

Objection to BN2021/04167 Brighton Gas Works BN2 5TJ

The Regency Society objects to this application, though in principle it supports the redevelopment of the brownfield site primarily for residential use. We recognise the considerable constraints on redevelopment of the site and that the proposals are not without merit, for instance the active frontages throughout the public realm, but the deficiencies of the proposals are such as to require objection, not just comment.

The former Kemptown gasworks is not a large site, the seaside frontage of Lewes Crescent is two and a half times longer. The double-squared space between the house frontages of Sussex Square would barely fit into the irregular quadrilateral of the site, which overall is only 15% larger.

The Grade I listed conservation area buildings of Sussex Square, Lewes Crescent and Chichester and Arundel Terraces enjoy a single architectural expression. The much smaller gasworks site would be fragmented into five areas each of a different architectural character. It is natural that the seafront should have a different character than its hinterland, and that the Boundary Road frontage should have its own distinct character, but illogical that the focal static space, the "circus", should have three, superficially different, architectural expressions – imagine the three segments of the Circus at Bath each being treated differently.

Courceles and Marine Gate are both mid-rise buildings. High rise buildings would be intrusive in views from both the seaward and landward sides of the site and challenge the pre-eminence of the locally listed Marine Gate. No building anywhere on the site should have greater absolute height than the west range of Marine Gate. The central and eastern seafront blocks should be reduced by a storey to nine storeys. The rise in ground level requires the even taller blocks around the central circus to be reduced to less than nine storeys.

The pedestrian route into the central circus from Kemptown is in effect through the service yard of an industrial estate. All servicing of residential and non-residential uses should be under the podia or through the existing service entrance from Marina Way.

The northern entrance to the Green Link and the configuration of the adjacent block are compromised by the exclusion of the parcel of council-owned land between the site and Roedean Road and Marina Way. This junk yard is hardly the right image for a "gateway" into the city from the South Downs National Park and it would be difficult to develop in isolation for a more appropriate use.

The Council should commit itself to the area between the seaside front of the site and Marina Way becoming public open space, with the intrusive caravan dealer's shanty offices removed. The Green Way should be continued down to Marine Drive, a surface level pedestrian crossing provided at the bottom of Boundary Road and the derelict footbridge removed, at the latest by the time the first phase of redevelopment is completed.

2/1/22