

Dear Members,

As many of you will have gathered through the grapevine or the Argus, The Council's planning sub-committee rejected the application by Explore Living by a margin of 9-3. This is a remarkable degree of victory for our campaign. The Conservation Advisory Group representative, John Small, voted in favour of the rejection.

The efforts of Peter Martin, Brighton Marina Residents Association, Robert Powell, Marine Gate Action Group, Rosemary Shepherd, Roedean Residents Association, Brian Simpson of "savebrighton" along with Stella McCrickard, Vicki Davies in the press release and flier campaigns were exemplary. Those of you who helped with the Petition contributed worthily with over 2,000 names collected. Each objection contained in the Petition were read out at the opening of the session by Councillor David Smith. It set the tone perfectly. These were in addition to the petitions collected and presented to the Full Council meeting on December 4th by Ward Councillor Mary Mears.

Peter Martin's targeted email campaign of key facts to the Councillors with admirable diligence gave them sufficient grounds on which to object. The list of objections after the rejection was extensive, leading off with "obstructed views of and from the Kemp Town Estate".

Much time has been expended on this over the last two months by the foregoing team to ensure Councillors and the public were aware of the key issues expressed by the majority of the residents most affected by the development. The style and content were as thorough as that of the developers presentation. Given the voluntary nature our resources contending with those on salaries or paid consultants, it is cause for considerable credit to all.

The video presentation made by the developer for the Councillors consisted of a "before and after" walk through from Black Rock. It was presented by the Council officer for the Marina development. The new proposed development as seen in the video proved beyond doubt that the scale of the massive "superblock", which could cover the whole of the current Asda site from the ramps to the far eastern end of the current store to a height of 10 stories, made it clear that the developer has had to resort to the most dense format of development imaginable. Combined with the 28 storey "Marina Point" building (6-8 storeys higher than Marine Gate) in place of the current Asda petrol station, which would be moved to the east end of the multi-level car park and the 5-16 storey block on the Macdonald's site and the Western break water units, every available piece of land would be built on. Open space is left to the undercliff area or roof top areas. No sense of place would be possible. At street level, one would be surrounded by a walls of tall buildings. The western breakwater buildings are an apology of urban design for such a prominent site overlooking the conservation area. To live there during windy or stormy weather would not be for the faint hearted with waves and spray battering your front door and windows.

It was likely last night that the decision will be appealed. This morning, the Argus confirmed in an interview with Jim Dennis of Explore Living, that he will appeal. This has to be lodged in 30 days. So the first engagement has been won but now it will be necessary to parlay the community to participate in this process. The Appeal to the Planning Inspectorate will require us to be register along with the other associations assembled into a group as official witnesses and be represented by a planning Barrister.

Unlike before, I do not believe the Society should or, indeed, could undertake this alone. It has to be taken together by other residents and their Associations. We will be giving this some detailed and considerable thought. Our Secretary, Jill Sewell, will commence some (private) discussions with a planning barrister to give us initial ideas with which to plan a strategy. I will be doing the same with another. I confirm that any funds which might be needed in the future will not be committed without a clear mandate and in particular will not affect the rigorous budgeting which has held the Society in good stead, thanks to Joan Griffiths' thoroughness in her bookkeeping.

On a separate issue, we have, I believe, scored well on two other fronts. Firstly, most of you will know we entertained the South East Regional officers of English Heritage. We did address the Marina development, but equally, it was intended to open a dialogue with them in order to discuss measures to assist the Society in our efforts to uphold the fabric of the buildings and gardens of the Estate. We discussed matters of HIPS and Energy Conservation initiatives and their impact on preservation orders for Grade 1 listings. There are indications they will do so on a number of fronts. More about this in time. However, with the Marina back in centre stage this refreshed relationship with EH is most timely.

Secondly, in the presentation I gave to full Council on December 4th, I asked to give the Heritage Seafront and the major Brighton Estates policy status within the Core Strategy Document, which forms part of the Local Development Framework. This is an important document which is to be submitted to the Secretary of State. It encompasses housing, transport and the delivery of services by the City. Though Heritage is addressed, it is not a central commitment of the City and is therefore unfunded. Hence the dilapidated state of our seafront. Tourism suffers as a result. Councillor Geoffrey Theobald, the Environment Cabinet Minister, has offered us to meet with him and his officer to find ways to take the matter forward. I intend to take this matter up, even though it goes well beyond the role of KTS. If the City raises the place of Heritage as a central policy and funds it properly on an annual basis, we will put pride of ownership back into the seafront and safeguard the Estate from yet unknown further threats!

As we all gather ourselves for our Christmas celebrations around family and friends, I do hope you all will celebrate with cheer and raise a glass of gratitude that we share a heritage neighbourhood, which is improving thanks to your continued support.

There will be a lot to do early in the New Year.

Happy Christmas!

Paul

Paul Phillips, Chairman,
Kemp Town Society

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