

*Submitted to the Environment cabinet, Brighton and Hove City Council : March 25th 2010*

## Planning brief for the Royal Alex site - A deputation by residents of the Alex Triangle

The Alex Triangle is the area of land within the Montpelier and Clifton Hill conservation area that is enclosed to the rear of properties on Dyke Road, Clifton Hill and Clifton Road. The Triangle includes the Royal Alexander hospital site at its southern apex. 2-300 residents have homes that look out into the Triangle. In December 2009, Triangle residents submitted comments during the Council's consultation on the Royal Alex Planning Brief (*Conservation and amenity inside the Alex Triangle - A submission by neighbouring residents on requirements for the planning brief for the Royal Alex site*, 15 December 2009).

In this deputation we summarise the four main issues highlighted in that submission and ask the Cabinet Member for Environment to describe how the Planning Brief addresses each of them.

### **Our question**

With regard to each of the four issues summarised below, we ask the Cabinet Member to describe:

- a) How the planning brief addresses this issue; and
- b) What force the brief has, to guarantee outcomes on this issue, not only at the present time but also with regard to development of the site in future years?

### **Four issues**

#### *1 An amenity issue - new development on the crown of Clifton Hill*

The sector enclosed by the north and west boundaries of the Alex site contains the highest point of Clifton Hill, and ground falls away steeply to the north and west. Any development in this sector of the site will potentially loom over all adjacent properties, since the fall of the land means that a three-storey building at Alex ground level is effectively five stories or more when viewed from the back doors and gardens of neighbouring properties in the Triangle. In our submission we suggested that height limits should be specified in the Planning Brief, that pitched - not flat - roofs should be specified, and that set-back of new buildings from the north and west boundaries should also be specified.

#### *2 A commercial viability issue - densities in the north-west sector of the site*

The area of the Alex site adjacent to the north and west boundaries contains no conservable buildings, and conservation of buildings in other parts of the site implies that, in order to achieve commercial viability, a developer will wish to achieve higher densities in this part of the site. In view of the issue of height and dominance over adjacent properties outlined in 1 above, we would like to know how the Brief deals with this pressure to stack units in the north-west sector of the site.

3 *A conservation issue - the character of this part of the Conservation Area as an open space*  
The Triangle is an unexpectedly large area of land behind the street frontages, with long sight lines and an open aspect punctuated only by mature trees; apart from trees, nothing rises higher than two storeys (plus roof) above Alex ground level. In our submission we argued that this quality of shared open space, opening out to the north and west, should be conserved and enhanced, as a valuable and beneficial characteristic of the environment, not only for the 2-300 current residents (including 100-or-so occupants of retirement flats) but also for occupants of 100-or-so future homes and users of other facilities (eg a GP surgery) that may be created by development on the Alex site.

4 *A second conservation issue - the architectural qualities of structures in different sectors of the redeveloped Alex site*

Within the Triangle, at the 'back' of the Alex site, the scales, rhythms and textures of structures are distinct from those at the 'front' of the site, especially on Dyke Road. The diversity and greater intimacy of rear extensions, flint walls, gardens and other small-scale features within the Triangle contrast with the grander proportions of Victorian buildings facing into Dyke Road, and constitute the charm of this particular kind of off-the-street townscape within the Conservation Area. In view of the nature of previous development proposals for the site, which applied a standard structural module and exterior style across the entire site regardless of these characteristic variations, our submission argued that the Brief should assert a '360-degree' view of the conservation of urban space, taking into account the differing rhythms, textures and scales of the Victorian environment in different sectors of the Alex site.

*March 15th 2010*

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