



NEIGHBOURHOOD BRIEFING

ISSUE No.1 MARCH 2023

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE HOVE STATION QUARTER

WHY 'HOVE STATION QUARTER'?

This is the first Hove Station Quarter Newsletter, produced by the Hove Station Neighbourhood Forum. You have received it because you live in a street which is within or close to the Hove Station Development Area 6 (DA6) designated in the 2013 City Plan by the Council as one of eight Development Areas to which the City Plan directs urban development. (Fig 1) This landmark decision set in motion a train of events which led to the ongoing transformation of our area by high rise, high density redevelopment. DA6 is the core of the Hove Neighbourhood Plan Area for which the Hove Station Neighbourhood Forum, working with local residents and businesses have developed the Hove Station Neighbourhood Plan, with policies focused on realising its vision of creating a new Hove Station Quarter, as an inclusive and great place to live, work and relax, straddling and joined up across the railway line.

Hove Station Neighbourhood FORUM

YOUR INTEREST, AS A RESIDENT OF HOVE

Ten years on we are now approaching the decisive final stage of plan-making, the Neighbourhood Plan Referendum, which we and the Council anticipate will be held in the autumn. All residents over 18 living in the Neighbourhood Plan Area will be given the opportunity to answer yes or no to the question:

'Do you want Brighton & Hove City Council to use the Hove Station Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area?'

The outcome will be a simple majority vote, but we are aiming for a significant majority that would reflect all the hard work by the Management Committee and its working groups - all volunteer residents.

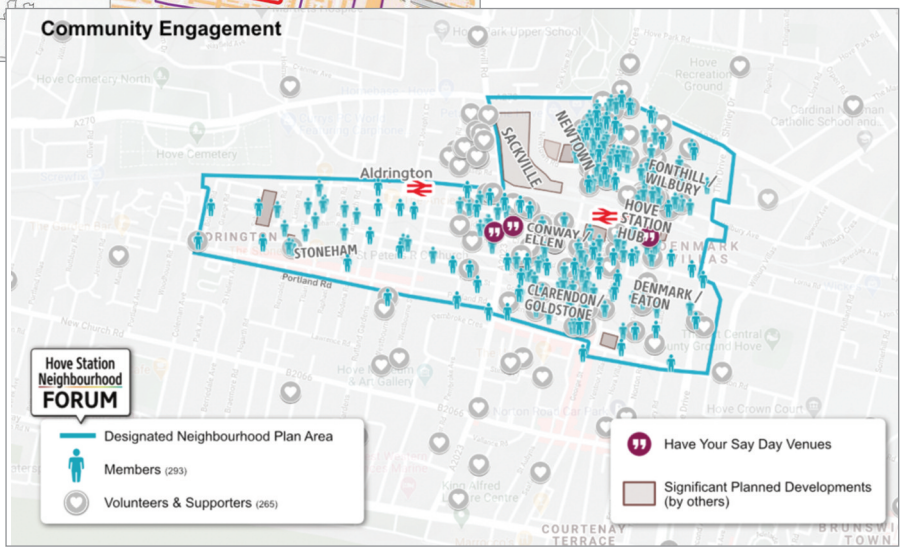
Hence this first newsletter, along with

the return of our trademark 'Have Your Say Day' community consultation event on **March 25th** at the **Honeycroft Centre** on Sackville Road. This follows a successful January 31st AGM and marks the beginning of a new phase in the Forum's community engagement activities, which were restricted by Covid, and then by recent procedural delays in finishing the Neighbourhood Plan.

It's now time to update the plan-making journey, set out the positive outcomes achieved en route, and share the evolving neighbourhood action programme that is using the Neighbourhood Plan as a platform for promoting and supporting community initiatives. This will continue to significantly influence the emergence of the Hove Station Quarter.



Left, (Fig 1) the DA6 map from Brighton & Hove City Council's 2013 City Plan; Below, (Fig 2) the Forum's map showing the distribution of members and supporters. More maps and much more information are on www.hovestationforum.co.uk.



HAVE YOUR SAY DAY - 1pm-4pm 25th March at the Honeycroft Centre, Sackville Road, Hove - Guest speakers, talks, displays & information

THE END OF OUR LONG JOURNEY TO A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Back in 2013 local residents were completely unaware of the council's decision to start the regeneration of the Hove Station area. This emerged in local public meetings to discuss an outline mega-project prepared by local developers Matsim for the redevelopment of whole of the Conway Street area. Whilst this scheme was withdrawn it became clear to an informal group of a couple of dozen residents that it was not a question of whether large scale regeneration would happen but when - and how could the local community influence the process? They decided to take advantage of new planning laws giving local communities the right to prepare a statutory Neighbourhood Plan which the local planning authorities would have to take into account when making decisions on planning applications. However, preparing a Hove Station Neighbourhood Plan as the first of its kind in the city was inevitably a learning experience for both the Forum and Council planners. No one expected the process to take so long!

Hove Station Neighbourhood Forum - governance and membership

In late 2014 the Hove Station Neighbourhood Forum was legally designated and formally constituted by Council as a statutory (but community-led) planning organisation, with the right to prepare the Hove Station Neighbourhood Plan for a designated Neighbourhood Plan Area. The Forum constitution legally requires membership to be open to all who live

or work in the Neighbourhood Area. A founding group of 25 members began plan making in early 2015 by holding an Inaugural AGM which elected a Management Committee to meet monthly and lead working groups of Forum members focusing on specific issues, including housing need, traffic and movement problems, deteriorating buildings and neglected public realm. By the time the Forum finished the Draft Neighbourhood Plan in 2020 it had over 300 members.

The route to the Hove Station Neighbourhood Plan

Planning law prescribes the key stages on the route to an approved Neighbourhood Plan. Accordingly, from 2015 the Forum worked with residents, in co-operation with Council planners and in direct consultation with local property developers, to navigate five community-led stages. All of them involved Have Your Say Day events, with exhibitions and contributions from senior city planners and major developers. Each attracted 70 – 120 participants and culminated in the 2020 submission of the Draft Plan to the Council.

This sequential participatory planning process first identified community priorities to create the Vision and Aims of the Plan. Initial planning policies were developed in the context of detailed discussions with developers to influence the evolution of their projects and inform our subsequent comments on their planning applications. After many detailed meetings with Council planners the Forum organised the

legally required 6 weeks public consultation on the Regulation 14 Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Following amendments prompted by consultation responses and agreed with the planners, the **Regulation 16 Draft Neighbourhood Plan** was submitted to the Council in 2020. This was accompanied by our **Consultation Statement**, which is required to demonstrate that the legally prescribed route has been followed, and that at each stage of plan-making all reasonable steps have been taken to engage the local community. It sets out the full story of our unexpectedly long journey to the submitted Draft Plan

The final stages are the responsibility of the Council, which undertook the 6 weeks consultation on the Regulation 16 Draft Plan and then submitted it, together with responses received to an Independent Examiner appointed jointly with the Forum in late 2021. The Examination started in February 2022. Back then, both the Forum and Council officers expected it to be completed and any required amendments made in time for the Referendum, to be run by the Council in the summer. Subject to a 'Yes' vote the Neighbourhood Plan would then be finished in the autumn. The Examiner surprisingly paused the Examination in March, requiring further detailed documentation and the Council to re-run the 6 weeks Regulation 16 Consultation. The Examination has just resumed and the Referendum is expected this autumn. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hove-station-neighbourhood-plan>

EN ROUTE TO THE COUNCIL RECOGNISED HOVE STATION QUARTER

The Hove Station Quarter vision crystallised in 2015 with the strapline 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. Since then the Forum's plan-making has reshaped the Council's DA6 policy, which had allocated the former goods yard for waste management – shown in green in Fig 1 on the front page. On learning that a new landowner wanted to redevelop it mainly for housing, the Forum organised a 700 signatures strong residents' petition objecting to the

waste management allocation because it ruled out the possibility of a Hove Station Quarter. In 2016 the Council did change the allocation and this site is now under construction as MODA Hove Central.

This game-changing success opened the way for the creation of a three pronged engagement strategy to secure the necessary 'buy in' to our vision and emerging policies.

Residents: our Have Your Say Days,

Workshops and Newsletters raised awareness of how the interaction of market forces and planning policies was transforming our area, and created community capacity for community action to influence the process.

Developers: the Forum's statutory status enabled it to engage in pre-application negotiations with developers, well before the conventional public exhibitions, to

secure their buy in and press the community priorities for affordable housing, community facilities, minimum traffic impact and public realm improvements.

Council: the detailed consultations with planning officers necessary to prepare the 2019 Draft Plan paved the way for partnership working to develop the Council's Hove Station Area Supplementary Planning Document SPD 18 in 2020-21. This provides detailed guidance for the implementation of both City Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies. Initially the planners proposed to restrict the boundary of the SPD to DA6 area south of the railway (Master Plan Core Area in Fig 3) but it was eventually agreed that it should include the whole of the DA6 area in the context of a wider Hove Station Quarter area. Thus in late 2021 the Council formally bought into the development of the Hove Station Quarter.



Fig 3 - Hove Station Supplementary Planning Document SPD 18 page 3 - Figure 1.2: Hove Station Quarter Area see: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/spd18-hove-station-area-supplementary-planning-document-spd>

HOVE STATION QUARTER UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Given that all the land in DA6 to the north and most of it to the south of the railway is in private ownership, the regeneration of the Hove Station Quarter is market-led by landowners and developers seeking to maximise returns from property investment. They have brought forward and received planning approval for very high rise, very high density redevelopment projects – opposed by many residents who hold the Council fully responsible.

Granted, the Council identified DA6 as location suitable for high rise redevelopment - and rightly so, but the area already had the Clarendon and Ellen estate 10 storey blocks alongside the rundown industrial sites in Conway Street, directly opposite the underused former goods yard north of the railway. Redevelopment of brownfield land within easy walking distance of the Hove Station public transport hub was to reduce development pressure on greenfield urban fringe sites.

Medium to high rise 8-10 storeys projects would have been appropriate and sufficient, but government-imposed house building targets reduced the Councils' ability to resist 11-18 storey very high density projects. Where local authorities like Brighton were not meeting their targets but still refusing

such schemes, developers could expect to gain approval on appeal to the government, with Councils then required to pay substantial costs.

The inclusion of 'affordable' housing at the government-defined level of 80% of market prices reduces project profitability. The government system for assessing the commercial viability of schemes makes it difficult for local authorities to achieve their target proportion of 'affordable' housing. Brighton has a target proportion of 40%, but in the Hove Station Quarter 10% was all that the Council, backed to the hilt by the Forum, could negotiate. Moreover in a hot market like Brighton these flats are still not affordable for most first time buyers.

In these circumstances it is not reasonable to blame the city Council, nor indeed the Neighbourhood Forum, for the dense high rise private sector housing which is delivering low levels of 'affordable' housing whilst visually dominating the emerging Hove Station Quarter. We are where we are. Following heated exchanges at our well-attended AGM in late January an almost unanimous show of hands demonstrated residents agreeing, some albeit more reluctantly than others, that the ongoing redevelopment was

'acceptable'

Both the Sackville Road MODA Hove Central and Conway Street Hove Gardens projects are 'build to rent' developments and have bought into the Forum's Hove Station Quarter vision. MODA will bring relatively few additional cars into the area - 130 car parking spaces for 560 apartments, and Hove Gardens is virtually car free; neither will have parking permits allocated off-site. The developments will be managed by on-site staff who will welcome their first tenants in the autumn. They quickly established Community Liaison Groups (CLGs) which include ward councillors and representatives of the Neighbourhood Forum, local residents' associations, community stakeholder organisations and the Hove Civic Trust.

CLGs deal in detail with construction issues as they arise, but they are also pioneering community engagement in decisions about the use of developers' financial contributions - Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - which are paid to and spent by the Council on transport, education, recreational facilities and public realm improvements. To date, planning officers have decided where the money is spent with no local

community input. The MODA CLG has developed and submitted several project proposals, including a pocket park outside the Honeycroft and an on-street tree planting scheme for the Fonthill - Newton Road area.

This initiative is the forerunner of a process now coming on-stream for allocating the 'Neighbourhood Portion' of the CIL, which in the case of our approved Neighbourhood Plan will be 25% - elsewhere it is 15%. This has been a key issue in our plan-making which identified community priorities for the investment of developer contributions in the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

The major projects now under construction, including the former

Peugot dealers on Newtown Road, will be completed within two years. Whilst the Neighbourhood Plan proposes the phased redevelopment of the whole of the Conway Street area in the long term, several more projects are likely to emerge in the short term. The Plan proposes the mixed use medium rise redevelopment of the Denmark Villas Royal Mail site which is likely to be sold as soon as a relocation site is acquired: the single tower extension of Hove Gardens west to Fonthill Road will be on site later this year; and the bus company has planning approval for the redevelopment of its Conway Street offices and garage. To see the Hove Station Master Plan, visit <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hove-station-neighbourhood-plan>

FROM PLAN MAKING TO NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITY ACTION

The Forum's plan making has established a platform for developing community action as place making, and this shift of emphasis will contribute to making the vision of a new Hove Station Quarter a reality - for both existing residents and newcomers.

A Hove Station Quarter Neighbourhood Action Agenda is being developed by the Forum in consultation with ward councillors, long standing residents' and community stakeholder organisations, together with new and emerging residents' associations in the Artists' Corner and Conway Street. Eventually these will be joined by residents' associations in MODA Hove Central and Hove Gardens. Agenda items are summarised below and will be the focus of the next issue of Neighbourhood Briefing:

- Tracking the progress of regeneration to keep the local community up to date via our Neighbourhood Planning Briefing and Have Your Say Days, backed up by regular social media posts.
- Campaigning for the delivery of key Neighbourhood Plan policies,

including the provision of genuinely affordable social rented, car free housing in the longer term redevelopment of Conway Street; the renovation of the existing footbridge and the construction of a second footbridge from MODA Hove Central to give direct walking and cycling access to the station; a significant on-street tree planting programme funded from developer contributions.

- Developing the Community Hubs designated in the Plan as a move towards 20 minute Hove Station Quarter, which would enable residents to meet more of their day to day needs within walking distance, with an initial emphasis on developer funded public realm improvements.
- Launching community-led projects including a Community Speedwatch Project for the Fonthill Road and Newtown Road 'rat-run', linked to improvement of the tunnel for cyclists and pedestrians as progress towards a Low Traffic Quarter; a Community Energy Project to encourage investment in domestic energy insulation and energy efficiency measures, not least by increasing the take up of grant aid.

COUNCIL TO SPEND UP TO £500K IMPROVING FOOTBRIDGE

Some good news. After a sustained campaign by the Forum going back eight years, the Council's budget approved last month allocated £250k to be spent by next March on the footbridge, with another £250k for the financial year from April 2024. This will fund significant short term repairs and maintenance – a holding operation pending the long term structural refurbishment of the bridge which is in owner Network Rails' next 5 year capital programme beginning in April 2024. In 2015 when we established the Neighbourhood Plan, the vision of a joined up Hove Station Quarter placed a premium on improving connectivity across the railway, starting with the footbridge.

Network Rail is responsible for structural work with the Council responsible for funding ongoing repair and maintenance, but neither organisation was giving priority to either short or long term action. Despite petitions, it took the Council three years to deliver short term action - regular cleaning was put in place, pigeon proofing in 2020 and repair of the steps up from Hove Park Villas. Network Rail closed the bridge after the summer gales in 2021 to repair the roof and insert steel plate reinforcements along the bridge, with plans for a 'full renovation in 2-3 years' time'.

The Forum then lobbied Network Rail direct and a helpful dialogue confirmed in early 2022 that the assessment of the long awaited structural refurbishment was nearly finished, and we kept up lobbying by sharing this information with Council officers.

The next steps in the campaign will include working with the newly elected ward members and Network Rail about how officers propose to spend the £500,000 repairs budget and set up a dialogue with the community about priorities for action, including new lighting, CCTV, and new anti-graffiti painted panels. The Forum intends to sustain its campaign until this Grade II listed bridge is fully and finally refurbished.

HAVE YOUR SAY DAY - 1pm-4pm 25th March at the Honeycroft Centre, Sackville Road, Hove - Guest speakers, talks, displays & information. Come along and find out about the plans for our area, and the Referendum.