

# **TOWARDS THE REGENERATION OF PORTSLADE**

## **PORTSLADE OLD POLICE STATION HERITAGE CENTRE**

### **A COMMUNITY RESOURCE**



**This document was researched and presented by the**

**BRIGHTON AND HOVE HERITAGE COMMISSION**

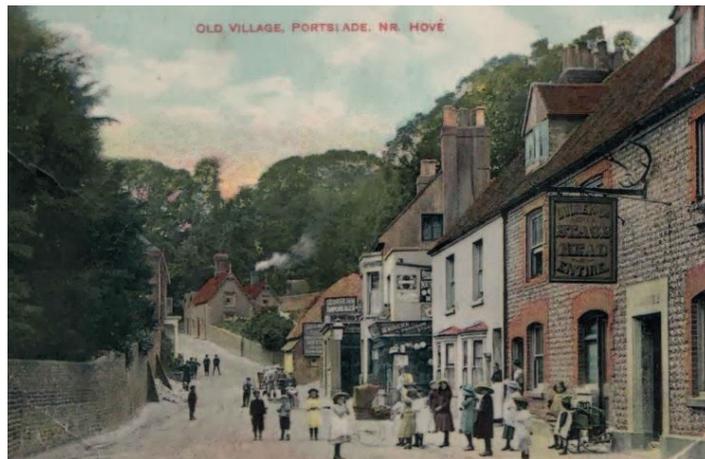
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**A view of the area by Turner – Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

## INTRODUCTION

Portslade as a community is on the Western limits of Brighton and Hove. It has an attractive and vibrant historical core as well as possessing an area of seafront.



**OLD PORTSLADE**

Yet Portslade suffers from high levels of anti-social behaviour and crime. The poor academic achievement of local Portslade schools – particularly South Portslade - is a matter for concern. Many Portslade residents are isolated from the core areas of Brighton and Hove. Commercial areas of South Portslade in Boundary Road and Station Road report falling footfall and poor trading conditions. Is this a result of being on the shadow of Brighton?

Areas to the west and outside the City such as Southwick and Shoreham have historically also been in the shadow of Brighton and Hove's economic and social vibrancy. Yet both these areas have in recent years benefitted from regeneration.

Much (but not all) of this has been endogenous, and it is not coincidental that both Southwick and Shoreham possess locally run community or heritage centres which have acted as catalysts for community development. Much has been achieved from within the communities.



**Mid-twentieth Century Children in Portslade**

A similar plan for Portslade would fulfil Brighton and Hove's Community Sustainability Plan 2012-16 key principle -

- CULTURE AND COMMUNITY - One Planet. Council and city. - Partnership working and a local plan for local culture.

A Heritage and Community Drop-In Centre in South Portslade could become just such a catalyst.

## PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSED COMMUNITY AND HERITAGE CENTRE

The centre would create

- A space serving schools, local organisations and the local community
- A dedicated museum
- A resource centre
- An education centre comprising permanent and temporary displays of relevance to Portslade
- A centre for events in and around Portslade
- A local archive of historical materials (much already promised by various people in Portslade)
- A community meeting space open to all appropriate users
- A venue for local events big enough for groups of 20 people.

## BENEFICIARIES

The centre will benefit

- Local schoolchildren
- Local associations
- The local community
- Visitors to B & H
- Anyone with an interest in sustainable development in Portslade
- Anyone hoping for the regeneration of their local area.

## PORTSLADE – NEED FOR REGENERATION

Before and after WW2 Portslade was a significant industrial, manufacturing, and strategic centre. Since that time it has lost much of its critical mass.



**NORTH STREET – BEFORE**



**NORTH STREET - AFTER**

In 1960 Portslade-by Sea or South Portslade was a successful industrial centre, the home to two power stations, and until recently a gas works. It was a centre for the Southdown Motor Services, Ronuk Polishes manufacturing, and many large and small engineering companies. It was an important railway goods centre. Its port was thriving. It was a lively community.

Between 1960 and 1980 Portslade lost much of its base and at the same time was the subject of many ill-conceived urban plans. This included –

- The demolition of much of North Street – once a key shopping and community centre - to allow the expansion of a factory that itself closed after a few years.
- The demolition of buildings along the coast road.
- The wholesale moving of residents from South Portslade into North Portslade housing estates leading to long term decline in much of the town.
- The hollowing out of Portslade's social and economic base.



### **HOLLOWED-OUT SOUTH PORTSLADE FROM THE AIR**

Much of Portslade is now an island of relative deprivation on the edge of the thriving and vibrant City of Brighton and Hove.



**ELECTRIC LIGHT FACTORY – A GROUNDBREAKING STRUCTURE IN ITS TIME**



**NEARBY SITE TODAY – LOW VALUE LAND USE**

## CURRENT HOUSING PLAN CRITIQUE

Regardless of any future use for the Old Police Station the current plans for converting this imposing building into a single maisonette are seriously flawed.

(We suggest that these notes be read in conjunction with documents BH2013/02455 – Plan Drawing 67-StAR-02).

1 – The curtilage as it stands presents huge technical problems in preparing the site for the building works –

- The decontamination centre is built of heavy duty bomb proof reinforced concrete and will present huge demolition problems. (The i360 works recently required the demolition of a similarly heavy duty pill box from the same era and it proved to be a very challenging task.) As the curtilage in this case is close to

residential buildings the risk of collateral damage to adjacent properties is high.

- Within the period Police Station building the police cells present huge problems as they are built of heavy duty elements, and break up the living space, and lack windows suitable for residential use. The enormously heavy cast iron cell doors will present serious technical problems and will require expensive equipment to move them. However, as the cost of recycled iron is relatively low the option of selling them on to a scrap metal dealer will not raise significant finance.
- The cost of dealing with these problems will be high and might well add £70,000 to the cost of preparing the site for construction of the maisonette.

2 – The plans for the proposed maisonette will result in the construction of a sub-standard home.

- The site inherently suffers from a lack of natural light. The architects recognise this limitation and have attempted to remedy it by the use of light tubes. Yet even the light tubes cannot disguise the fact that the hallway lacks any light whatsoever. And many tenants would not welcome it
- The site is surprisingly restricted and the architects have had to resort to various stratagems in order to create a useable space. We have passed the plans before a qualified architect and his comment was that the design lacks panache but demonstrates how hard it would be to gain a credible living space from the old police station.
- In the opinion of local estate agents who have studied the plans the maisonette would be unattractive, hard to market and likely to worth no more than £500 per calendar month on the open market. This project clearly does not offer acceptable value for public money.



**CHAPEL PLACE – THEN AND NOW!**

## PROPOSED COMMUNITY AND HERITAGE CENTRE BUILDING

We propose that if the Old Police Station in St Andrews Road be converted to a community and heritage and community centre it could contribute to the much-needed regeneration of the area.



### **A LANDMARK BUILDING**

The Old Police Station is located in St Andrews Road, one of the streets in South Portslade which has retained its original character. The Old Police Station forms a vibrant focal element in this street, which comprises terraces of largely intact family houses of the Edwardian period.

The building was constructed in 1908 for the East Sussex County Constabulary. It is a red brick building constructed in a mixed Baroque and Queen Anne style.

The front elevation is distinguished by a carved off central sandstone porch with an intricately carved pediment containing an enriched shield with the

logo ESCC. The original double panelled doors are of distinctive Baroque design.

Sharing the curtilage is the early 20th Century Decontamination Centre. It is a fine example of utilitarian defence-related building in original condition. The decontamination units survive almost intact.

The Old Police Station is a building of considerable size, and alongside the decontamination unit it is testimony to the importance of Portslade during the earlier parts of the Twentieth Century.



**ST ANDREWS ROAD – AN ATTRACTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

It retains many original features such as police cells, a reception and administration room, storage cupboards and fireplaces.



**POLICE CELLS**

Within its curtilage the World War Two decontamination unit in almost pristine condition is testimony to the area's past importance.



**DECONTAMINATION UNIT CAN BE CONVERTED INTO  
A SEMINAR ROOM WHILE RETAINING ORIGINAL FEATURES**

The facilities that this building complex can offer are just what is needed for a Community and Heritage Centre.

This building already possesses a fire escape and toilet facilities. It will not require any further structural alterations to make it useable as a centre.

It would be very hard to find any better alternative location for a community and heritage centre.

We propose

- That the council drop its plans to gut the building and construct one maisonette within the cartilage.
- In favour of using the site as a community and heritage centre.

We ask

- That the council give us a six months period to put together a fully funded and costed plan.

## REDEVELOPMENT

We suggest the following actions

- Formally overturn current scheme
- Secure building against theft and vandalism
- Allow six months for project launch
- Carry out full neighbourhood consultation on terms of reference of the Trust
- Appoint steering committee for project

- set up a Friends of Portslade Heritage Centre
- agree a constitution and elect Trustees
- Carry out full structural survey and carry out immediate necessary repairs
- Commission project team to put together detailed plans for building restoration
- Commence promotional works



**AN ICONIC DOORWAY**

## VIEWES OF LOCAL COMMUNITY

Straw polls have been carried out in the area and no significant opposition to this scheme has been identified. On the contrary, the usual response is enthusiasm and something along the lines of "About time too"!

It is very widely recognised in the area that there is a need to amenities to give people belonging in an area of high housing density containing many areas of semi-dereliction. There is concern about the consequences of the decline in the Boundary Road area.

There are at present 200 signatures on a preliminary poll. This number will increase once a go-ahead for the six month pilot has been received.

Key stakeholders within the community are ready and eager to work together to launch this exciting project.

Local supporters believe that the proposal will –

- Will restore a sense of local pride via heritage
- Provide educational facilities via seminars for adults
- Provide an unusual classroom environment for children (there are ten schools in Portslade).

## ORGANISATIONAL AND FINANCIAL PLAN

The Brighton and Hove Heritage Commission will provide a constitution for the proposed charitable trust.

A steering committee will produce a financial plan.

## KEY SUPPORT

- PORTSLADE COMMUNITY FORUM
- ROGER AMERENA
  - Roger Amerena’s family have lived in Brighton since the 1870s and has been involved with conservation for much of his life. He has sat on CAG for 14 years for the Ancient Monuments Society, is Chairman of BHHC and was instrumental in saving the Royal Alexandra Hospital.
    - “It is paramount that Portslade and its environs possess some form of Heritage Centre, which it lacks at present. This site with its historical connections, and central location is ideal and I am fully behind it.”
- DUNCAN CAMERON
  - Duncan Cameron is Vice Chairman of the BHHC and a Member of the Conservation Advisory Group.
    - “As an area of the City that has lost much of its identity over the years, Portslade is crying out for the sort of care and attention that a heritage centre can bring. The location of the Old Police Station in the well-preserved Edwardian buildings of St Andrews Road will form a perfect focus for the cultural regeneration of South Portslade. The commercial and industrial history of Portslade is very

different from that of the rest of Brighton and Hove and needs to be rediscovered and nurtured."

○ VALERIE MAINSTONE

- Valerie Mainstone is a member of the Commemorative Plaques Panel of Brighton and Hove and a Commissioner of BHHC.
  - "I have never believed that our City's heritage begins and ends historically with the Prince Regent and his cronies, nor geographically with the so-called 'cultural centre.' Having lived in Portslade, Hove and Brighton most of my life, I believe that we have a rich heritage from our working ancestors, both men and women, throughout our entire City. We deserve a centre where lost ways of life are remembered with pride. I will do all I can to support this splendid project."

○ NEIL ENGLAND

- Neil England founded and owns EOP Ltd, a company local to Portslade that specialises in restoring heritage structures and has spent a lifetime amongst Brighton and Hove's old buildings. He contributed his skills to a display at the 2014 Venice Biennale.
  - "I have worked and operated in and around Portslade for many years and have grown to respect and like its people very much. As a Commissioner with the BHHC I am happy fully to support the application to create a heritage centre for Portslade within the Old Police Station.

○ FRANCIS TONKS

- Frances Tonks is an ex-Mayor of Brighton and Hove and is now an honorary alderman. He is the President of the Brighton and Hove Heritage Commission and has for much of his life been involved in heritage projects.
  - "We must try to preserve significant places of heritage value within our city all over Brighton and Hove – but Portslade is especially in need of preserving its own unique history. This project should help to achieve this and I am fully behind it."

○ ALAN ROBINS



experience in the renovation of Industrial buildings, especially water mills, and has acted as an advisor to the British Engineerium.

- "I was born in South Portslade at a time when it was a thriving port with a vibrant centre around North Street Portslade. I have a great interest in Portslade in general and am saddened by its decline and neglect, which as an historian I am very aware of. The setting up of a Heritage Centre within the Old Police Station would enable me and other likeminded Portsladers to share this rich sense of history and inculcate a sense of pride in the area among school aged children, visitors and the general public before there is nothing left that is recognisable of its rich history in particular its Industrial history".
- GRAHAM COX
  - Graham Cox is the Conservative Party Parliamentary Candidate for Hove and Portslade and has been a City Councillor.
    - "Having been born in Portslade myself I have seen how the town has been neglected in recent years when compared with the rest of the City. This proposal for a Heritage Centre, showcasing in an easily accessible way the interesting history of Portslade, is an exciting idea. It has been proposed by the people of Portslade and has my full support."
- PETER KYLE
  - Peter Kyle is the Labour Party Parliamentary Candidate for Hove and Portslade.
    - "As Portslade marches into the 21st Century by embracing social change, new technology, and adapting to local development, we mustn't forget where we came from. Preserving our heritage and making it accessible to everyone reassures people that our community is rooted in culture and history, something that also gives us more confidence to embrace the opportunities of the future. That's why I'm happy to lend my support to the preservation of the Old Police Station and I wish campaigners the very best of luck."
- ROY GREEN

- Roy Green is a member of Portslade History Group. He is a retired engineer/machinist with an interest in Archaeology and history. He is a military historian and belongs to the Western Front Association.
      - “Born in Portslade, growing up and working in the area I have seen the decline in the built environment and the loss of many jobs. I am keen to help preserve what remains of Portslade for future generations and fully support the creation of a Heritage Centre in the Old Police Station”.
- IAN FARRELL
  - Ian Farrell is a member of Portslade History Group. He is retired Human Resources manager in Telecommunications. He is also a qualified and experienced Referee. Ian has an active interest in History.
    - “My interest in History and Sport brings me in to contact with a wide section of the Public including young people. It would be very disadvantageous if these young people were not given the chance to discover the rich heritage of Portslade and the surrounding area. I fully support the creation of a Heritage Centre which will provide information and resources to complement the work of schools and Adult Education providers, as well as providing education for visitors”.
- RICHARD WILLIAMS
  - Richard Williams is a member of the Portslade History Group. He is a retired Telecommunications Engineer and Programme coordinator for a Local History Group.
    - “Whilst researching places of interest to see and visit, I have noticed that smaller places, like Rottingdean and Storrington for example, have their own Museums and a dedicated staff of volunteers to welcome and inform visitors. There are also a range of resources available for local people to carry out their own research. I feel that the opportunity to create the same for Portslade should definitely not be missed and I am fully in support of creating such a Centre in the Old Police Station. Both Southwick and Shoreham have such a facility so why not the poor relations in Portslade?”
- DAVID ROWLAND

- David Rowland is a local historian, researcher and author who founded the Old Cells Police Museum ten years ago.
  - “The Old Police Station would make a fine Heritage Centre, and I sincerely hope that the City Council will realise what a wonderful opportunity this could be. It is such a lovely historical building.”

- FRIENDS

- STEVE ANDREWS – Chair Portslade Community Forum
- JUDY MIDDLETON – Local Historian
- NEV KEMP – Chief Constable

## CONCLUSION

The current plans for the Old Police Station are ill-conceived and offer poor value for money.

BHHC proposes that an alternative use for the building as a Heritage Centre would offer better value and would offer a sorely needed resource the community.

We ask that the Council

- Overturn the current plan
- Give the local community six months to put together a detailed business plan.

Brighton and Hove Heritage Commission October 2014



