

**D04**

**F/ TH/ 03/ 1200**

**PROPOSAL:** Redevelopment of the site, up to 5 storeys in height, for 107 residential apartments comprising 1, 2 and 3 bed units and penthouses, a 60-bed hotel (Use Class C1) with conference and function facilities, (3,581 sq.metres), and health and fitness centre (97 sq.metres) (Use Class D2), retail (Use Class A1) or food/drink (Use Class A3) (1,810 sq.metres), a children's play area (244 sq.metres) (Use Class D2) and 204 ancillary parking spaces, together with provision of means of access from Harbour Parade and Marina Esplanade including the stopping up of Marina Esplanade with the relocation of the roundabout further east, and the reconfiguring of the western open area

**LOCATION:** PLEASURAMA AMUSEMENT PARK (FORMER), MARINA ESPLANADE, RAMSGATE, KENT, CT11 8LY

**WARD:** Eastcliff

**AGENT:** PRC Fewster Planning

**APPLICANT:** SFP Ventures Partners Ltd

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That consideration of the application be deferred with authority delegated to the Head of Environmental Services to grant planning consent subject to the following:-

- No objections being received from Kent Highways in respect of the further transport assessment
- No objections being received from English Heritage in respect of the amended plans and the further information submitted
- No objections being received from Kent Police and Southern Water
- No objections being received, within the relevant period, as a result of the further notifications undertaken in respect of the amended plans
- Agreement being reached upon the level and form, where appropriate, of contributions to affordable housing and education
- Subject to the imposition of appropriate safeguarding conditions

#### SITE, LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

This application relates to the extensive, vacant site that was formerly occupied by the Pleasurama amusement complex, situated on the north - western side of Marina Esplanade, to the north of its junction with Harbour Parade.

As Members will be aware, the site was previously occupied primarily by a substantial, two storey building used as an amusement arcade, incorporating amusement machines; children's soft play area; cafe/restaurant; bingo hall and associated office/administration facilities. The majority of the remainder of the application site, outside of the former Pleasurama building, was previously used for the purposes of an amusement park in connection with the building. The far, north - eastern part of the application site includes the existing roundabout and first section of public car park within Marina Esplanade.

The application site has lain vacant for some considerable time, following the loss of the former building as a result of a fire. The full extent of the site enjoys an overall frontage of

some 275m (902') to Marina Esplanade and a maximum depth from the existing cliff face of some 50m (164').

The site is contained between Marina Esplanade on its south - eastern side, beyond which is the main Ramsgate beach and the cliff to the north – west, above which is the promenade, Eastcliff Bandstand and Wellington Crescent. To the south - west, the site is adjoined, in Harbour Parade, by a single storey building that accommodates amusement facilities with associated food operations. To the rear of this amusement arcade, at a higher level, are two storey, terraced, Grade II Listed Buildings in Kent Terrace. At the eastern end of Kent Terrace, and located between the amusement arcade and the application site, is the refurbished, Edwardian lift. This lift provides access between Harbour Parade and Wellington Crescent. At its base, it is adjoined by a small, pitched roof, kiosk structure that is used for the sale of refreshments etc during the summer months.

The application site lies immediately adjoining the Ramsgate Conservation Area, the boundaries of which extend along the Harbour Parade frontage of the application site and the rear boundary of the site with the cliff that adjoins the bandstand.

Beyond the site to the north - east, in Marina Esplanade, are further areas of car parking, created as an integral part of the environmental improvements of Ramsgate seafront.

### PLANNING HISTORY

The application site enjoys an extensive planning history, including, inter alia, an approval in 1997 for alterations to the former Pleasurama buildings to provide a mixed use, factory outlet, shopping complex, including a children's soft play area. In support of the application, retail and traffic impact assessments were submitted. This planning permission was accompanied by a legal agreement that required the provision of 282 off-street car parking spaces and cycle/motorcycle parking facilities prior to the development first being brought into use. The legal agreement also required the provision of a series of off-site highway works that included, inter alia, a mini-roundabout at the junction of Marina Road with Wellington Crescent.

Following the loss of the original building by virtue of the fire, approval was granted, in 1999, for the erection of a substantial building, on three floors, to provide a retail mall; multiplex cinema; night club and leisure facility. Within this application, the roof of the proposed building was shown to be level with the adjoining cliff top, with access being gained to the development at this level by virtue of link sections between the building and the promenade, together with a lift structure and fire escape staircase points upon the roof of the building.

In 2000, a further planning consent was granted for a mixed use redevelopment of the site to provide a retail mall; multiplex cinema; health and fitness centre and a bowling facility or family entertainment centre. Once again, it was proposed for the development to be finished level with the cliff top by means of a landscaped roof.

In 2001, following consideration by Planning Committee, amendments were agreed to this latest scheme. These changes comprised, for the most part, the substitution of the multiplex with an hotel, resulting in corresponding revisions to the size, scale, shape and design of the building. In this respect, the finally agreed scheme included provision for an increase in height and bulk of the development towards the Harbour Parade frontage of the site.

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning consent is sought for the redevelopment of the site for the erection of a building up to 5 storeys in height, comprising 107 residential 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments; a 60 bedroom hotel of 3,581 sq m (38,544 sq ft) including reception, conference room and

function room facilities; retail and food/drink units on the ground floor of approximately 1,810 sq m (19,482 sq ft); a children's play area of 244 sq m (2,626 sq ft) and a health/fitness centre of 97 sq m (1,044 sq ft).

The application has been accompanied by a comprehensive planning and design statement in support of the proposal. A full copy of this document will be available for inspection by Members in advance of the meeting in accordance with adopted procedures.

This statement indicates that the design of the proposed scheme is reminiscent of a stylish 1920's seaside design, with a strong horizontal emphasis and making use of expanses of glazing set between white rendered masonry. As such, it is contended that the development will not detract from the Georgian terrace architecture of Wellington Crescent. The statement further confirms that the roof tops of the hotel and the spaces between the arms extending to the sea, will be landscaped gardens, effectively providing a quality visual continuity to the existing gardens. It is therefore argued that this will enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings in Wellington Crescent. Also, the use of planting, cascading down the rear elevation of the proposed building will, it is contended, further enhance the overall design.

The proposed hotel would be located at the south – western end of the site, facing onto the main roundabout in Harbour Parade. As such, the main entrance and reception area will be incorporated into this frontage of the building. The remainder of the ground floor frontage of the building to Marina Esplanade would comprise shops, in a mix of Use Class A1 (retail) and A3 (food and drink), together with the health/fitness centre and children's play area. The proposed 107 residential units would be provided within the four floors above the shops and cantilevered out over part of the rear service area.

The development would be set away from the existing cliff face to provide this secure, rear, service yard, together with a parking area for 204 cars (including disabled spaces) and cycle parking. This area, which would also include refuse storage facilities, would be accessed from an entrance at either end of the development. In Harbour Parade, this access would be situated between the main reception area and the neighbouring kiosk. In Marina Esplanade, the service access would be gained from the newly located roundabout, the works in respect of which would be undertaken as part of this development. These accesses would be barrier-controlled to ensure that the facilities are set aside for all uses within the proposed scheme.

With regard to transport, the application has been supported by the submission of two travel assessments. The first, main, assessment was submitted with the application as part of its original submission. This assessment concludes that the site is well located in terms of public transport provision, whilst the level of pedestrian and cycle accessibility throughout the local highway network is high. The assessment, however, examines possible measures to be included within a Green Travel Plan. In terms of car parking, the assessment confirms that provision has been formulated having regard to the accessibility of the site by means other than the car. As such, it is found to be sufficient for the site uses, thereby largely self-contained and will not have an overall impact upon local streets. The second assessment was submitted following the receipt of the application and takes into account updated traffic counts at nearby junctions. These findings conclude that Wellington Crescent, including its junctions with Victoria Parade, Marina Road and Augusta Road, together with Madeira Walk, including its junctions with Harbour Parade and Albion Hill, will remain well within design capacity.

Following the initial consideration of the application, amended plans have been submitted showing the construction of a set of external steps between the existing lift and the service access to the site from Harbour Parade. This structure has been added to the scheme in order to create a visual link between the existing and proposed features, whilst at the same

time helping to serve to screen the existing cliff face from the wider public view from the turning head within Harbour Parade. In addition, revisions have been made to the design of this elevation of the proposed building and further, supporting, visual information has been submitted in order to demonstrate, more clearly, the relationship of the development to the adjoining conservation area and listed buildings in Wellington Crescent.

In final support of the application, a desk top report has been submitted with regard to potential sources of contamination.

## PLANNING POLICIES

Isle of Thanet Local Plan Policy TC6 relates specifically to this site, which indicates that proposals for the site should be for a mixture of leisure, retail and residential uses and that the development should be no higher than the top of the adjoining cliff. This site specific policy forms part of the broad approach contained within policy BC17 which seeks to promote the Ramsgate Royal Harbour and sea front for leisure/tourism development.

Policy BC9 expresses support for proposals that would increase the attraction of the area to tourists and extend the season.

Policy CB1, which relates to the design of new development, is applicable to the consideration of this application. In addition, policies CB4, CB6 and CB7 relate to the proposal insofar as the development affects the character and appearance of the adjoining Conservation Area and the setting of nearby Listed Buildings.

Policies H1 and H11 relate to the provision of new residential development, while policy H16 indicates that, upon sites of 25 units or more, an element of affordable housing will be sought.

Policy S2 indicates that the first preference for the location of new retail development, including units of less than 1,000 sq m (10,763 sq ft), is within the main town centres or, where no such site is available, on the edge of the town centres.

Transport policies TR3, TR8, TR11, TR12 and TR13, relating to infrastructure, car parking, public transport and the needs of cyclists and pedestrians, are applicable to the determination of this application.

The above policies are carried forward into the emerging Thanet Local Plan, respectively, in the form of policies T3 (TC6 and BC17); T1; D1 (CB1 and H11); HE1; HE4; D2; H1; H9; TC1, 2 and 6 (S2); TR4; TR17; TR14; TR13 and TR12.

## NOTIFICATIONS

The occupiers of surrounding properties, together with those persons who submitted representations concerning the previous applications, have been notified of this latest application. In response, twelve individual letters have so far been received in which objections to the development are raised on the following grounds:-

- The development will adversely affect the setting of the nearby listed buildings in Wellington Crescent
- The proposal will be detrimental to the special character and appearance of the adjoining conservation area
- The proposed buildings are too high and will affect the public outlook from the cliff top promenade, bandstand and Wellington Crescent. In addition, the potential siting of roof top air conditioning plant/equipment, coupled with the fact that the rear elevation of the building will be set away, and thereby visible, from the promenade, would be further detrimental to visual amenity

- There would be a loss of existing public car parking facilities, thereby causing an increase in demand for on-street parking in the vicinity of the site, particularly in the summer months
- The submitted plans do not provide adequate off-street car parking for the proposed uses within the curtilage of the site
- There would be a significant increase in the volume of traffic in the area, leading to congestion and a danger to cyclists and pedestrians
- There is inadequate provision shown for servicing of the proposed commercial uses
- The proposed arrangements for refuse are unacceptable, due to the limited nature of such provision and the distances that residential occupiers would have to travel in order to make use of such facilities
- The design and architecture of the development is not in keeping with the general appearance of the town
- The scheme represents an unacceptable overdevelopment of the site, at an excessive density
- The development would result in overlooking and a loss of privacy to properties in Kent Terrace
- The development would lead to petty crime in and around the area
- Will the development take adequate account of the issue of affordable housing?
- The proposed residential units would put an unacceptable burden upon existing services such as education, health and public utilities

Whilst raising an objection to the development on the lack of off-street car parking, one of the above letters does state how impressive the plans of the development look in terms of the appearance of the scheme and suggests that the contended shortfall in car parking could be addressed by the provision of additional parking at basement level. Also, a second letter within those referred to above states that the retail element of the scheme is acceptable.

The Ramsgate Society and the Kent Terrace Residents' Association have submitted letters of objection, in which the above issues of the height of the building; impact on the nearby listed buildings and conservation area; increase in traffic; impact upon public outlook and loss/lack of car parking are raised.

The letters also include reference to the loss of sea views experienced from individual residential units/properties; impact of construction vehicles; the site should be developed for, or at least include, leisure purposes, or alternatively as open space or a market; the development could result in access rights for fishing from the promenade being withdrawn; there is insufficient within the scheme to benefit all of Thanet, and in particular Ramsgate, residents; there are already enough apartments on Ramsgate seafront; the Council has acted unreasonably in handling this site; the pedestrianised area outside the seafront elevation should be reverted back to a road open to vehicles and consent should not be granted because it would mean profit for the developer. However, these issues are not material planning considerations and cannot be taken into account in the determination of this application.

Following the receipt of amended plans and additional information, re-notification has been undertaken in respect of the further details submitted. At the time of writing this report, no further representations have been received.

## CONSULTATIONS

At the time of writing this report the views of Kent Highways, as Strategic Highway Authority and the Highway Manager, are awaited in respect of the further transport information submitted.

English Heritage commented, in respect of the plans originally submitted, that concern was raised at the potential impact of the roofs on the conservation area and setting of nearby listed buildings. Further supporting information and amendments to the design of the scheme were therefore requested. At the time of writing this report their further views are awaited.

The Environment Agency raise no objections to the development, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions relating to contamination, remediation and drainage.

Kent Fire Brigade indicate that a dry rising main be installed in two specified locations and a fire hydrant be installed within the rear car parking area.

The Environmental Services Manager raises no objections subject to the imposition of conditions relating to the control of noise or other nuisance that could emanate from the site.

Kent Police, at both local and county levels and Southern Water have been consulted on this application, although no responses had been received at the time of writing this report.

## COMMENTS

In accordance with the principles established by virtue of the previous schemes for the development of this site, I consider that, once again, this latest proposal will be appropriate for this site in terms of the mix of uses. In particular, the incorporation of a 60 - bedroom hotel, together with a mix of retail and food/drink uses, a health/fitness centre and children's play area, will enhance the attraction of this part of Ramsgate as a destination to visitors. I therefore remain satisfied that this scheme would represent a significant benefit to the area in accordance with adopted local plan policy TC6.

With regard to the proposed retail units, I remain of the opinion that, in terms of retail policy, this site constitutes an appropriate edge-of-centre location for new retail development. Furthermore, given the limited scale of the retail element within this latest proposal, particularly when compared to the previous schemes, I am satisfied that it will not produce any adverse impact upon the vitality or viability of the existing town centre. In fact, I consider that the proposed inclusion of retail and food/drink uses will serve to reinforce the attraction of this part of the seafront, thereby complementing the overall offer available to residents and visitors alike. As with the previous schemes, I can see no objections to the inclusion of food/drink uses within the development, subject to the precise means of ventilation to such units being controlled by means of planning condition. In this respect, the agents have indicated that this element of the scheme will be treated in a coordinated manner, to ensure that requests for such treatment will not be made on an individual basis.

In terms of scale, I feel that this latest scheme reflects the principles established within the earlier proposals. I also consider that, once again, this latest design is highly individual and innovative and, if permitted, will firmly complement the previous environmental improvements to this seafront area. In particular, I would commend the suggestion of the applicants to include the construction of a new, pedestrian staircase from Wellington Crescent in the extreme south – western corner of the site. As Members will fully appreciate, such a facility would complement the existing lift access to and from the seafront and significantly increase pedestrian accessibility, not only to the development itself, but also to the beach, seafront and Royal Harbour. Furthermore, this addition to the design of the scheme will serve to screen, from public view within Harbour Parade, the relatively unattractive face of the existing cliff to the rear of the site.

The proposed development will, for the most part, result in the roof of each of the arms extending towards the sea reaching the level of the cliff top with the adjoining bandstand. However, as Members will be aware, the level of the promenade falls towards the Edwardian

lift and, as such, the main section of roof above the main body of the hotel will be above the level of the promenade. However, a section drawn through this middle section of the hotel confirms that this area of the roof would be set some 20m (65'7") from the edge of the cliff. Therefore, while the rear elevation of the hotel will only be some 15m (49'3") from the cliff top at this point, the highest part of this section of the building will actually be level with the cliff top.

On the hotel, the only additional exception to the above projections would be the tower feature adjacent to the hotel, service area, access that would project some 2m (6'6") higher. However, as this feature will only be some 4.5m (14'9") in diameter and set over 21m (68'11") from the cliff top, I feel that its impact upon the visual amenities would not be sufficient to justify refusal, particularly in view of the contribution that this feature makes to the design and appearance of the built form of the development when seen from within Harbour Parade.

In addition, the inclusion of the pedestrian staircase would clearly, by necessity, project above the level of the cliff top. However, this feature is shown to be only 5m (16'5") in width and it will still be lower than the roof of the existing lift. Therefore, in view of the contribution that this feature will make to pedestrian access, the design of the scheme and reduction in visual impact of the existing cliff face from Harbour parade, I consider that these benefits outweigh the limited, additional, visual impact upon the extreme south – western section of the cliff top promenade.

In general terms, I am therefore of the opinion that the relationship of the proposed development to the adjoining conservation area and listed buildings will be acceptable. I feel, however, that samples of materials, particularly those to be used in the external finish of the roof of the building, will need to be submitted for agreement prior to the commencement of development, although I am satisfied that this can be adequately controlled by condition. In addition, precise details of landscaping for the roof areas and the rear elevation of the building will also need to be submitted for agreement prior to commencement of work but I feel that these can also be safeguarded by means of condition.

Members will be aware, however, from the above, that the further views of English Heritage are presently awaited in respect of the revised plans and additional information that has been received in respect of the relationship of the development to the conservation area and surrounding listed buildings.

Although the views of Kent Highways, at both strategic and local levels, are awaited at the time of writing this report, I do not envisage highway objections to be raised. The only off-site highway matters comprise, firstly, the re-siting of the existing roundabout in Marina Esplanade which can be required by planning condition to be in place prior to the first use of any part of the development. Secondly, the additional transport assessment submitted indicates that, due to the limited scale of this latest scheme, there is now no justification to require further off-site highway works. For example, the construction of a new mini-roundabout at the junction of Wellington Crescent and Victoria Parade. All other highway related matters, such as the provision of car parking; turning; servicing; cycle parking; green travel plan etc, can be dealt with by means of planning condition, as with previous consents relating to this site.

It is noted from the submitted design statement that the applicants have given consideration to the issue of contributions towards affordable housing and education and have confirmed that, if justified, such contributions would be met. At the time of writing this report, these matters remained outstanding, however, subject to their satisfactory resolution I can see no justification for either issue to lead to a recommendation that is other than favourable from these points of view.

In conclusion, I once again consider that the principle of this development is acceptable and would recommend that Members give favourable consideration to this scheme, subject to the satisfactory resolution of all of those matters referred to above.

Case Officer  
JOHN ELVIDGE

*Background Papers:*

<i>English Heritage</i>	<i>Letter dated 1 December 2003</i>
<i>Environment Agency</i>	<i>Letter dated 25 November 2003</i>
<i>Kent Fire Brigade</i>	<i>Letter dated 24 November 2003</i>
<i>Environmental Services Manager</i>	<i>Memo dated 4 December 2003</i>