

May 2012

urban gravesham

The Civic Society for Gravesend & Northfleet

member of:

CIVIC
VOICE
talking civic sense

newsletter

WELCOME

to our new members

Urban Gravesham continues to grow. Over the last few months we have had many new members - welcome to you all. Thank you for joining our endeavours to protect our historic town.

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EDINBURGH HOUSE HAVEN'T GONE AWAY... AND NEITHER HAVE WE!

Heritage Quarter update:

It is now nearly nine months since Edinburgh House gave up their planning appeal for the failed 'concrete jungle' scheme and announced they would be coming up with a new plan for Gravesend's Heritage Quarter. The new application is due to be submitted in the summer and, judging by what has so far been revealed, the signs are not good. The Eastern Quarter, a large 5-7 storey development overlooking St. Andrew's Gardens, blocking views of the river from the market place and Queen Street and dominating this historic area, is virtually unchanged.



The Market Square / Eastern Quarter. North Facing.

The Western Quarter, while allowing more open space around St. George's Church, looms in rising tiers over the churchyard and still climbs to a massive 7 or more storeys along Bath Street, thus losing the existing distinctive views of the landmark church spire. The plan, still includes many one-bedroomed flats, of which Gravesend already has far too many.

The consultation forum meetings held by Gravesham Council have been very much one-way affairs, Edinburgh House drip feeding limited information to forum members with no opportunity for serious discussion on whether their proposals, initiated 7 years ago, are suitable for Gravesend.

The forum member supposedly representing Gravesham's business community is hardly impartial, listing both Edinburgh



The Market Square / Eastern Quarter. South Facing.

House and Gravesham Council as major clients; MSDC of the High Street, designed the EH website and their advertising material. It's a shame that after years of "living and breathing Gravesend," Edinburgh House have so few friends in the local business community that they have to rely on their own associates for support. It is a far greater shame that the Chairman of the forum chose to turn a blind eye to this cosy arrangement.

The secret 'open' day – On 11th February 2012, Edinburgh House made the curious decision to spring its only Heritage Quarter public consultation, with no prior advertising, in the form of a one day exhibition held, somewhat ironically, in one of the many empty shops in the St. George's centre. Not surprisingly only 'around 175' people took part, hardly a significant or representative cross-section of local opinion. Thousands of local people have taken a keen interest in the Heritage Quarter yet no attempt was made to seek their opinion. This has left the impression that Edinburgh House are afraid of public opinion and regard consultation as so much box ticking.

During the 'open' day, when asked by a member of the public *which other historic towns his company had regenerated*, Richard Hughes of Edinburgh House replied:

"None..."

"You are our guinea pigs."



While such honesty is commendable, it doesn't inspire confidence especially when we consider the fate of Castleford.....

Continued over page;

CASTLEFORD

What is happening, or rather not happening, in the town of Castleford, West Yorkshire? After years of negotiations, Edinburgh House were given planning permission by Wakefield Council in 2009 for a shopping development, but after years of failing to start, let alone deliver the scheme, people there are now becoming impatient; a petition signed by **22,000 locals** called on the Council to support instead the proposed redevelopment of the old Castleford Tigers rugby ground and complaints to the local newspaper go back several years.....



“...a Wakefield council official candidly admitted that Castleford was like a 19th century mill town where the local mill owner effectively dictates how and when everything happens.

In Castleford’s case the “mill owner” is property speculator Edinburgh House... everything else will have to wait until Edinburgh House gets its finger out.

Might it be possible for our elected representatives to climb out of the pocket of big business and start running the town for the benefit of its people?”

Neil F Liversidge Managing Director
West Riding Personal Financial Solutions Ltd

The Castleford and Pontefract Express (December 2011) reported that the continued failure of Edinburgh House to commence building work was affecting other retailers who had plans for the area...

Gravesham councillors need to consider the possibility that in a few years time, we may be in exactly the same position as the disappointed people of Castleford, who despite grand promises from Edinburgh House still have nothing except a blight on alternative developments.

CASTLEFORD

The New Pontoon

Urban Gravesham welcomes the new pontoon, it is exactly the kind of regeneration we need – Gravesend boasts of being a riverside heritage town and our location on the river is what makes it special. The pontoon will be used by the G&T Ferry, London Riverbuses, historic passenger ships such as the Waverley and Balmoral (steam ships), Thames Sailing Barges taking on passengers, international visitors and of course the boat owning public.

It’s a pity some of our councillors have sneered at the pontoon as a “rich man’s plaything” especially as it could be a way of bringing more visitors into the town via the High Street.

Petition to scrap Saturday car parking charges:

We are launching a petition calling on the council to reintroduce free parking in its’ town centre car parks on Saturdays as local traders have been badly hit by Saturday charging.

A petition form is enclosed with this newsletter.



www.urbangravesham.org **YES to sympathetic regeneration**