know without further investigation if these vessels are suitable to allow the vessel to take the ground, but even if they had to stay afloat, they would draw significantly less than a cruise ship and the likely dredge cost might be reduced. In any event, the necessary quay side work highlighted above, would still need to be undertaken if we were to put a vessel with people living on board alongside there.

Loom / Access / Services / Waste – Assuming the nautical issues could be resolved / paid for, the presence of a large cruise ship or an unsightly block ship type barge alongside at Middle Dock would “loom” significantly over Appledore.

More widely, the presence of an additional 200 – 400 persons living on a cruise ship / barge at Middle Dock would also require the installation of the appropriate services to keep the facility running – waste, water, electricity, IT, gas, parking, road access and gangway access. None of which are present at Middle Dock and would need to be specifically routed – perhaps adding another £100,000 to the project cost. In addition many of the existing buildings on the site would need to be made secure, improved or demolished if people are to be living at the site.

No assessment of the suitability of Middle Dock for temporary accommodation has been made. There is likely to be the requirement for educational, health and other services and we have not yet investigated whether the local network of services has the capacity to accommodate.

The Planning aspect of this proposal have also not been considered and we will need to take advice on whether there are implications that will need to be addressed.

Appledore - The long running question of marine authority and governance of Appledore would also have to be resolved before this project could go ahead – relying on TDC status as the landowner and leaseholder of the foreshore will not be sufficient – the project will require an authority with suitable marine powers to supervise delivery.



3. Conclusions

Initial high-level investigation suggests that this initiative is physically possible if sufficient resource is made available for its delivery. However, it will not be without its difficulties and is likely to cost at least £1,500,000 - £2,000,000 in capital preparatory work.

No assumptions have yet been made about whether the initiative is sensible/ affordable from a revenue perspective and this would need to be examined in detail in any subsequent report.

No assessment of the Planning implications of this proposal has been made.

No assessment of the on land requirement for services, power, or waste management has been considered.

No partner Local Authorities have yet been identified, investigation into this and how it affects their own duties under the Housing legislation will be investigated if a full feasibility report and business case is requested by this committee. We have spoken to a large Unitary Authority that investigated a similar idea recently. They decided not to proceed due to the various complexities they identified.

The berth at Middle Dock would not be suitable for a vessel designed to stay afloat and therefore only a barge like vessel would be suitable.

Compliance issues around the safety of such accommodation at the site would need in depth consideration and management solutions.

If it were resolved that a cruise ship or barge were to be moored at Middle Dock for the purposes of providing temporary accommodation that would effectively make delivery of the Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre project impossible and mean that Levelling Up funds would not be available for the required quay wall stabilisation works. In addition, depending on timing and delivery of the intended Environment Centre, it might be that the recycling fleet will need to be relocated to another site on a temporary basis.

The proposal has not been greeted positively by Shelter (The UK's leading Housing and Homelessness Charity). When consulted on the initial idea by the BBC, Charlie Trew, Head of Policy at Shelter, said the cruise ship proposal did not address the root cause of homelessness.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

To be fully identified in any feasibility report and business case.

Human Resources Implications

The following will need to be considered:
Management and supervision requirement
Cleaning
Security

The human resource implications of the proposal are likely to be considerable. No assessment of commercial viability has been completed so it is unclear whether addition



resource requirement would be funded by the project income or would come as an additional cost to the Council.

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

To be fully identified in any feasibility report and business case

Equality/Diversity

To be fully identified in any feasibility report and business case

Risk Management

To be fully identified in any feasibility report and business case

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

The intention of the notice of motion is to investigate the proposal as a solution to the problems that the council is facing in sourcing and affording temporary accommodation.

Member Consultation

Cllr Brenton (Proposer) – 13/01/23

To be included

Cllr Ford (Ward Member) – 13/01/23

To be included

Cllr Hames (Ward Member) – 13/01/23

To be included

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members consider, in light of the initial findings, whether or not officers should direct resources toward the production of a detailed feasibility study and business case (at the expense of delay to other priority projects) in line with the Notice of Motion presented by Cllr Brenton and resolve accordingly.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION



Consultations: Date of Consultation
 Officers Consulted –Steve Hearse, Sean Kearney,
 David Heyes, Staci Dorey, Paul Brown, Councillor
 Brenton,

Reporting Officer Richard Haste

Appendix 1

Example advertised on the internet. The companies advertising have not been contacted and availability is uncertain.





HMSBAR 580 : ACCOMODATION BARGE for hire – 220 Cabins

- 📅 **Available:** 1 January, 2022
- 🕒 **Published On:** 24 May, 2021
- 🚢 **Vessel Type:** Barge -Accommodation, Barges (All)
- 🌍 **Region:** Africa
Africa-East Coast
- 📍 **Location:** Mozambique

From our large selection of accommodation barges for charter, we offer this highly versatile accommodation barge for rent, which has the modular flexibility for all manner of project uses, either maximising accommodation/public areas or offices & meeting rooms for corporate functions



AWB006: 310 Person Shoreside Accommodation Barge



Classification: Lloyds Register - + 1A1 RE Pontoon
Building Code: SOLAS 1974/83

Length overall 91.40m
Width: 27.40m
Depth 6.10m
Bottom of keel to highest point 22.5m
Working draft 2.20m

Net Tonnage: 4030

Power Supply: Diesel engines – total output of 5 generators 1,250 kw (250kw each).
Additional contingency generator.

Sewage treatment – SludgeHammer system.

Accommodation: Upto 310 guests in ensuite rooms. All spaces air conditioned.

