

KING'S LYNN ST MARGARET'S WITH ST NICHOLAS' WARD FORUM

A local amenity society working with the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
for a better, brighter, safer King's Lynn

Please reply to: Dr Julian Litten, Friarscot, Church Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 5EB.
Telephone: 01553 766643 E-mail: julian.litten@btopenworld.com

Jemma Curtis
Regeneration Programmes Manager
Generation and Economic Development
Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
King's Court
Chapel Street
KING'S LYNN
Norfolk
PE30 1EX

27th November 2016

Dear Jemma,

Riverfront Delivery Plan

Below are the ward forum's comments, common to the three options, in addition to those in the ward forum's on-line feed-back response.

Shelters on the South Quay

Under the Millenium Scheme several shelters were erected and proved to be both unnecessary and inadequate; it is arguable whether any shelter would meet with greater success. This is because the prevailing wind is from the south west and thus scours the quay seating area and so, despite the shelters, few people are tempted to sit on the quay in adverse weather. The design of the present shelters was poor. The sides were plastic - to afford views – but this rapidly deteriorated owing to the sea-salt air, became marked and dirty and required constant cleaning, which they did not get. They have now been removed – and with them the wind-break shelter. The ward forum **recommends** that something constructed from more traditional materials – similar to, but not a pastiche of, the wooden shelters along the promenades at Great Yarmouth and Scarborough – might be more fitting.

New lighting scheme

A new lighting scheme is proposed under all three options – but without an illustration of nature and design, it is **impossible to support or oppose** the proposal. However, the ward forum **recommends** that the sensitivity of the siting of any new lighting, and its illuminative strength, should take into account the proximity of residents' premises. A distilled lighting ambience, especially along St Margaret's Lane, would be preferred, utilising the King's Lynn lantern-style globe lighting, of which there are a number of surviving examples along the eastern side of the southern part of the High Street. The ward forum would also **urge** that care should be taken in selecting the sites for any new fittings, to ensure that they do not impart a constant illumination of residents' first and second floor bedrooms.

Seating

Proposed under the three options. The ward forum **supports** these proposals, but with the recommendation that it is vandal-proof and designed in such a way as to blend with the listed buildings along the South Quay. The reproduction historic benches in The Walks provides one example of what might be suitable.

Nar Loop

The Loop was once the bend of the River Nar and it appears as such on the earliest maps of the town and is regrettable that it was ever felt necessary to cut it off into its present shape, allowing it to become silted up and, now, a stretch of dead marshy land. Even so, it is **essential** that it retains its form and shape for both historic and environmental reasons. For example, it retains much of its original quay-side wooden walling, albeit currently camouflaged by the reed-beds; under plans for the area it would become an attractive piece of open water once more. The ward forum therefore:

supports the proposal under **Option 1**, to retain it as existing, though the ward forum would urge some environmental improvements.

is opposed to the proposal **Option 2** to site public car parking within the loop. This is a maritime environment, not an area for siting vehicles not associated with maritime activity.

supports flooding and extending the water area **Option 3** but would prefer a greater area of water and a much smaller area of parking – consequently the size of each as pictured in **Option 3** to be reversed.

That said, the bold re-irrigation of the Nar Loop, excluding the car park, is an incentive for light industry, employment and consequent wealth-creation and well-designed residential development.

Fishing Fleet location retained

It is vital to the history and future of the South Quay that the Fishing Fleet be retained in its present location. The ward forum **supports** this proposal under all three options and would like to see the idea of facilities **Option 2 and 3** extended to **Option 1**. The ward forum also **suggests** provision of a retail unit for wet fish.

There has been a suggestion that a yacht club and boat-builders, with an associated slip-way, be incorporated as part of the proposed new build on the Silo Site. The ward forum **supports** this proposal, in addition suggesting the re-location of TS Vancouver from its present site on the corner of St Margaret's Lane closer to where the yacht club and boat-builders will be sited, thus creating a complete maritime environment of commercial Fishing Fleet, yacht club, boat-builders, a chandlers and the Naval Cadets. The ward forum would go so far as to **recommend** that such an environment might also incorporate a public house, as was the case on the South Quay for centuries and, perhaps, shower and lavatory provisions for those who work in the Fisher Fleet.

Windfall sites along the Millfleet.

Option 1 has this area as green open space, to the ward forum's mind a valuable resource in what will be a greatly redeveloped area of the town if these plans are enacted. Green spaces and green lungs are vital elements for urban townscapes. The ward forum is therefore **opposed** to the proposals as shown in **Option 2** and **3**.

Harding's Way open to all traffic.

The ward forum is **completely opposed** to any changes to the Hardings Way bus, cycle and pedestrian route to allow access to all vehicles. Harding's Way borders the important community resource which is the Harding's Pits Doorstep Green. Doorstep greens were set up by national government to provide an essential 'green lung' for urban communities which otherwise lacked such facilities. This is certainly the case for both the Friars area of the town and South Lynn. It is the only area of public open space beside the river which has not been urbanised and where there is a considerable environmental and wildlife element. Since Harding's Pits Doorstep Green was established there have been continuous moves to erode both its nature and its size. The introduction of buses to Harding's Way, which was originally a foot and cycle path, has had a deleterious effect on the green, imposing an unhappy urban element and making the original path unsafe for unaccompanied children and those walking dogs. The vast majority of current users are on foot or cycles (not buses) and it is quicker (and a lot more pleasant!) to walk into town from South Lynn via Harding's Way than to drive via London Road. Introducing general traffic will worsen the whole environment of the area. New roads always lead to an increase in traffic and, in addition to the immediate area of Harding's Pits Doorstep Green, will worsen air quality, congestion and public safety further into the town centre, particularly on the South Quay, Church Street, Stonegate Street and the Millfleet. Moreover Harding's Way will have to be widened, turning it from a relatively quiet route to what will essentially be a through road with all the attendant environmental draw-backs, including the pollution that roads produce.

Residential units on land north of Harding's Pits.

The ward forum is **opposed** to the size and scale of the proposed units. They are placed precisely where they will most impose themselves upon Harding's Pits, the green open space to the south, and will affect and block the magnificent views of the historic centre from the whale sculpture on Harding's Pits and the wide expansive views to the river. Those same views must, inevitably, be exploited to the benefit of the prospective residents of the units – and to the detriment of the wider community. The importance of this landscape is such that it has been used in the television series *Coast*; furthermore,

BCKLWN itself features promotional images of it on its website. The ward forum was also disappointed that nowhere in the housing recommendations is there provision of affordable and social housing.

To the east of Harding's Pits is Friars' Walk, an historic lane of the late 13C, following the line of the former west precinct wall of the Whitefriars Carmelite Friary. This is the **only surviving** medieval lane in King's Lynn and it is **vital** that its historic ambience is maintained. Its importance cannot be overstressed. Furthermore, it was influential on Sir Guy Dawber PRIBA (1861-1938), co-founder and 1st President of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, who was born and bred in the house on St Margaret's Place which now serves as St Margaret's Vicarage. The ward forum is **vehemently opposed** to any erosion to the ambience and aesthetic of this highly-important lane.

Dedicated Residential Parking

The ward forum is **surprised and dismayed** that none of the three options contains so much as a reference to the considerable need for parking provision for residents and existing residential properties. Phil Reilly, NCC Highways Officer, has also told the ward forum that the expansion or creation of an adjacent zone to cater for ward residents will be 'dovetailed in with the South Quay regeneration project.' There is no sign of this being so. Why? Those spaces which did exist have been eroded in recent years and there is continual loss as new developments take place. The Riverfront plan is designed to bring increasing number of visitors to this area, which will exacerbate the problem for residents and this must be addressed.

Parking

The ward forum strongly **urges** that no more parking places are lost within the study area.

Pile Driving and transport of building materials

The current rejuvenation of Hillington Square has necessitated some minor pile-driving, the result of which has been much vibration experienced by the residents of the listed properties lining the west side of Bridge Street. Concern has been raised by ward forum members, especially those who live in the triangle formed by Church Street, Priory Lane, St Margaret's Lane and South Quay, to the vibration that their listed buildings might be subjected to during development of the Silo Site and the Sommerfeld & Thomas site. This is the **highest concentration of listed buildings** in King's Lynn. It is a criminal offence for a third party to cause damage to a listed building, thus the ward forum would like to be **assured** as to what measures BCKLWN will take before and during construction to measure and monitor the effect that pile-driving may have on the listed buildings and what provisions are to be taken to a) keep pile-driving to a minimum, b) to assess vibration levels during construction work and c) compensate freeholders for any damage afforded to listed buildings.

Concern has also been expressed by ward forum members as to the amount of construction traffic which the proposed developments will generate. Narrow medieval streets are **not** appropriate for the type of large lorries and heavy-plant transporters associated with 21st-century construction and the ward

forum would like to know what consideration has been given to the use of the River Great Ouse as a highway for the import/export of heavy plant, building materials and spoil.

Design and Viability

An idea of what the South Quay might have looked like in the 1840s can be gained from viewing the 1994 BBC television adaptation of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the town sequences of which were filmed in Nelson Street, St Margaret's Lane, King's Staithe Lane and King's Staithe Square. Particular attention was paid by the set-designers to such things as shop-fronts, sign-writing, street lighting and historic paint colours for buildings and architectural woodwork. The introduction of photography in the 1840s has provided numerous images of the South Quay during its mercantile life between c.1850 to 2000, the majority of which are available in the archival records at True's Yard Fisherfolk Museum. Whilst an examination of these photographs will show how the South Quay has developed over a period of 150 years, it should not be assumed that the ward forum is in any way recommending a return to the past, rather it is **recommending** that these archival photographs may provide design-guide opportunities for street furniture, sign-writing, lighting and the advantages of a variety of architectural styles. The ward forum is **not against** a mixture of traditional and modern architecture, even including shipping container development as at Hackney, which might in itself be the answer to sensitive residential car-parking.

Two towns recently involved in riverside regeneration are Amiens and the Hanse town of Bruges. Similar in size and quantity of listed buildings to King's Lynn they, too, were faced with a need to regenerate their run-down riverside and canal-side environments, address issues of narrow medieval streets v parking issues and incorporate new commercial opportunities without losing the medieval street. That which has been achieved at Amiens and Bruges shows what can be done to revitalise dormant and tired streetscapes and riverscapes whilst bringing small industry and affordable housing and business premises into the middle of medieval towns. The ward forum **urges** peer examination of these two developments.

The majority of the buildings lining the South Quay began life as merchants' warehouses, though most have subsequently been put to other uses. Whilst there is a need to create income the ward forum is **completely opposed** to such entertainments as "night clubs" or any other enterprises incorporating loud live and/or recorded music. The recent intrusions of loud music from the Hanse House and Ratskeller have effected the lives of the local residents, especially at weekends, who have lost that which is referred to as "quite enjoyment" of their homes. It cannot, and **must not**, be allowed to expand. Furthermore, loud vibrating music is detrimental to the stability listed buildings.

General

There has been a commercial Quay at King's Lynn since the 12C and that which survives today is a witness to the eight hundred years of constant mercantile import and export upon which the prosperity of King's Lynn was built. The South Quay, therefore, had always been the industrial spine of the town; the ward forum **urges** that this be borne in mind and should underline whatever development is proposed for it.

To the north of the development area is King's Staithe Square, with its elegant set of small mansion houses, built by the more prosperous of the town's 17C and 18C merchants. It is, in fact, the main approach from the north to the South Quay. At present it is bisected by traffic coming off the South Quay, rendering it impossible to use as a place of pedestrian enjoyment. On one side is the impressive Custom House – the most widely-used motif in BCKLWN's tourism advertising – balanced, to the south, by Bank House. But it is a bare, cold and bland environment, lacking plant-life. The ward forum is of the **opinion** that it requires a complete re-think, diversion of traffic and some sensible landscaping. The cellars beneath the Square will prohibit the planting of trees, but a large central area of small shrubs and soft vegetation would enliven the area and make it look more like a town square.

Regarding the South Quay itself, the ward forum **supports** a mixture of residential, light commercial, light industrial, craft-based and river-related enterprises, and some leisure facilities such as cafés, bars and restaurants, thereby avoiding the creation of more "retirement homes". The need is to make the Quay compatible with wealth creation, but avoiding loud day-time and night-time music.

At present, the low Quay wall presents a Health & Safety issue and whilst it may have been sufficient when the Quay was serving as a mercantile port it is a trip-hazard and will need to be raised, either physically (which would assist in flood prevention) or by well-designed railings, such as those along the promenade at Cromer. One of the more unattractive areas of the South Quay is the ground-floor car-park of Three Crowns Yard, which resembles a second-hand car-dealer's lot. The ward forum **recommends** that such a feature should never again be incorporated into any development along the South Quay.

To the south of the South Quay is the Silo Site and Sommerfeld & Thomas. The ward forum **supports** the development of this area with a mixture of residential, light-industrial and commercial enterprises, asking that the façades of that which is built be in keeping with the adjacent architecture, encouraging an acknowledgement of the vernacular rather than pastiche.

End note

The historian, A J P Taylor, said of King's Lynn: "In the 19th century it gutted fish; in the 20th century it gutted the town." Indeed, that was a sad period for King's Lynn, when successive town councils of the 1960s and early 1970s inflicted more damage to the town through its wholesale demolition policy to create the Vancouver Centre and Hillington Square than did the entire Luftwaffe during the Second World War. The ward forum is, therefore, **encouraged** by the Riverfront Development Plan.

The ward forum trusts that these comments will be of use and that it will be given further opportunities to comment on any proposals for this highly important part of King's Lynn.

Yours sincerely,

Julian W S Litten
Chairman
St Margaret's with St Nicholas' Ward Forum