

NEWSLETTER 195
June 2004

Big Plans

The Council has been doing some hard thinking about the area around the Brighton Centre. They have produced a draft document called a "Supplementary Planning Guidance Note" (SPG).

The purpose of the document is to give guidance to developers who are applying for planning permission in the area. So the ideas in the document will not necessarily be implemented, but the Council is encouraging developers to include them in their plans.

The Seafront Buildings

The Grand Hotel is one of Brighton's finest seafront buildings and the SPG is very clear about the need for any new development to be sympathetic to it. It states that new development must be "an improvement to the setting of the listed building"

The Council itself owns the neighbouring Brighton Centre which is now almost 30 years old. They would like to re-develop it in order to ensure that Brighton can continue to attract major events.

One plan is for a residential tower block above the conference centre. This would help the Council to fund the re-development.

The Kingswest takes up the remainder of the sea-front between Cannon Place and West Street. Some of the options in the SPG involve demolishing it.

Keep off the Beach

The SPG has lots to say about other part of the area. It seems to come down against any building on the beach opposite the Brighton Centre and Grand Hotel. However the wording is a bit vague: It says "The SPG does not necessarily advocate building on or over any part of the beach area." It adds that if any such plans were put forward they would "need to be assessed very carefully".

We are unhappy with this part of the document. We would like to see a much stronger statement against building on the south side of Kings Road particularly if it is above the height of the promenade.

The End of the Ramp?

One interesting proposal is to do away with the rooftop car park above Churchill Square, which is currently not used. It could be replaced with another floor of shopping space.

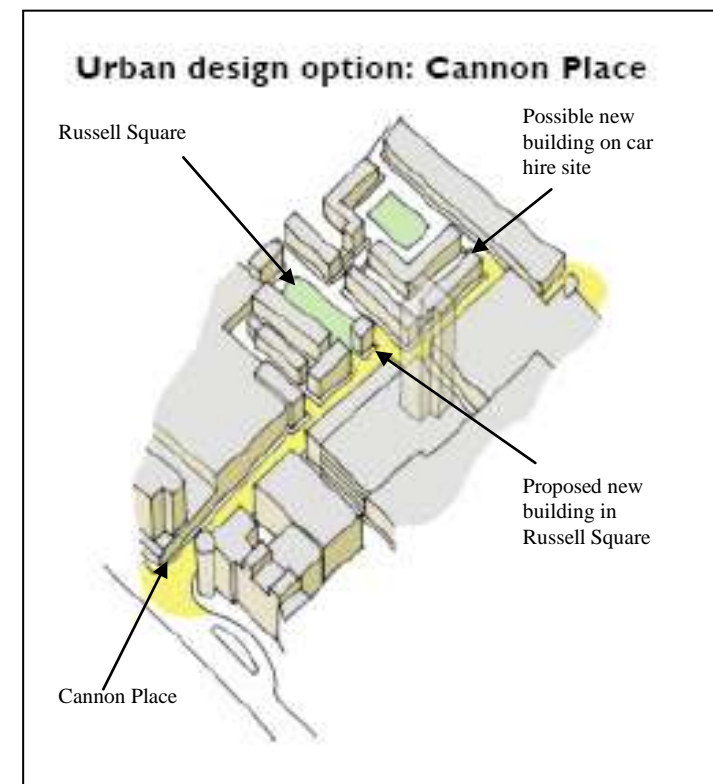
If this was done, the most noticeable result would be the removal of the ugly overhead roadway across Cannon Place. This could also allow for the re-development of the car hire premises below it.

Re-shaping Russell Square

Possibly the most controversial proposal from the Society's point of view is to enclose the end of Russell Square. This would involve a new building at the eastern end of the square on the west side of Cannon Place.

The aim is to reduce the impact on this charming square of the large modern buildings at the eastern end, namely Chartwell Court and Churchill Square.

It is not entirely clear from the drawing included in the SPG (see below) but the proposed building would take the pavement and part of the garden at the eastern end of the square.



We are opposed to the scheme for Russell Square. It would take light from existing buildings and reduce the size of the garden. The result would that the square would feel overcrowded. It would also cut off the only green space in Cannon Place, a street which the SPG rightly says needs visual improvement.

Lots of Good Ideas

The SPG contains lots of things which we would welcome:

- Improved pedestrian access to Churchill Square from the top of Cannon Place; at the moment this area is an unsightly rubbish store and loading bay;
- Development of businesses at the ground floor level of the car parks in Cannon Place and Russell Road;
- Improvements to Cannon Place such as the development of small “infill” sites, and more discreet entrances to service areas by means of arches and gateways;
- Improvements to the blank view of the Metropole Exhibition Halls in Cannon Place, possibly by the use of trees.
- A pedestrian link from Churchill Square to the the seafront;

The Society has its Say

We have written to the Council welcoming much in the SPG but strongly opposing development on the beach or at the end of Russell Square.

You can read the full SPG document at <http://www.urbanpractitioners.co.uk/brighton/>

Let us know what you think of it.

Committee Member Stands Down

We are sorry to report that John Clinton has resigned from the Society committee. He was elected at the AGM in March. Since then his personal circumstances have changed and he is no longer able to come to regular committee meetings. He has therefore decided to stand down. He will continue as a Society member.

Queues in Regency Square

We have spoken to Council officers about the problems of cars queueing at the carpark entrance. The Council is going to put up a notice asking drivers not to queue beyond the double yellow lines.

Meanwhile NCP staff have again been trying (not very successfully) to close the underpass when queues do build up. While we understand their reason for doing this, we believe it is not acceptable since many vehicles need to get through which are not trying to join the carpark queue.

Group’s Name to be Shorter !

After months of debate there is still no clear decision about the future of the Council’s Conservation Advisory Group, on which we have a representative. However, major progress has been made: in future the group will be called the “Conservation Advisory Group”, thus, no doubt, reducing costs to the Council’s ink and paper budget.

Fish-eating Mammals Invade Chartwell Court

The security operation surrounding this year’s Labour Party Conference in Brighton goes under the codename “Operation Otter”.

It is already well under way: all residents of Chartwell Court are being personally interviewed by police officers to confirm their identities. They have been asked to show their passports or other identity documents in order to speed up the process.

Details will go into a police database which will be retained for use during future conferences. The police have assured residents that the database will not be used for any other purposes.

Society Contacts

Chairman: Roger Hinton
☎ 321794 ✉ hinton@clara.net
Secretary: John Gavin ☎ 749747;
Treasurer: Andrew Walker ☎ 700340

www.regencybrighton.com

Time to Pay Your Sub.

Thanks to all those member who have recently renewed their membership. If there is a cross in the box below your subscription is now due.



To Andrew Walker, Treasurer, RSAS, 9 Chartwell Court, Russell Square, Brighton BN1 2EW

I would like to re-new my membership of the Regency Square Area Society for the year 2004-05 in the category ticked below:

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