

HOVE STATION QUARTER

live work relax



NEIGHBOURHOOD BRIEFING

ISSUE No.2 OCTOBER 2023

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE HOVE STATION QUARTER

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER APPROVES OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

We have finally heard officially that the Forum's Draft Hove Station Neighbourhood Plan has been approved by the Independent Examiner to go forward to its Referendum.

Everyone living and or working in the Neighbourhood Plan Area will be entitled to answer the question 'Do you want Brighton and Hove City Council to use the Hove Station Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area?'

Minor factual updating is now being undertaken by the Council's Neighbourhood Planning Officer who will take the Draft to the relevant Council Committee next month to approve the arrangements necessary for the Council to hold the Referendum.

The outcome will be determined by a simple majority but basically, the more people who vote 'Yes', the more influence the local community will have on the continuing regeneration of the Hove Station Quarter.

Full details will be provided in the December issue of this Newsletter.

Hove Station
Neighbourhood
FORUM

www.HoveStationForum.co.uk

ROYAL MAIL SITE IN DENMARK VILLAS TO BE SOLD FOR REDEVELOPMENT

The Royal Mail site behind Denmark Villas will definitely be sold for redevelopment, it's not a question of whether but when, to whom and for what kind of development. This was made clear by their operations manager at an on site meeting with Forum Committee members at the end of September. They are irrevocably committed to building a new delivery office to serve some 120,000 addresses in the city, which will replace their current offices both in Brighton North Road and Denmark Villas. A planning application has been submitted for it to be located adjacent to the A27/Patcham Interchange. If they cannot secure approval for Patcham they will move out to a site in the Shoreham-Worthing area.

A new modern delivery office will be much more efficient and will include a switch to a fully electric delivery fleet from day one, which would see the delivery operation achieve net zero by 2026. Despite hundreds of objections from local residents, the odds are that the Planning Committee will approve the application, probably before the end of the year, with significant consequences for Hove Station Quarter.

The Patcham site is owned by the Council and if sold to the Royal Mail would generate a major 'capital receipt' providing much needed cash for the city's budget. In turn the Royal Mail will sell both its existing sites for redevelopment for the highest price it can achieve to help fund their new delivery office. The amount that prospective developers would be prepared to pay for the Denmark Road site will be influenced by the type of development which the Council will be prepared to

approve.

Thus there is pressure on the council to approve the highest possible density redevelopment scheme, subject to their City Plan Part 2 allocation of 67 dwellings, and some additional employment uses which is fully supported by Hove Station Neighbourhood Plan policies.

At our meeting, the Royal Mail's planning consultant indicated that for some time they have been exploring with city planning officers the possibility of a scheme for up to 120 dwellings. We indicated that the Forum would not support high rise above 9 storeys (half the height of Hove Gardens), that we would lobby the council to use its capital receipt to provide genuinely affordable social rented housing in a virtually car free development, and that the scheme should maximise green landscaping.

We voiced residents' concerns that only one Customer Service Point is proposed where people can collect and post mail items - in central Brighton. The response was that they can now do this at the Post Office on Blatchington Road, but when pressed they did not rule out the possibility of one at Hove Station perhaps run from the newsagents.

The Forum will keep residents and local businesses informed and will submit comments on any planning application for the Denmark Villas site, but in the meantime please send any comments to our website.

For further information see planningapps.brighton-hove.gov.uk/online-applications, or Royal Mail information website, which includes an FAQs section, at www.royalmailpatcham.co.uk.

WILL THE GOVERNMENT CLOSE HOVE STATION TICKET OFFICE?

Using a link provided by 38degrees.org the Forum lodged a strong objection to the proposed closure of the Hove Station ticket office directly into the email inbox of Jacqueline Starr, the CEO of the Rail Delivery Group which is driving the proposed changes. Our objection was

reported in the Brighton and Hove News 20th August - 'Closure of ticket offices'. We argued that, as with all other stations, the closure of the Hove ticket office will remove staff from a fixed point where they can provide advice in brief but effective conversations about the choice of (PTO)

CONGRATULATIONS! to one of our local pubs, the Watchmaker's Arms, for winning CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2023 Surrey and Sussex Region.

routes and train times - a change which will discriminate against elderly, and disabled travellers. But we also stressed the particular circumstances of Hove Station by explaining that the Neighbourhood Plan focuses on the development of a new Hove Station Quarter centred on the development of the station and its immediate environment as a Community Hub. This Hub will serve both longstanding residents and the 2000 plus new residents soon to move into new housing within walking distance of the station as a result of the large scale regeneration of the area.

We further pointed out that the station is a listed building which will constrain the

commercial re-use of the office space and suggested that one ticket office window should be retained to deliver current services at specified times of day, particularly during the week.

The government Transport Secretary has the final say on whether closures take place. No changes are expected until late this year and the full programme would take three years to complete.

The Independent newspaper online had a helpful article on 20th September, explaining what the ticket office closures will mean for passengers, which is still available to see under the 'Travel/news and advice' section.

COUNCIL MUST TAKE URGENT ACTION TO HALT FOOTBRIDGE DETERIORATION

In the 1840s, the railway line arrived in Hove after the railway company paid the Stanford Estate £30,00 (2023 equivalent £4.5M) for their right to run across Stanford land. Hove Station dates from 1879, the footbridge from 1890. These assets are Grade II listed on a special register of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest.

For many years the footbridge has been poorly maintained. Only through determined campaigning by the Forum were pigeon deterrents installed, lighting improved and regular cleaning established. Last year Network Rail repaired the bridge roof and inserted essential steel plate reinforcements

But the current shocking condition of this listed structure presents a sorry sight to the many residents and visitors who use Hove station. The graffiti is worse than ever and it appears that rats are now eating the side panels. This continuing neglect undermines residents' and visitors' sense of pride in the emerging Hove Station Quarter.

In response to the Forum's FOI request Network Rail revealed that from structural surveys it considers the footbridge '...to have deteriorated to the point of requiring refurbishment'. This will be major project requiring line closures which has been included in the Network Rail 2024-29 work plan.

Under the terms of a 19th century agreement between the London, Brighton

and South Coast Railway (succeeded by Network Rail) and the Hove Commissioners (succeeded by Brighton & Hove City Council), responsibility for maintenance rests with the Brighton and Hove Council. Thus Network Rail says that the City Council must pay for the work. However, the Council claims that the structure is beyond its design life so the legal agreement is no longer valid. The Council has budgeted £250k for footbridge repairs in 2023-4 and again in 2024-5; which, in a council officer's own words, 'would unlikely be sufficient to cover any extensive refurbishment.'

The Forum is now pressing Goldsmid Ward Cllr. Trevor Muten to establish what this money will be spent on. We continue to emphasise community priorities for new lighting, new anti-graffiti panels and CCTV – the need for latter was demonstrated when vandals lit a small fire on the bridge in August which the fire service extinguished at 4am!

Watch this space...

If you have website management and social media skills, and have a few hours a month to spare on a voluntary basis, we could really do with your help! Please email us at hovestationforum@gmail.com with 'Website Help' in the subject field and we'll get back to you.

HSQ - NEWS IN BRIEF

Stairs down to Conway Street - why no change?

When the planning application for the Hove Gardens project in Conway Street was approved it was agreed that S106 developer funds would be used to improve the stairway. The stairs were closed for several weeks and then re-opened - to reveal no change. We eventually discovered that this was because they found a void under the stairs going back to when the Station pub was built! The Hove Gardens Office will soon open on the corner of Conway Street and Ethel Street – opposite the stairs – so with the Hove Gardens staff the Forum will press the Council to sort this out asap.

Conway Street west of Goldstone Street will be closed to vehicles until mid -

2025 whilst the existing bus company buildings are demolished and replaced by a new bus garage in a four storey office and engineering building. This is the next major project in the development of Hove Station Quarter south of the railway and will be fully explained in a feature article in our December issue.

The Natural Fit Gym in Newtown Road

had its retrospective planning application to use the balcony overlooking Newtown Road refused - not least because of residents' objections, strongly supported by ward Councillor Jackie O'Quinn. See Brighton and Hove News website 7th September - 'Gym rebuffed by council planners'

Rat-running down Fonthill Road and along Newtown Road/Wilbury Road

was a major concern as we prepared the Neighbourhood Plan. So we secured Council funding for a Community Speedwatch Project – if you are interested please contact Mike Gibson via our website.

MORE UPDATES IN DECEMBER

WE NEED FUNDING - Hove Station Neighbourhood Forum is a statutory organisation, but is run by local volunteers who offer their time and expertise in the interests of ensuring that you, as a Hove resident, have a say in development in their area. However, we do incur costs such as for printing, venue hire and website management - please consider making a donation, either one-off or a regular standing order - it all helps! Please email us at hovestationforum@gmail.com with 'Donation' in the subject field and we'll get back to you with the details - thank you in advance!