



# Regency Review



The Newsletter of the Regency Society of Brighton & Hove

Issue 7

April 2003

## King Alfred towers to wake up Hove

Three dramatic, very different proposals for flats and a new indoor sports and swimming complex are on offer for the King Alfred site.

Frontrunner in the "Wake-up Hove" stakes is the proposal by architects Frank Gehry and Piers Gough with sculptor Anthony Gormley. Its four slim tower blocks of flats (ranging from 17 to 38 storeys) surround a three storey plateau containing the sports and leisure facilities and pools.

The architects claim that the total public open space, on several levels, is greater than the site area. The Anthony Gormley sculpture is located in a deep subterranean spherical chamber, with tidal seawater, above which is a winter garden enclosure with a matching, but fully-glazed, sphere above it.

The proposal by architects Wilkinson Eyre consists of residential slab blocks, ranging from eight to 11 storeys, with the sports facilities and pools in a separate, but linked, five-floor leisure centre.

The scheme by the Richard Rogers Partnership consists of five stepped slab blocks of flats, each with their longer dimension running north-south, ranging from five storeys in the north and between nine and 19 storeys in the south. The leisure facilities are mainly underground, or at ground level, with decked open spaces above forming pedestrianised squares and gardens.

Each scheme contains some car parking facilities for the leisure centre and flats. The proposals have been exhibited for public consultation and council officers have begun examining the schemes and making financial appraisals. It is likely that each design will be further developed before the selection is made.

For further details, visit the Society's web site at [www.regencysociety.co.uk](http://www.regencysociety.co.uk) or .org

*Images, from top: Gehry-Gough, Richard Rogers Partnership and the Wilkinson Eyre proposals*



## Tall order may be wishful thinking

Several planning applications for tall buildings are being held in abeyance, by agreement with applicants, while the council seeks specialist urban designers/architects to act as consultants in drawing up a policy document for this contentious subject.

We hope that the local policy will conform with Guidance on Tall Buildings issued by CABE/English Heritage in March 2003 and that it

will clarify the criteria for designing tall buildings in to prevent a repetition of the unsatisfactory tall towers and slab blocks of the mid 20th century.

We now expect a full examination of views of potential buildings, both from nearby and from more distant viewpoints. The CABE/EH document even mentions "highlighting opportunities for correcting past mistakes". In most instances this will be wishful thinking.

## Stadium inquiry to go on into summer

The local inquiry into this planning application is in progress at Hove Town Hall.

By June, counsel and barristers involved are likely to be free to hear representations from the Council for the Protection of Rural England and interested individuals. No date is yet available for the completion of the public hearings.

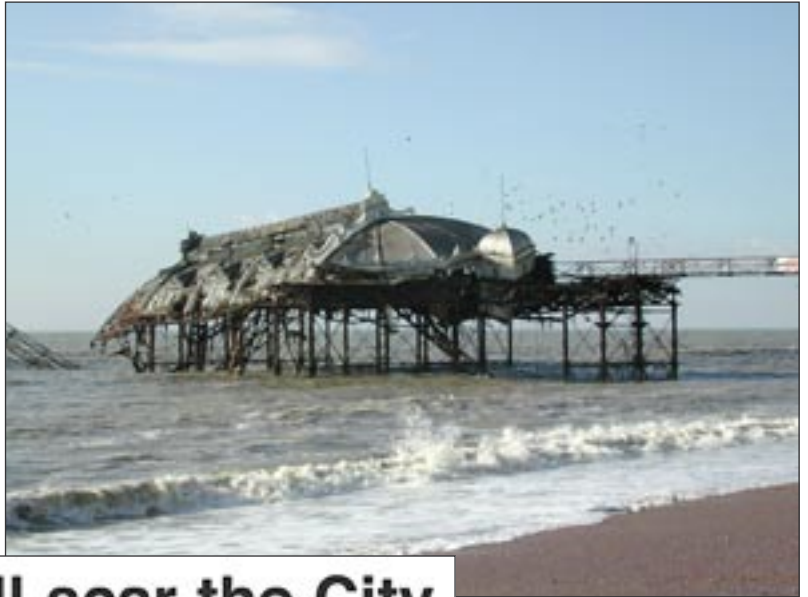
# West Pier plans approved but Trust fails to appoint conservation experts

At the 26 February meeting, the planning Applications sub-committee granted planning approval to the West Pier enabling development on the foreshore on either side of the West Pier, subject to conditions.

The Regency Society, supported by 15 local amenity societies, placed a prominent half-page advertisement in *The Argus* before the planning committee meeting. This called for the proposal be rejected, since serious problems over the development were still outstanding, including the supremely mediocre design of the proposed over-large new buildings.

Unfortunately, this view was not supported by English Heritage who wrote to the Council before the meeting, supporting the development.

The committee vote was nine in favour, two against and one abstention. The committee chairman who took part in the meeting (but did not chair it because



**West Pier plans will scar the City**  
Brighton & Hove's major conservation and amenity societies unanimously recommend the St Modwen application be rejected

*Hemp Town Society*  
Regency Square Area Society  
The Brighton Society  
Brighton Preservation Society  
THE BELLEVUE TOWN HOUSE  
Friends and Lovers of the Old Brighton  
HOVE CIVIC SOCIETY  
The Regency Society of Brighton & Hove

**AFTER RECENT COLLAPSES,** it is impossible to restore the West Pier. All the buildings on the deck, the deck itself and many of the piles will have to be recreated.

There is now no need to rush into an ill-conceived redevelopment – which is what Brighton & Hove Council is being asked to do on Wednesday, when they will consider proposals that include placing a series of buildings on the seafront with the same floorspace as the Goldstone football ground retail park.

While some will recognise the need for an enabling development, the scheme to be considered is intrusive, unimaginative and out of sympathy with the outstanding architecture and natural views surrounding the Grade 1 Listed pier. Brighton & Hove and the West Pier deserve better.

Brighton & Hove's leading conservation and amenity societies strongly support the renewal of the pier but we unanimously urge the planning committee to reject the current application.

If it goes ahead, it will scar the seafront – and the City – for generations.

THE FRIENDS OF PALMERIA AND ADELAIDE  
S.O.S. Save Our Seafront  
M.S.  
THE MONTEPELLIER AND CLIFTON HILL ASSOCIATION  
Friends of Brunswick Square & Terrace  
Museum Preservation Society

THE KINGSCLIFFE SOCIETY

he is still recovering from a stroke) recommended a call-in for this decision to be made by the Secretary of State. The Government Office of the South East decided there would be no call-in.

The Regency Society is concerned that the West Pier Trust and its development partner, St Modwen, have made little progress with the assessment of, and detailed proposals for, the restoration, repair and rebuilding of the many component parts of the pier itself. They have not yet appointed conservation architects for the extensive and critical work required.

## Station site information not made available

The urban design of this huge, and hugely important, site has proceeded in a most unsatisfactory manner.

The Government Office of the South East received letters from the Regency Society and many other concerned parties requesting that this application be called in for determination by the Secretary of State. This did not happen and planning approval for the core areas of the development has been granted subject to agreement on a range of outstanding issues.

The Regency Society will watch for the details of the reserved matters affecting the remainder of the site, for which only outline approval has been granted. Minimal information on these buildings is currently available, so improvements could possibly be made as information emerges.





# Bandstand and Wilds' tomb in danger

As members will know, Amon Wilds (1762-1833), his son Amon Henry Wilds and Charles Busby were the triumvirate responsible for much architectural development in Brighton & Hove during the early 19th century, including Brunswick Town, Kemp Town, Regency Square and Marine Square.

Amon Wilds' grave in St. Nicholas' Churchyard was designed by his son (who also designed the western extension to the churchyard in 1841), and is one of the most evocative memorials in this city. It is a Listed structure and was renovated by the Society in the 1950s but, after half a century of weathering, now requires further attention.

Current ideas are for the removal of the badly corroded railings, removal of vegetation and the re-rendering of the plinth. The Council, which is responsible for



Above: Wilds' tomb, 1954

Below: the tomb today



the churchyard, has been contacted for their views. Observations from members are most welcome.

The Bedford Square Bandstand, built in 1884, is a fine example of the Victorians' ability to satisfy many needs in a single structure. It is made of cast-iron and has a light, lacy feel, which belies the weight of the construction. Built on the Lower Esplanade, it was visually part of the King's Road, being linked by a bridge. Public conveniences beneath completed this combination of art and utility.

The bridge connecting the bandstand to King's Road was removed in the 1970s for reasons of safety, and the Bandstand has been left, decaying and useless ever since.

It is also Listed and the Council has a duty of care. Plans for the revitalisation of this section of the seafront involve the demolition of the geometric garden surrounding the bandstand and the replacement of the toilets, while the Bandstand itself will be offered on a lease to a new user.



Current building regulations require that the perimeter railing be raised in height – hence the coarse additions of scaffolding that presently grace it. One cannot envisage how any new use would preserve this fine structure in anything like its original condition.

It has been suggested that the Bandstand could be relocated to Brunswick Lawns. This is a bold idea, worthy of consideration: a new role in a fresh location must be preferred to the current mutilation.

Duncan McNeill

Further images can be found at [www.duncanmceill.com/wilds](http://www.duncanmceill.com/wilds)

## www.regencysociety.org and .co.uk

The Society's web site is now up and running. Designed by committee member Duncan McNeill, the site covers all aspects of the Society's work and will be updated regularly with the latest news.

Site sections include:

- About the Society
- Joining the Society
- Issues
- Lectures
- Regency Review newsletter
- Events
- Links
- Downloads
- Brighton architecture

Visitors can study buildings and details of architectural interest from Regency, Victorian and 20th Century Brighton & Hove through Duncan's outstanding series of photographs.

[www.regencysociety.co.uk](http://www.regencysociety.co.uk) can be seen now, with .org going online in June.

# Hopes for good day at Black Rock

Three schemes have been proposed and exhibited for the Black Rock site in Kemp Town. Two of the proposals include large public arenas for ice skating or general purposes; and one of these proposals includes a tall block of flats as well. Our preliminary opinion is that both proposals are likely to have a thoroughly detrimental effect on this prominent site, so close to Arundel Terrace and Lewes Crescent. The buildings would be overpowering and there would be a massive impact on transport requirements from the large numbers attending the frequent events that would take place to ensure the financial success of these venues.

The third proposal is altogether different: a health spa and hotel with conference facilities and underground parking. The outline scheme holds out the prospect of a thoughtful, contextual building forming a low lying, four storey crescent, with its convex side facing the sea, echoing the massive arc of Lewes Crescent, at a higher level, to the west and behind it.

The roofs of the building would be fully landscaped, with the possibility of a small park, and would be below the Marine Parade parapet wall, accessible via a slim, lightweight pedestrian bridge. There is also the possibility of a long winter garden, built as a greenhouse against the Marine Parade retaining wall, and stretching the full width of Lewes Crescent, but this proposal could not be fully funded as part of the proposed development.

This more modest scheme would seem to make only a slight impact upon the Grade I listed buildings behind it, and could act as a catalyst for real improvements to the Black Rock site.



*The hotel proposal for Black Rock*

## Spring lectures and events

**SIR JEREMY DIXON on:**

### **THE RESTORATION OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, COVENT GARDEN**

Tuesday 8 April at 7.00pm, Music Room, Royal Pavilion

Sir Jeremy is the architect for the DixonJones BDP redevelopment of the Royal Opera and Royal Ballet buildings. Architecture Today hailed this achievement as, "Turning it into a world class home. It is like a vast body of which only a small part is ever seen by the public. The architects and critics have spoken of it as a 'piece of city' rather than just

a building, with a significant urban presence."

The lecture is followed by the Regency Society's Annual General Meeting and drinks in the Great Kitchen.

**DEREK SUGDEN on:**

### **OPERA HOUSES AND CONCERT HALLS**

Wednesday 28 May at 6.00pm, The Old Market

This year we close our lecture season with an exceptional event. Derek Sugden is one of the world's leading acoustic designers and we are meeting in a venue that reflects the subject of his talk. A founder member of Arup Associates and Arup Acoustics, he advised on the acoustics of The Old Market, which were designed by his company.

Derek Sugden's thoughts on opera houses and concert halls will be a fitting finale for a splendid series of lectures.

### **REGENCY SOCIETY RECEPTION at A SEASIDE ALBUM**

Tuesday 17 June, Brighton Museum, time to be advised

A private evening opening for members with a talk from Philippe Garner. The Regency Society is supporting the major exhibition A Seaside Album: photographs and memory, which runs at Brighton Museum from 10 May until 8 October. This exceptional display of photographs, drawn from Philippe Garner's remarkable collection, shows the changing face of Brighton & Hove from the 1840s to the early 1990s. It is described in our January newsletter.

To attend, please complete and return the enclosed application form. A pdf version of the form can also be downloaded from [www.regencysociety.co.uk](http://www.regencysociety.co.uk)



### **MIDSUMMER PARTY IN THE SECRET GARDEN**

Saturday 21 June 6.00pm - 8.00 pm

We are most grateful to Yvonne Dale, who is once again opening her beautiful, secluded garden in Kempton for the Regency Society's midsummer party. Members will enjoy music from the Brighton Youth Orchestra and refreshments will be served. A delightful ambience in which to meet old friends and make new ones.

To attend, please complete and return the enclosed application form. A pdf version of the form can also be downloaded from [www.regencysociety.co.uk](http://www.regencysociety.co.uk)