

August 2011

urban gravesham

The Civic Society for Gravesend & Northfleet



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.

STUNNING NEWS!

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HERITAGE QUARTER SCHEME GOES 'BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD'!

Developers Edinburgh House withdraw their appeal

Edinburgh House's proposal for Gravesend's Heritage Quarter.



You may by now have read in the local press that developers Edinburgh House have withdrawn their appeal against the Council's refusal of the planning application for the Heritage Quarter Scheme.

The Public Inquiry (which was set for early September this year) has therefore been cancelled: This means that the Heritage Quarter Scheme, as we know it, is dead.

This is an amazing victory for the people of Gravesend. It would not have happened if thousands of ordinary people had not written letters of objection to the Council, or signed petitions, or attended, as hundreds of you did, the Council's Regulatory Board meeting in September last year.

How it happened

Over the last few months, Jonathan Clay and Martin McKay of Urban Gravesham, acting in their professional capacities as Planning Barrister and Planner/ Architect, have been preparing evidence against the scheme to present at the Inquiry. They were aided by hard working volunteers who collated and sifted through the vast amount of evidence to be gathered.

During this process it became increasingly obvious that there was a substantial case against the Edinburgh House scheme. It also became clear that were many local people very keen to come forward to give evidence at the public inquiry. Thank you to everyone who put their names forward.

Last month, Edinburgh House, possibly recognizing the strength of the case against them, applied to the Government's Planning Inspectorate to have the public inquiry postponed pending *'the negotiation of revisions to the scheme with the Council'*. This move was supported by the Leader of the Council, John Burden.

However, Urban Gravesham strongly opposed the postponement and wrote to the Government to say that the Inquiry should go ahead as planned and that the developers should either defend their scheme or else withdraw their appeal. The Government agreed with this and the developers chose to withdraw the appeal.

It's not the end of the story - Edinburgh House to submit a new planning application.

Edinburgh House now intend to submit a new planning application for the Heritage Quarter to the Council in about six months' time. In the meantime, the Council have set up a new 'forum' to discuss the sort of development that Edinburgh House should build. Representatives of Urban Gravesham will attend, along with business representatives, St. George's Church, and Councillors from the both the ruling Labour Party and the Conservatives.

It is difficult to predict how successful the forum will be. We hope that Edinburgh House will listen to the thousands of objectors to the previous development, and come up with a new regeneration scheme that respects the historic character of Gravesend, and that has the support of the community. On the other hand, it may be that Edinburgh House intend to try to push through a scheme which is still vastly over-scaled and out of character with the existing area.

However, at this stage, UG welcomes the opportunity to put the case for sympathetic regeneration. We will keep you informed about the progress of the forum.

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EDINBURGH HOUSE FINANCES



As reported in the Gravesend Messenger on August 11th, Edinburgh House appear to be in financial difficulty. They have debts of almost half a billion Euros and were faced with the possibility of having to sell their German assets via German insolvency laws. According to Capita Asset Services, Edinburgh House were compelled to reschedule their loans because they were "unable or unwilling to provide capital" and "there was no reasonable prospect of repayment".

For more information on this interesting situation, go to:

<http://www.costar.co.uk/en/assets/news/2011/July/Edinburgh/?dmi=UQT,HKQ7,4AGJGB,1FIH1,1>

Irrespective of whether planning permission is given, it is not known whether Edinburgh House will be able to raise the £120 million required to carry out the heritage quarter development. We think that the Council should think very carefully before concluding any deal over its landholdings with what may be a stricken development company.

A DOUBLE VICTORY. GRAVESEND'S NEW TOWN GREEN

SAFE FROM
DEVELOPMENT

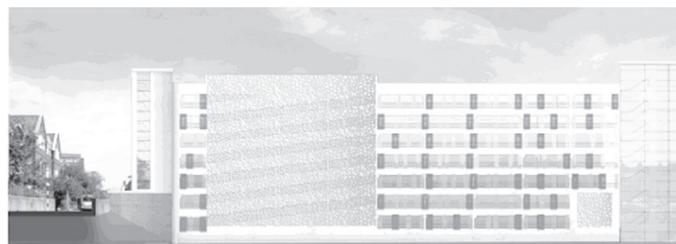
News of the withdrawal of the Edinburgh House appeal came on the very same day that Kent County Council made its decision to designate significant parts of St. Andrew's Gardens as a 'Town Green' which means that it would be protected as a green open space in perpetuity for the people of Gravesend.

Urban Gravesham's application was supported at the KCC meeting by Councillor Brian Sweetland who spoke in favour of it and Councillor Harold Craske who wrote in support. Adam Holloway MP also attended the meeting. Many thanks to all those who appeared as witnesses at the Public Inquiry last May and put the case so well for the preservation of these much-loved gardens.



TRANSPORT QUARTER

Some less good news. Last month the Council's Regulatory Board ignored objections and gave planning permission for a multi-storey car park between The Somerset Arms and the Railway Station. It now remains to be seen for this unfortunate scheme whether the finances will be available to go ahead.



Victoria Centre on left. View from Darnely Road Area



View from Rathmore Road (train station approach)