



Chief Planning Officer
Folkestone & Hythe District Council
Folkestone
CT20 2QY

19 January 2025

Comment on planning application

Reference no:	24/0505/FH
Site address:	Former Rotunda Amusement Park, Plots F1, F2, G1, G2 and H, Marine Parade, CT20 1SU
Proposal:	Approval of reserved matters (layout, access, scale, appearance, and landscaping) of Phases 5 and Phase 6 comprising Plots F1, F2, G1, G2, and H and the harbour public realm for the erection of residential dwellinghouses, commercial space, associated car and cycle parking, landscaping, playspace, public realm and associated services, amenities and plant and the discharge of conditions 8 (public open space), 9 (water use) 20 (biodiversity) and 21 (wind flow mitigation), pursuant to S73 outline planning permission Y17/1099/SH
Officer:	Sue Head
Stance:	MAINTAIN OBJECTION

Dear Mr. Lloyd,

The New Folkestone Society's full committee considered the revised application at several meetings including a public meeting, all of which had a unanimous vote against the proposal. With apologies for the delay in this response, we would like to make the following additional comments in relation to the Officer's Report:

Heritage

- Policy SS3 requires the proposal to preserve the character of the settlement and preserve and enhance the historic elements. Paragraph 4.216 of the Core Strategy deems it "essential" that the history of the site is recognised, and paragraph 4.223 states that



"redevelopment of the site must both conserve and enhance the character and setting of the wider conservation area and listed buildings". Nonetheless, paragraph 7.139 of the Officer's Report admits the design and appearance of the proposal is "overwhelmingly modern in its appearance which directly contrasts with that of the nearby conservation area in both layout and architectural language".

- Sadly, the redesign following public consultation has paid more attention to a minor change in graduation of buildings, shaving bits off and putting them elsewhere – namely increasing height and mass around the station, causing further harm to the heritage setting.
- Paragraph 7.124 of the Officer's Report admits the outlook, setting and appearance of the Conservation Area will "change considerably" but suggests public benefits outweigh this. However, the list of public benefits is debatable – does premium, expensive housing really meet the local housing need, especially considering we have some of the most deprived wards? A public shingle garden is not really a benefit as there is already a massive one – the beach! And the provision of a Goods Yard is actually the replacement of a charming, outdoor Goods Yard with an indoor model that, whilst it can be frequented in all weather, loses the rustic charm of the current provision and is more akin to a motorway service station.
- Paragraph 6.6 in the Officer's Report states that the NPPF defines significance as "the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest." It specifically states historic interest is included. It further says that "significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting". However, paragraph 7.120 states that "the setting and appearance of these listed assets would be substantially altered but their significance, historic fabric and primary space retained". As the significance comes from its setting and physical presence, and the Officer admits the setting is "substantially altered", then the significance has to be affected.

Furthermore, we feel that not enough weight has been given to the heritage and history of the site. It is of international importance, having been the first rail-sea-rail crossing in the World, played an important part in WWI and WWII and hosted films, television shows and events such as Gandhi's last interview on British soil and the Great Gold Robbery.

Replacing much, if not all, of the station walls with shops and levelling off part of the track-bed to platform level turns the station into a shopping centre, which greatly diminishes its appearance and significance as an historic railway station. Railways stations must have



a continual track-bed to function; whilst the station is no longer functional, this creates a visually jarring appearance not in keeping with a heritage railway station. It is a great shame that the applicant apparently does not want the line used as a functional, green method of public transport that would be a significant tourist attraction. It is also curious to undo the hard work that went into restoring it to award-winning status. It also means the hugely popular *Walking With Ghosts* immersive visitor experience would no longer be possible. This has attracted huge visitor numbers in the past two years and was planned to be the centrepiece of a co-ordinated, district-wide remembrance event.

As mentioned previously, it is still possible to stand on the platform and get a sense of how your ancestor may have felt standing on British soil for the last time during WWI. This is not possible in the middle of a shopping centre.

- The harm to the Grade II viaduct and swing bridge, which is a stone's throw from the development, has been understated – it is not “negligible”. In fact, paragraph 2.14 fails to mention the viaduct and swing bridge in a list of close Listed structures, or the fact they are the closest of these assets – not 10–15 Marine Parade, as suggested! Likewise, the lighthouse and East Head Pier have been overlooked here.
- As mentioned in our previous comments, there are other areas afforded designated protection around the site – the National Landscape (formerly AONB) has not been mentioned at all, but NPPF paragraph 189 says it has “the highest status of protection” and requires great weight to “conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty” in National Landscapes. Views from it will be affected, as illustrated in the visual mock-up from the East Cliff. As the National Landscape is a material consideration, do views into and out of it count in the same way as with a Conservation Area? If so, why has this been omitted from the Officer’s Report?

Similarly, views from a Scheduled Monument (Martello tower no. 3 on the East Cliff), SSSI (Warren and East Cliff) and a Marine Conservation Zone will be impacted, but none of these have been mentioned.

There is also the Dover–Folkestone Heritage Coast, which stops just east of the Harbour Arm. The Kent Downs Management Plan 2021–2026 considers Heritage Coasts to be “extremely sensitive to development”. Why has this not been considered? Has the Kent Downs National Landscape team been consulted? NPPF paragraph 191 requires decisions to be consistent with the special character of a Heritage Coast and Policy NE9 covers



development in protected coastal areas. Policies MMP2, SD1, SD2, SD3, SD7, LLC1, HC2 and HC3 might also be relevant.

Parking

- A net loss of 240 public parking spaces will cause issues that will migrate to the town centre, including traffic jams on roads to and from the harbour – especially with the Road of Remembrance indefinitely closed. It appears to be excused by the temporary, private nature of the current main car park and the residential development permission; however, that permission is also for commercial use and the provision of outdoor leisure amenities, for which parking is expected and required by elderly and disabled visitors.

Affordable housing

- NPPF paragraph 59 requires all viability assessments to be made public. This was also confirmed by Justice Dove (*R (Holborn Studios) v London Borough of Hackney (No 2)* [2020] EWHC 1509 (Admin)). We mentioned this in our previous comments, yet it has not been justified by the Officer.
- NPPF paragraph 59 further requires LPAs to consider whether the evidence is up-to-date and any site changes. As it was written in 2012, it is significantly outdated and much has changed, thus a new viability assessment should be required.
- Furthermore, Policy CSD1 requires 70% of the affordable housing to be "affordable housing by rent". The application appears to provide only shared ownership, thus is not compliant. Appendix 2 of the Core Strategy makes it clear that "affordable housing by rent" is not the same as shared ownership. However, the Officer has failed to mention this apparent breach of Policy CSD1.

Community engagement

- Policy C1 states that "any programme for community-building and place-making must engage the local community and be community-led". However, the public exhibitions were very well-attended, and the response was described in the press as "brutal"; yet little has changed. A significant number of responses were received – 92% of the respondents to the first consultation opposed it, whilst 96% of the responses to the second consultation were in opposition. This clearly illustrates that the local community has not been engaged



in place-making and community-building and still oppose the scheme as it stands. This will create a disconnect between the application area and the rest of the town, which should be avoided.

Design, Height and Scale

- Whilst the minimum and maximum parameters are accepted in the outline permission, scale is not. We do not consider the Officer's response that height is accepted is sufficient to counter arguments about scale; paragraph 7.104 in the Officer's Report mentions that Condition 7 mentions a key consideration on scale: "the impact of the proposed building on its surroundings, including the nearby heritage assets as well as the adjacent Folkestone Leas & Bayle Conservation Area".
- Furthermore, paragraph 7.106 mentions that Plot G2 is no longer to be built. It is explained that there will be "public open space" in lieu of a building and this is considered acceptable. However, the design must conform with the parameter plans and they state that the minimum height for plot G2 is 1.5 metres and the maximum is 11 metres. No building, i.e. leaving public open space, is 0 metres high thus not compliant!
- We are unconvinced that the level of overshadowing – both to residential units and public spaces – will be acceptable. The Officer has not mentioned overlooking and lack of privacy caused by the close proximity of units, particularly either side of the station. Both of these points are contrary to Policy HBI.

Other matters

- Has vortex shedding been considered? This was a significant problem for Dover Harbour, where it cost a lot of money to redesign affected elements.
- We are still puzzled by the underground car parking – how will this work and not be affected by rising tides and sea levels, as mentioned by the Environment Agency? There was mention of raising the level on the current car park side of the station – will this not affect the setting of the station? Might there be harm to the heritage station buildings during construction of a basement car park?
- Whilst condition 41 (sea sports centre) was removed in the S73 application, condition 42 (beach sports centre) was not – the application was to vary the condition. There was a



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mention of investigating retention of this (which would be considered a public benefit). It was even mentioned on the exhibition boards at the last public exhibition that the beach sports centre would be retained. Where is it?

- Is there still office space included in the overall application, as allocated in Policy SS10?

Yours sincerely,

Mark Hourahane
Chair, New Folkestone Society planning sub-committee