



NEWSLETTER 210 January 2006

A Meeting with Ken Bodfish

Council leader Ken Bodfish is coming to speak to the Society at 7:30 pm on Thursday 26 January. The meeting will be held in the ground floor Osborne Suite at the Hilton Metropole Hotel in Kings Road.

We have organised the meeting in response to the concerns that have been expressed about the change of use granted for two hotels in Regency Square; they are now being used by the Council as hostels for the homeless.

The issues cross several of the Council's internal boundaries between, planning, housing and tourism.

That is why we thought it would be best to ask the Council leader to clarify just what the Council policy is. We have asked him to answer the following questions:

- How were these hotels able to get change of use to hostels without the normal planning consultations?
- What will happen if other hotels in the area now apply for a similar change of use?

- Does the council still have a policy of not allowing hotels to change to residential use?
- How can the council claim to support the tourist industry while allowing three properties in a prime location to be used to house people whose anti-social behaviour is liable to drive tourists away?

There will also a chance to raise other questions and make comments.

A Hostel at Keehan's Hotel?

Keehan's Hotel, on the east side of Regency Square, was run by the Keehan family for over fifty years.

It is one of only two houses in the square that have not adopted the standard colour that was introduced by the Council in 1981. This results from an oddity of planning law which means that the Council cannot force property owners to paint their houses the standard colour: the rule is that the colour of a property must either be left the same or changed to the standard colour.

When the hotel was sold last year, it was not a change of colour that was causing concern to neighbours. It was a fear that this hotel would be the next property in the square to become a house in multiple occupation (HMO), in other words a hostel.

For this reason the Society asked the Council to confirm that Keehan's was still being run as a hotel.

Planning Officer, Matt Gest has monitored and visited the site on a number of occasions over the last few months and says "I have not witnessed or have any evidence pointing to the fact that this property may be being used as an HMO or indeed is being used as anything other than a Hotel."

He has promised to investigate again if we have any reason to think that the situation has changed.

Meanwhile several other hotels in the square are now on the market.

What is the Council's Policy for Hotels?

Some local hotel owners have, in the past, come up against a problem when they tried to change their hotels into residential property, for example by conversion to self-contained flats.

The reason for this can be found in the Local Plan, a document that set's out the Council's planning guidelines.

The Plan defines a "core area", which includes Regency Square. Within this area, the change of use of hotels and guest houses "will not be permitted unless clear evidence is provided to demonstrate that a hotel / guesthouse is no longer viable for use as such; and alternative types of holiday accommodation suitable for the property (including dual uses for out of season times) are not viable.

To prove non-viability evidence will be needed that the hotel has been "marketed extensively for at least a year and at a competitive price." Occupancy rates for the past three years are also required.

So why did the Council allow two hotels in Regency Square to be changed to HMOs? No doubt Ken Bodfish will be able to give us a definitive answer.

Contacts

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

Web site: www.regencybrighton.com

Conservation Area Gets Bigger

The Council has announced an increase in the size of the Regency Square Conservation Area. It has been expanded to include buildings on the south side of Western Road between numbers 29 and 93; these include listed buildings at numbers 80 and 86. Numbers 21 to 47 Clarence Square are now included as is the northern side of Stone Street.

Buildings in a conservation area are subject to stricter planning controls than elsewhere. It is an offence to demolish a building (or a substantial part) in a conservation area without permission.

Alterations to buildings are expected to "respect the historic character of the area so that the quality of these buildings are eroded no further." Features such as UPVC will not be given permission.

A Good Time Was Had ...

Fifteen members gathered on January 2nd to welcome the New Year with breakfast at the Regency Restaurant. Coffee and conversation flowed freely.

Many thanks to the Regency staff for looking after us so well.



Fish 'n Chips for Breakfast?

There is a restaurant on the sea front between the Metropole and Granville Hotels. It has recently re-opened as a fish and chip shop offering a takeaway service. Neighbours are concerned that it is planning to open until the early hours of the morning.

The Time Restaurant, which was the previous occupant, had a take away service so no planning permission is needed for that. We are investigating whether permission is needed for late opening.

Just Like Old Times!

What a pity that our much improved refuse collection service could not be maintained over the holiday period.

A bag of rubbish in the street is a relatively rare sight these days except on collection day. But the last few weeks have been a sad reminder of what it used to be like, with piles of rubbish lying around for days.

The reason is the complex bank holiday arrangements introduced by Cityclean.

For the three weeks after Christmas, collection days have been changed. Most streets in our area will have a collection on Tuesday 10 January and then revert to Mondays.



Don't Bet On It!

Ladbrokes want to open a Casino with a bar and restaurant in part of the Metropole Exhibition Halls. The site is between Cannon Place and St Margaret's Place. The main entrance would be the existing doors towards the southern end of Cannon Place.

The Casino will operate until 4 am and is expected to attract 400 people a day. There will be 120 staff. This is likely to cause an increase in traffic and noise in the street late at night.

We have asked the planning committee to impose conditions to protect neighbours. We object to the proposed staff exit in St Margaret's Place because of the risk of late night noise. We have also suggested

that the car jockeys who will be employed by the Casino should not be allowed to use the car park in St Margaret's Place.

We have asked for conditions to prevent noise from ventilation equipment and from entertainment: the plans show a stage near the north end of the site.

You can see full details of the application on the Council web site: the address is www.brighton-hove.gov.uk. Click on Planning, then Planning Register and put in the reference BH2005/06526.

It's That Time Again!

Membership subscriptions for 2006 / 07 are due in February. Please help the Society by renewing now. If you are able to give a bit more than the basic subscription that will help even more.

Membership Renewal

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

I would like to renew my membership of the Regency Square Area Society for the year 2006 / 2007 in the category ticked below:

	£
Ordinary member	4.00
Family	4.50
Senior Citizen	3.50
Associate (non-resident)	3.50
Business (non-resident)	6.50

Basic subscription _____
Optional donation _____
Total enclosed _____

Name _____

Address _____

Payment by cash or cheque payable to Regency Square Area Society please. Members' details are stored on computer for administrative purposes only.