

Planning Brief
Medina House site, former saltwater baths, Kings
Esplanade, Hove



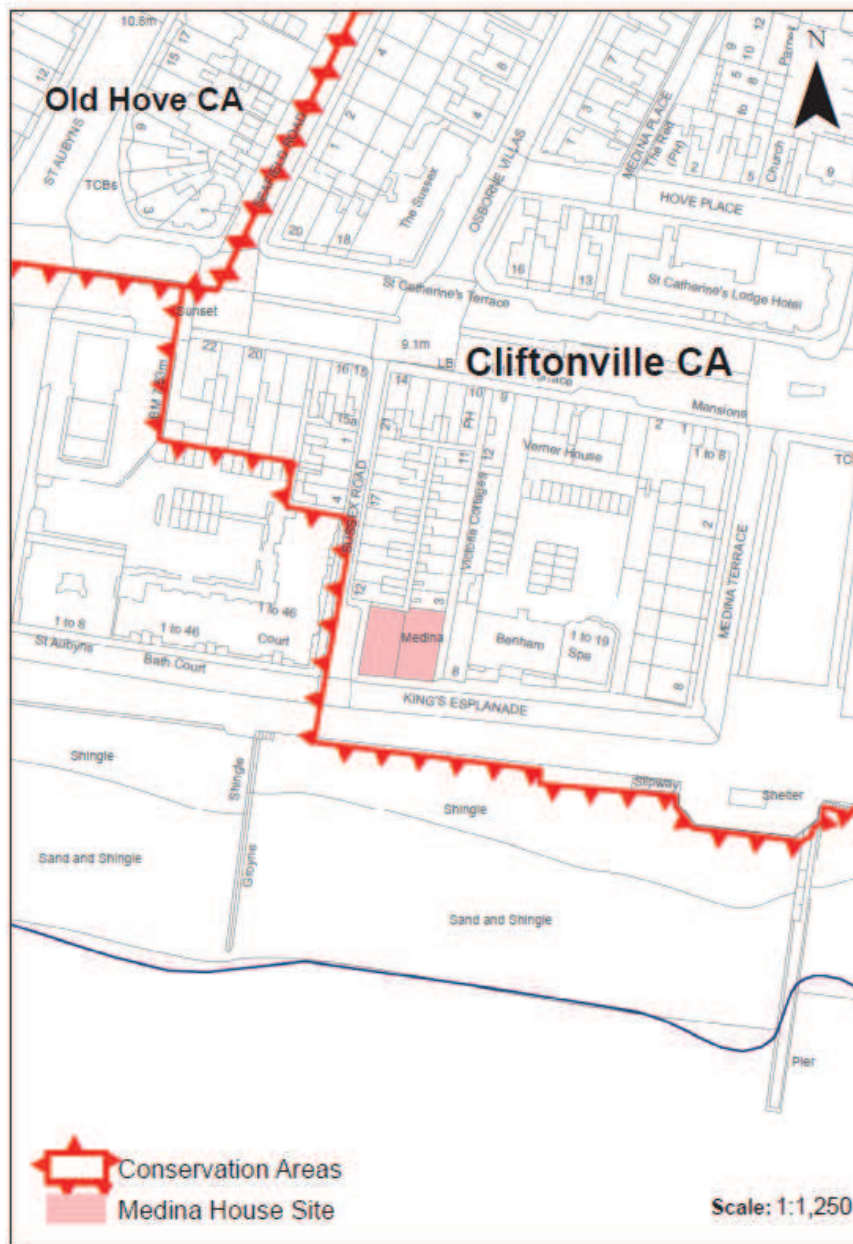
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Purpose of this document

This Planning Brief has been prepared to guide the development and reuse of the Medina House site, Kings Esplanade, Hove. The site has been the subject of a number of development proposals and planning applications over the last few years that have not received the support of the local planning authority. This brief is intended to provide clarity to developers regarding the appropriate scale, potential land use and other planning issues with regard to any future development proposals for the site.

The Medina House Site, Hove



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Site Map to show the site's location and local Conservation Area (CA) boundaries

Status of the Brief

Planning Briefs do not form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and so cannot be given full statutory weight. However, the guidance contained in this brief was approved by the Economic Development & Culture Committee of Brighton & Hove City Council as a material planning consideration in the assessment of future development proposals and planning applications relating to the site on 19 September 2013.

This brief has been the subject of a public consultation exercise carried out during 18 March 2013 – 30 April 2013 and the results of this consultation have informed the contents of the brief.

Site and Surroundings



The south elevation of the Medina House site and its immediate surroundings, Kings Esplanade, Hove

The site is located on the seafront promenade of Kings Esplanade, Hove between the junction of Sussex Road to the west and the Victoria Cottages twitten to the east.

The western half of the site comprises the vacant Medina House, an architecturally-unusual three storey building dating from 1894 that originally housed a laundry and women's slipper baths. It was part of the wider Medina Baths complex which also included a swimming pool and slipper baths for men (on the western corner of Sussex Road) and separate saltwater swimming pool and slipper baths for women. The building housing the women's pool was demolished in 2000, leaving a cleared area within the site on the east side of Medina House. Around the periphery of the cleared site remain remnants of the demolished building, most notably the now exposed interior of its northern perimeter wall, revealing the original ceramic tiles in

a bold pseudo-Arabic style. These are in varying stages of degradation resulting from their exposure to the elements.

The built form to the immediate north of this site comprises small, 2-storey mid 19th Century terraced houses on either side of Victoria Cottages - a twitten (alleyway) that runs between Kingsway (the A259 main seafront road) to the seafront esplanade. Lying to the east of the Victoria Cottages twitten is Marroccos, a locally well known restaurant/café and ice cream bar housed in a 3-storey building.

These relatively small scale buildings and terraces are bounded to the west and east by larger, 7 to 9-storey purpose built flats, which include Bath Court to the west of Medina House - an 8-storey redevelopment of the western section of the original Hove (Medina) Baths complex fronting Kings Esplanade and the western corner of Sussex Road. The building height of Bath Court falls back to 3 storeys along the south west side of Sussex Road. Medina House marks the south west corner of the Cliftonville Conservation Area, the boundary of which runs northwards up Sussex Road, encompassing the 2-storey terraced houses fronting the western elevation of Sussex Road but excluding the Bath Court development.



The South West Corner of Medina House and Cliftonville Conservation Area, looking eastwards along Kings Esplanade, Hove

The Medina House building is a locally listed heritage asset, and it is described on the local list as follows:

“Kings Esplanade, Medina House. 1870-80. Former baths, then diamond factory, now vacant. Strange and whimsical building, render over original brick facade, with a heavily decorated “dutch” gable, whose appearance would be improved by the reinstatement of appropriate windows. Possesses some charm and character as well as historical significance.”

Although not selected for the national statutory listed building register, in response to the preparation of this brief in 2013 English Heritage observed that ‘this locally listed building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Cliftonville Conservation Area and provides visual interest along King’s Esplanade on the seafront. It is a characterful building that embodies historical significance as a Victorian bathhouse demonstrating the 19th Century fashion for bathing and health facilities that grew out of the Georgian development of the seaside resort.’

Recent Background

Planning permission and Conservation Area Consent were granted in 1999 for the demolition of the existing single storey structure on the site of the former swimming baths and conversion of Medina House to form 3 flats and the erection of 2 new houses (BH1999/01456/FP and BH1999/01482/CA).

Since this time a number of planning applications have been submitted to demolish the existing Medina House building, all of which have been either refused by the council or withdrawn by the applicant. The most recent applications to demolish the existing building and redevelop the site with a 9-storey mixed use building were refused, and subsequently dismissed on appeal to the Planning Inspectorate (BH2009/03120 and BH2009/03105). The Planning Inspector dismissed the appeal as he considered that the contribution of the Medina House site and the visual openness its gap creates within the Cliftonville Conservation Area is a continually positive one and that to demolish the building would be contrary to Policy HE8 of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005. Neither did he consider that the building was shown to be beyond economic repair, commenting that a brief visual inspection of the condition of the interior and exterior of the property appeared better than might be expected, having regard to the age of the building, its evident lack of maintenance and exposure to the south east winds. Some recent repair work has now been undertaken at Medina House subsequent to a Planning Enforcement Notice served in Sept 2011 to remedy the previous condition of the land, which was adversely affecting the amenity of the area. Furthermore, the Inspector also allowed for the principle of the loss of industrial use here due to the physical constraints and location of the development site which he considered unlikely to be suitable for modern industrial purposes.



The south west corner of the Medina House site Kings Esplanade, Hove looking eastwards toward Brighton

Planning Policy Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012

Section 12 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment' directs local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including proposals which may affect the setting of that heritage asset). The significance of Medina House has been identified and assessed by the council as a locally listed heritage asset.

In determining planning applications, account should be taken of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets (in this case Medina House), and putting them to viable use(s) consistent with their conservation. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of the Medina House site, the NPPF directs weight should be given to this asset's conservation.

The NPPF directs that the loss of a building and/or other elements which make a positive contribution to the significance of a Conservation Area should be treated as either a substantial harm or less than substantial harm (as appropriate) to the designated asset and/or conservation area. In this instance the level of harm depends on how significant Medina House and the openness of the site are deemed with regard to their positive contribution to the Cliftonville Conservation Area. As part of the planning application process for BH2009/03120 and BH2009/03105, the planning inspector concluded that Medina House, as well as the openness of the Medina House site, continues to make a positive contribution to the character of Cliftonville Conservation Area. This assessment, along with the 2013 English Heritage observations that this locally listed building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Cliftonville Conservation Area should be taken into account when considering the impact of future proposals at Medina House on preserving the significance and character of the Cliftonville Conservation Area.

Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005

The key Local Plan policies and associated documents which relate to the site are referenced below, although this is not a definitive list.

As a locally listed heritage asset, Medina House is included on the 'local list' of buildings of local interest and therefore **Local Plan policy HE10** applies, which states:

"The planning authority will seek to ensure the retention, good maintenance and continued use of buildings of local interest. Whilst not enjoying the full protection of statutory listing, the design and the materials used in proposals affecting these buildings should be of a high standard compatible with the character of the building."

In addition, Medina House, the remains of the adjoining swimming bath, and the openness of the site, continue to make a positive contribution to the character of Kings Esplanade and Cliftonville Conservation Area. **Local Plan policy HE8** can be seen to support the retention of the Medina House site and the openness it provides through stating that proposals should retain buildings, structures and features that make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Local Plan policy HE6 directs that proposals within or affecting the setting of a conservation area should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area. All proposals for this site will be assessed by the contribution they make to the objectives of policies HE10, HE8 and HE6.

Local Plan policy QD27 has an important role in protecting proposed, existing and /or adjacent users, residents and occupiers from development which would cause material nuisance and loss of amenity; and a tall building here is likely to impact on the amenity of adjoining occupiers through loss of light; overlooking and an increased sense of enclosure. The principle of an acceptable high density development has not been demonstrated at this site.

The last use of this vacant site was by a firm of diamond cutters and merchants. **Local Plan policy EM3** seeks to retain the best sites for industry (Use Classes B1, B2 & B8) and does not release industrial land unless the site is unsuitable for modern employment needs and purposes. In this instance, the physical constraints and location of the Medina House site are such that it is considered unlikely to be suitable for modern industrial purposes. Due to this, past planning consents as well as the Inspectors appeal decision of 2011 have allowed for the principle of the loss of industrial use here, although a proposal that did include an element of B1 would not necessarily be inappropriate.

Brighton & Hove Submission City Plan Part 1

At the time of writing the council has formally submitted the Brighton & Hove City Plan Part One to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent planning inspector. The key submission policy which relates to the site is referenced below, although other submission policies may also apply:

CPI5 Heritage which seeks to conserve and enhance the city's historic environment in accordance with its identified significance, giving the greatest weight to designated heritage assets and their settings and prioritising positive action for those assets at risk through neglect, decay, vacancy or other threats. This brief is considered to conform to this submitted policy.

Development Opportunities

The primary development opportunity at the Medina House site is as a residential scheme with the reuse and retention of Medina House as a core feature. Other potential land uses appropriate to its seafront context or historical use may be possible. The council's key concern is the preservation and contextual setting of Medina House and it will adopt a flexible approach to proposals that support this objective.



Some of the remaining original ceramic tiles used to decorate the former swimming baths at the Medina House site, Hove

Development Principles

All proposals should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Cliftonville Conservation area, as well as preserve or enhance the setting of conservation areas in the wider neighbourhood where these may be affected.

As noted above, following consideration of evidence presented at planning appeal, the inspector concluded that the building makes a positive contribution to the conservation area and that its demolition would be harmful to the conservation area. Medina House is in a reasonable condition with regard to its physical structure and stability and the council will support development proposals that provide for the reuse of the existing building.

Proposals should retain the essential detailing elements of its front and western facades including its distinctive Dutch-style gable. The opportunity should be taken to ‘open up’ the upper storey windows at the front of the building. There is also scope to increase the size of the ground floor window on the eastern side of the front elevation to match the size of each of the ground floor windows on the western front elevation.

All proposals for development of the site should respect the ‘openness’ of this south west corner of Cliftonville Conservation Area as well as the small and intimate scale of the adjoining residential development immediately to the north. On this basis, in addition to the retention of Medina House, a development similar in height to Medina House and the adjoining Marrocco’s building on the site of the former swimming baths fronting Kings Esplanade would be acceptable in principle. Proposals should not adversely affect the positive contribution of the site to the conservation area, nor serve to visually discord with the existing roof line of Medina House or be detrimental to the amenities of the occupiers of Victoria Cottages including through the detrimental loss of light.

In respect of the new build element, there is scope for a high quality modern design befitting its seafront location. The architectural design should not overpower Medina House, the surrounding conservation area or the seafront promenade. A rendered finish may be appropriate within the context of the area. The building level should be stepped down towards Victoria Cottages to protect the amenities of these residences and for this reason the downward slope of the land back from Kings Esplanade towards these cottages should be noted. All development on the Medina House site should respect the original, existing building line of Medina House onto Kings Esplanade and also have regard to the predominant building frontage line along the Victoria Cottages twitten..

The site visually benefits from the presence of some original surviving Arabic-influenced ceramic tiling attached to the wall adjoining the most southerly cottage of Victoria Cottages at the north east end of the site. Unfortunately exposure to the elements since the demolition of the former swimming pool building has left the tiles in a poor state of repair. If restored they have potential to positively benefit the character and appearance of any new development and also serve as a visual reminder of an element of the former use of the site. The council would encourage and support their restoration as part of the site's redevelopment.



Original ceramic tiles attached to the north east wall of the former swimming baths, Medina House site, Kings Esplanade

Transport and Access

Due to the sites location in an area of on-street parking controls, proximity to local amenities and public transport services, Local Plan Policy HO7 Car free housing, of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan can be considered at this site. The maximum car parking standards for residential units in this location is 1 car space per dwelling plus 1 space per 5 dwellings for visitors. Development proposals should promote cycling and ensure there is adequate cycle parking to serve the development. The minimum standard in SPGBH 04 for residential units is 1 cycle space per dwelling plus 1 space per 5 dwellings for visitors. To comply with Local Plan policy TR14 all cycle parking must be secure, convenient, well lit, well signed and wherever practical, sheltered. However where the need generated by the development cannot be met on site and in compliance with policy TR14, the planning authority will negotiate with the applicant for the provision of cycle parking facilities nearby on the public highway or for a related contribution to improvements to the cycling infrastructure . Where appropriate, Sheffield type stands are preferential, spaced in line with the guidance contained within the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets section 8.2.22.

Further Planning Information

- Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005 - Local Plan Map,
- Policy EM3 Retaining the best sites for industry; Policy HE10 Buildings of Local Interest; Policy HE8 Demolition in conservation areas; Policy HE6 Development within or affecting the setting of conservation areas; Policy QD27 Protection of Amenity; Policy SU2 Efficiency of development in the use of energy, water and materials; Policy SU7 Development within the coastal zone; Policy QD4 Design - strategic impact; Policy HO7 Car Free Housing; Policy TR14 Cycle access and parking;
- Proposed Submission City Plan Part 1 Feb 2013 – see Policy CP15 ‘Heritage’ and SA1 – ‘The Seafront’; and subsequent City Plan editions;
- National Planning Policy Framework 2012
- Conservation Areas in Brighton & Hove - see Cliftonville Conservation Area;
- Brighton & Hove City Council Local List of Heritage Assets
- Brighton & Hove City Council Planning Register – for Planning and Appeal Decisions
- Site Waste Management Plans

