

HUNSTANTON CIVIC SOCIETY

Charity Registered Number 1101087

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4th. January 2010

Mr. Geoff Hall
Head of Planning & Development
BCKL&WN

Dear Mr. Hall

Re: Planning Application 09/01764/FM

After considerable discussion the Hunstanton Civic Society has decided that it must OPPOSE the present planning application for development of the former Kit Kat site because the proposals are for what seems to be the wrong building in the wrong place. The Society is grateful to the developers for meeting with us and keeping us informed of the way in which their proposals for the site have evolved.

Although we do not think that the present proposals are appropriate, Hunstanton Civic Society is keen that the former Kit Kat site should be developed because :-

- A. Several long-term residents are distressed that this prime site has been left derelict for several years.
- B. They have fond memories of attending functions in the restaurant and the ballroom of the Kit Kat between 1935 and the 1980's.
- C. It is recognised that the Southern part of the town and promenade is in need of regeneration and appropriate development of the former Kit Kat site could give this necessary impetus.
- D. A landmark building on that site might reflect the original art deco architecture of the boating lake, the swimming pool and the Kit Kat building itself, re-igniting memories of Hunstanton in its hey day. It is essential that any development here be integrated with agreed town planning and regeneration schemes.
- E. There is a need for affordable housing in the town to enable young people to both live and work in the town and prevent it becoming a ghetto for the elderly.

However, the Civic Society does have a number of concerns :-

1. The proposed height reaching to a maximum of 6 storeys. We would not wish to see a line of tall buildings along the sea front with relatively inferior buildings on the landward side of them as has happened in some English and several continental resorts. It is recognised that the 6th.floor is on the corner of the proposed building that is nearest to the tower that has recently been attached to the Oasis and that the proposed building tapers down to 2 storeys where it is adjacent to the 2 storey row of houses in Seagate Road, therefore in this case the massing seems reasonably balanced.

2. Unfortunately, the Borough Council is largely responsible for blighting the Kit Kat site, because in 1984 the Council erected the Oasis Leisure Centre on the site of the former swimming pool and the architecture of the building is less than inspiring. The recent play area extension has not helped. The public toilet block on the opposite side of Seagate compromises the location. Also in the Eighties, the Council demolished the boating lake making way for the current Sea Life Centre and crazy golf. Once again the architecture fails to match the art deco appearance of the boating lake. Perhaps the most detrimental decision of the Council with regard to the Kit Kat site was to execute a long lease for the noisy mini fairground on land between the application site and the sea.

3. Several retail units in the town are currently unoccupied and therefore additional units may not be viable. However, the development site does benefit from considerable footfall particularly in the holiday season because Seagate Road is one of the main access points from the Town and Car parks onto the promenade and beach. Relocation of the Life Saving hut into one of the units might help tidy up the area and there is potential for the other 2 units to cater for water-sports activities that are being promoted in that part of the seafront. It is likely that the ground floor units at this location would be closed out of season giving a further blighted appearance to the street scene and seafront.

4. Another recent development of flats in the Town that was bitterly opposed by residents has run into difficulties because the units were far too small for the prices being asked. 45-50 sq. m for a one bedroom flat and 75-80 sq. m. for a two bedroom flat does not seem generous.

5. It would not appear that an Environmental Impact Assessment has been done. As the site is just behind the sea wall currently maintained by the Borough Council to a lesser standard than that recommended by the Environment Agency there is a danger of flooding due to over topping or even break through of the sea defence in the event of a tidal surge.

On the King's Lynn & West Norfolk Local Plan adopted in November 1998, the development site - 9 & 11 Seagate Road falls within the Holiday Development Expansion Zone. In keeping with this, the developers had originally intended to build a high-class hotel that would have provided some year round employment opportunities. The location is, however, compromised as discussed in 2 above. Hence it has been decided that a hotel would probably not work in that location but it is our understanding that the developers are keen to build a hotel in an alternative location.

The development that the Hunstanton Civic Society would really support would involve the Borough Council in a site swap. If a comparable area of the present Council owned Southend car park to the South of Harlequin House could be developed as a hotel, such a building would shield the unsightly Southern aspect of Harlequin House. It could then release the former Kit Kat site to provide for relocation of the 'Pier' amusement centre to a much more suitable location for its business.

The 'hangar' could then be removed from The Green, thereby bringing the Council into full compliance with the 1955 Covenant on The Green and in accordance with the status of The Green as part of the Conservation Area. Such a site swap would be immensely popular with the town's residents. Far from being negative, the Civic Society is of the opinion that rejection of the current application could create a golden opportunity to put matters right and regeneration of the town on a firm footing.

Kind regards
Yours sincerely

Andrew Murray Hon. Secretary