



Black Rock Development Brief



What is an SPG?

A Supplementary Planning Guidance Note (SPG) is one of the material considerations that can be taken into account when determining a planning application. It is intended to provide helpful guidance for the developer, consistent with the provisions of the Local Plan. This SPG Note is one of a series produced by Brighton & Hove City Council and it is to be read in conjunction with the Brighton and Hove Local Plan. Each SPG note has been subject to a period of consultation and Council Approval.

Introduction

Squashed between the sea and the Downs, Brighton and Hove has very few vacant, developable sites. This one has been returned to the Council following its use by Southern Water as a construction base for Operation Seaclean.

Black Rock was identified in the 1993 Brighton Seafront Development Strategy as one of the 'landmark sites' which provide a wide range of opportunities for private investors and entrepreneurs to underpin the rejuvenation of the seafront. Since then, the phased development, concentrating first between the Piers, has proved a brilliant success story for business, visitors, residents and the Council alike. This success is now being taken into the area east of the Palace Pier, with the first phase of environmental improvements being completed along the Colonnade. The Aquarium leisure redevelopment scheme, opposite the Palace Pier at the western end of Madeira Drive was recently completed and the successful conservation area action in Marine Parade and the streets behind has been supplemented by European funded URBAN improvement projects in East Cliff, Kemp Town and Whitehawk. The successful re-use of the Black Rock site, with an appropriate leisure orientated scheme, will be an important element in the continuing rejuvenation of this part of the seafront.

Whilst Black Rock is a valuable site for the city, for the local communities of East Cliff and Queens Park, Kemp Town, Whitehawk and Roedean it is a local resource. To involve everyone in the future of the site, the Council has undertaken an extensive consultation process the results of which have shaped the contents of this development brief.

THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The Black Rock site is situated behind the beach at the eastern end of Madeira Drive, with Brighton Marina adjoining it to the east and the historic landscaped Slopes and Regency terraces of Kemp Town to the north. It sits within one of the city's main transport corridors – the A259 a major distributor road and bus route running east-west along the seafront and linking Brighton and Hove with the port of Newhaven and its links to France, and other south coast resorts.

Current access to the site is from Madeira Drive, a cul-de-sac that ends adjoining the site. Route 2 of the National Cycle Network, which is also part of the South Coast Cycle Route between Dover and Southampton, runs along the north side of the site and joins the end of Madeira Drive. A well-established pedestrian route, which runs along the entire seafront and connects with other parts of the South Coast, passes along both north and south sides of the site. Both pedestrian and cycle routes link the site with the Marina, the Under Cliff Walk and the A259. At this point the A259 Marine Parade/Marine Drive is carried high on the cliff behind retaining walls to the north of the site. Madeira Drive therefore joins the A259 either via Dukes Mound, a short inclined link 800m to the west of the site, or at the Aquarium roundabout in front of the Palace Pier 2km to the west.

Immediately to the west of the site is the eastern terminus of the historic Volks Railway. Constructed in 1883 it runs to just short of the Palace Pier in the west. The eastern terminus building is new, constructed as part of the requirements associated with Southern Water's 'Operation Seaclean', and has its own small off-street car park. This car park is not only used by disabled travellers, visitors and staff but is also required for track access and maintenance and for access to and maintenance of the storm water sewer which runs from this point west under the seafront.

In addition to the pedestrian access, the promenade to the south of the site provides the emergency vehicle access to and from the Marina, linking to the raised Marina access roads avoiding the Marina/A259 interchange. The Marina access roads themselves, which run alongside the eastern boundary of the site, are public highways but are maintained privately by the Marina Company.

Brighton Marina is a modern development of shops, leisure uses and housing enclosed by robust concrete breakwaters, elevated access roads and retaining walls. Adding to the Asda superstore and the multiscreen cinema, a Bowlplex and a David Lloyd Leisure Centre with a 25m swimming pool have recently opened and currently under construction are more apartments, shops, restaurants, and a 100 bed budget hotel.

By way of contrast the other three sides of the site, the north, south and west, are bounded by the Kemp Town Conservation Area. This is centred on the Regency Grade I listed terraces of Arundel and Chichester Terrace, Lewes Crescent and Sussex Square above the site. The conservation area extends down to the high water mark on the beach and includes the Kemp Town Slopes and gardens, which are also part of the Kemp Town park and garden of special historic interest (Grade II). The Slopes and esplanades contain three Grade II listed buildings – the Tunnel Entrance, the former Reading Room and The Temple.

Rock samphire, sea purslane and yellow horn poppy are just some of the scarce plants which have recolonised the shingle along Volks railway and the beach in front of Black Rock. They are examples of the natural vegetation which historically would have been found all along the coast before the city developed. Both are Sites of Nature Conservation Importance identified by the Council. Further details of the precise extent of the SNCI's can be obtained from the Council Ecologist.

Black Rock marked the eastern boundary of the town until 1928. The name probably came from a large rock or cave that once lay at the foot of the cliffs. In 1823 Thomas Kemp started to build the Kemp Town Estate. As its name suggests, it was intended to be a separate town from Brighton. To protect the foundations of the houses, a sloping sea wall was built with steps down to esplanades and planted gardens below running down to what were then private beaches. The Reading Room, built into the cliff face, was a quiet place for the residents where their servants would bring them refreshments. The chalk cliffs were notoriously unstable and when the coastal road to

Rottingdean was lost to landslips in the 1920's, the Council built the Undercliff Walk as part of the sea defence works. The Black Rock Swimming Pool opened on the site on 8th August 1936. Its design was described as 'unobtrusive Seaside Modern style'. Much photographed and much loved, it finally closed its doors in 1978 and was demolished. The levelled site now contains a small rink for roller blading and hard standing areas used for special event parking, both provided by Southern Water as part of reparations following their use of the site.

The core of the site available for development is 0.87 ha. However, the Council will entertain creative schemes incorporating adjoining areas of land to the north, west and south, providing that the facilities currently provided there are incorporated as part of the development and that the natural and historic conserved spaces are maintained.

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES FOR THE BLACK ROCK SITE

- To enhance the tourism and leisure function of Brighton and Hove and its seafront;
- To provide an economically and environmentally sustainable development;
- To preserve and enhance the character of the adjacent conservation area and the settings of its listed buildings;

FUTURE USES

The Council believes that the Black Rock site should be used to provide leisure and recreation facilities for residents and visitors. The following range of uses have been drawn up following consultation with residents, business and local representative groups:

- An Activity Centre. This could be a Blading Centre, which would combine leisure ice skating with 'in-line' skating, skate boarding and other skating activities, or a Water Sports Centre including motorised watersports and with public slipways, or an Extreme Sports Centre which would include climbing, paragliding and skydiving. All should be provided in an indoor and outdoor venue to facilitate all year round use, with any appropriately themed retail being 'secondary' to the main use to avoid competing with and damaging the town centre or the Marina.
- A Managed Multi-purpose/Special Event Space. With part of it permanently covered, creatively designed to look interesting even when it is not being used for an event, with spaces that event organisers can use in different ways, and the frequency of open-air concerts controlled, such a space will meet a need in the city's leisure, tourism and conference base.
- An Hotel. Despite recent innovations and planning consents, hotel bed spaces are still in short supply in the city. A four star 100 bed hotel will fit on to the site, but will probably have to be distinctly different to those in the city centre, perhaps geared to Marina visitors (complementing the one already under construction at the Marina), heritage buffs or healthy living.

- Extension to the Kemp Town Slopes. Whatever the other uses on the site, part should be used to extend the Slopes and incorporate a 'children's village'/playground. Designs for the playground should be discussed at an early stage with the Council's Community Play Manager.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The Adopted East Sussex County Structure Plan 1991- 2011 and the Adopted Brighton Plan 1995 together form the Development Plan. The Brighton and Hove Local Plan which will eventually replace the adopted Brighton Plan went on 2nd Deposit in September 2001. (see Appendix A for the detailed policies).

Policies in the adopted Structure Plan provide a basis for support for new high quality leisure, tourist and conference facilities, developed for residents and visitors, provided they are compatible with the retention of important elements of landscape and townscape character and avoid damage to designated sites of natural or historic interest. They promote leisure based development which is accessible by a variety of means of transport and which ensures equal access to facilities for all social, economic and cultural groups and people with disabilities. They caution that access and parking may need to be restricted where conservation is a high priority and where alternative means of travel are available or could be provided. Policies also provide explicit support for new tourist attractions, activities and facilities taking advantage of the natural and built environment.

At a specific level, Black Rock is identified in the adopted Brighton Plan as a suitable location for a 'water based family play centre' and indeed an outline planning application for such a use was approved in 1986. However the Council now considers that a wider range of leisure uses are needed and would be appropriate for this site. The adopted Plan also identified Black Rock, with the Marina, as a potential park and ride site. However, following a nationally based pilot study into the defining criteria for successful park and ride sites, which included Brighton and Hove, they are no longer seen as likely sites and no mention of this is made in the Brighton and Hove Second Deposit Local Plan.

The Brighton Local Plan policies also indicate that tourism developments in conservation areas will be expected to preserve and enhance traditional architecture and the historic character; that development will not be supported that affects the setting of listed buildings like those in the Kemp Town Estate or damages the habitat of protected species.

The Brighton Local Plan also recognises the transport and tourism role of Volks Railway and supports its extension to the Marina and to the Palace Pier.

The emerging Brighton and Hove Local Plan has reached the second deposit stage and the site specific policy seeks a development that is centred around a recreation and leisure scheme which may include dry and wet sports, multi purpose/special events space and hotel accommodation. The development should complement and not duplicate facilities already available at the adjacent Marina and should ensure that the development as a whole provides attractions that will appeal to everyone and will draw visitors all year round.

CONSERVATION AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

The development must be based on sustainable principles and must avoid competing with and damaging the town centre and the Marina.

The site is a very sensitive one and also a very prominent one particularly from Marine Parade above and in views from the west. Any development here must be a very high quality design, carefully related to its surroundings so that it does not dominate long views. It presents the opportunity for imaginative modern buildings which screen the elevated concrete access roads to the Marina improving the view from the west and adding to the drama of the entrance to the Marina.

Any new building cannot be higher than the concrete retaining wall to the A259 Marine Parade/Marine Drive. The highest and bulkiest elements of the development should be immediately below the concrete retaining wall and then it should scale down towards the sea, following the line of the vehicular ramp to the Marina, and towards the west, following the line of the pedestrian ramp of Madeira Drive. Unsightly service areas will have to be hidden from the upper promenade, the seaside promenade or the beach.

The form and shape of roofs will be particularly important. They might be designed first, perhaps as a series of shapes to reduce their bulk, and then any buildings designed within them. There is scope for unusual and innovative designs incorporating vegetated shingle areas or a roof terrace extension to the upper promenade.

The design and materials of any new buildings are going to have to be sensitive and reflect the character and spirit of the location. Large expanses of reflective or shiny materials are to be avoided, although on southerly aspects, where any reflection from glazing will be out to sea, it is expected that advantage will be taken of natural light and sunshine. Elsewhere, elevations might for example make use of flint-faced cast concrete panels as an appropriate contextual material.

Landscaping should be of a maritime character, using appropriate materials such as loose shingle, flint pebble retaining walls, shingle-faced concrete slab paving and maritime railings and bollards. The new development will have real opportunities to promote coastal nature. Some imagination will create a distinctive setting for new buildings. Attractive coastal vegetation could be included in the landscaping and the existing conserved wildlife areas could be made more interesting for the public. A boardwalk and an information board would make a wildlife lesson from a corner of beach.

Whilst there is an opportunity to link the site with both the Marina and the Kemp Town Slopes, the development itself must not encroach on to the Slopes, and the existing views both of and from the Kemp Town Estate and the Slopes should be protected. To facilitate this, the Slopes should be extended in a sweeping bank across the western part of the site. This will visually complete the Slopes at the end of Madeira Drive and take the opportunity to provide a physical break between the conservation area with its listed buildings and the modern Marina beyond. It would also help to reduce the impact of any new development on the setting of the conservation area and the listed buildings. The bank would provide space for a 'children's village'/playground. Designers will be able creatively to combine this with the idea of innovative marine landscaping to provide a distinctive setting for the development as well as helping to conserve the existing beach habitat. In addition and commensurate with the scale of the new development, the Council will be seeking environmental enhancements to the Slopes and Esplanades as part of any planning permission, including restoration of the listed structures, lighting and better hard and soft landscaping. The historic Reading Room might lend itself for a café and recently planning permission was granted for one there.

The design, construction and material of any buildings should be, as far as possible, highly energy efficient and environmentally friendly, making maximum use of natural daylight, sunlight and ventilation. The possibility of including solar heating in any facility should be fully investigated. Wherever possible materials should be used which are recyclable or recycled or from renewable resources and non-polluting throughout their lifecycle. The design should minimise energy use, pollution and CO2 emissions from buildings. The Council will expect noise assessments of the new development to be carried out by the designers, including addressing the effects of emissions from buildings, plant, machinery, and from outdoor activities on residents in the Kemp Town Estate and Marine Drive.

Consistent with Access for All guidelines the development will be expected to promote access for all through good design both within the development and enabling convenient access with adjoining sites. The Disabled Access Advisory Group provides a forum for the disabled community and the Council encourages their involvement as early as possible in the planning process.

As part of its commitment to the arts, under its Arts Council supported Percent for Art initiative, the Council will be looking for the developer to integrate new public art into the scheme as part of the proposal.

With such exceptional heritage surrounding the site, English Heritage, the Garden History Society, the Conservation Area Advisory Group and the Architects' Panel will also be consulted on any proposals.

TRANSPORT PLANNING

Whatever the future use, the development of this site requires a creative approach to dealing with access and car parking. Using large areas of this prominent site for permanent parking is not going to be acceptable. A package of measures to encourage access by means other than the car, coupled with limited on site parking and other management arrangements is expected. There are excellent opportunities to actively encourage the use of alternative means of transport and promote awareness and use of public transport between the town centre, the site, and the Marina.

In planning terms at a local level, the Sustainable Transport Strategy sets out a future vision for Brighton and Hove and the ways in which improvements to the transport system can help deliver the vision. Details of the Strategy, and thereby the implications for the Black Rock Site can be found in the Local Transport Plan, which is available on the Council's web site. This strategy is also an integral part of Brighton and Hove's Local Plan.

Madeira Drive, the current access to the site, is a cul-de-sac already used as a pedestrian promenade, a cycle route, a coach passenger pick-up and drop-off point, for car, coach and sometimes lorry parking, and several times a year is closed for local and national events. In addition, Dukes Mound, the short steep link between Madeira Drive and the A259 has awkward priority junctions at either end, and four places in Madeira Drive, including at the Aquarium roundabout, feature in the Council's Road Safety Plan for investigation. Also at the Western end of Madeira Drive is the Palace Pier and the Aquarium sites, both of which have plans at different stages for improvements which will have transport implications for the area. Proposals for the Black Rock site will also have to facilitate: access to the Marina for cyclists and pedestrians; the improvement of the local stretch of the National Cycle Network Route 2; the extension of Volks Railway into the Marina. Please note that most, if not all, of these issues are currently being reviewed by the Council's Madeira Drive Working Group.

To sort these issues out, the developer will be required to prepare a Transport Assessment, preceded by a scoping study, in liaison with the Council. The Transport Assessment will be prepared in accordance with appropriate policies and guidance including those contained within PPG13, RPG9, the Structure Plan, the Local Plan, the Local Transport Plan, The Road Safety Plan, The Estate Roads Manual and IHT Guidelines for Traffic Impact Assessment, if they have not been superseded. The assessment should illustrate accessibility to the site by all modes and the likely modal split of journeys to and from the site. It should also give details of proposed measures to improve access by public transport, walking and cycling to reduce the need for parking associated with the proposal and to mitigate transport impacts.

Guidance on parking standards and commuted payments can be found in the Brighton and Hove Local Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance (BH) Note 4.

The detail of the transport package associated with the development of this site will be covered in the Transport Assessment, but it might include:

- reassessment of the design and layout of Madeira Drive, Dukes Mound and the A259;
- pay and display parking schemes for Madeira Drive, Dukes Mound and the A259;
- residents parking schemes in the neighbouring residential areas;
- traffic signals at the Dukes Mound junctions;

- improvements to existing A259 pedestrian crossings;
- possible alternative site access via the Marina or from a new slip road from the Marina junction;
- improvements to pedestrian and cycle links to the Marina, to the Under Cliff Walk, to the neighbouring area, and along the cliff top to Rottingdean including signed routes from North Street to the Marina via the site;
- permanent emergency access to and from the Marina;
- public transport promotion, service levels and operation including Volks Railway.
- the provision of car parking; disabled parking bays; taxi rank, shelter and facilities in particular for the disabled; sheltered cycle parking facilities; bus information system/timetable facilities; bus and, in particular for tourists, accessible bus and coach stops, shelters and facilities; and operational servicing requirements;
- Travel Plan;
- The Council's Madeira Drive Working Group's Requirements.

TENURE

The Council owns the freehold of the site. Its objectives in marketing the site are to facilitate the most effective leisure orientated development for residents and visitors, and to realise an appropriate receipt from the land. The Council will consider offers for a long lease of the land along with an appropriate development package, but will also consider a partnership arrangement where that might give best value for the residents of and visitors to the city.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

The following policies and proposals impact on the development of the Black Rock site. For a fuller appreciation, the documents can be accessed through the Council's Local Plan Team.

Adopted East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Structure Plan 1991-2011 (adopted on 2/12/99)

- Policies LT1, LT2, LT3, LT4, LT5 relate to specifically to the anticipated uses on the site
- Other relevant policies are LT7 and LT8 (access),
- Policies which maybe relevant to a specific development are LT8-LT12 (visitor accommodation, visitor facilities and sports)
- General policies which are relevant are in Chapter I "Strategy for a more Environmentally Sustainable Future" (S1 and S13 – Brighton and Hove Area); Transport Chapter; Environment Chapter EN6 (the coast); EN11 and EN12 (water and conservation); EN13 (air quality); EN14 (light pollution); EN15 (noise pollution); EN17 and EN18 (nature conservation); EN26 (built environment) and EN27 (conservation of energy).

Brighton Borough Local Plan 1995:

- Policies T10, T12, T15, T16, ENV33, ENV55; Proposals TRP5, TRP14.

Brighton and Hove Local Plan Second Deposit September 2001:

- Site specific policy for the Black Rock Site is SR21.
- Other relevant recreation/leisure policies are SR13 (amusement arcades); SR15 (large A3 food and drink venues); SR16 (night clubs); SR17 (new hotels); SR19 (new sport and recreation); SR20 (seafront recreation).
- Other relevant general policies will be found in the transport, energy, water, pollution and waste, design and safety, nature conservation and the historic environment chapters.

PLANNING HISTORY

BN86/2135/OA/CD:

Outline application for the construction of a family play centre with water based facilities – approved 10.2.87.

BN92/1215/CM:

Erection of spoil handling and processing plant for temporary period during construction of storm water overflow tunnel – approved 1.12.87 subject to restoration scheme for the site being approved and implemented within 6 months of the buildings being removed, provision of coach turning area and reinstatement of children’s play ground.

Extant Legal Agreement – BN92/1215/CM:

Children’s Playground: Restoration scheme to be carried out by Southern Water requires the provision of a children’s playground at the western end of the site. The Council agreed an amended scheme providing a skate rink instead.

Restoration Scheme: Southern Water is required to carry out landscaping including the provision of low level post and rail timber fencing and planting with suitable coastal plants. Because of the relatively low cost of this scheme there should not be conflict with the redevelopment of the site, but if appropriate this landscaping should be retained.

Site Location Plan



Brighton & Hove