

Appendix 2 – Public Comments: Valley Garden Forum

From: Valley Gardens Forum [<mailto:info@valleygardensforum.org.uk>]

Sent: 08 January 2019 21:30

To: Mike La Rooy

Cc: Anthony Middleton; Johnathan Sharrack; Daniel Nathan

Subject: re: Brighton Valley Gardens Phase 3 – (Royal Pavilion to Seafront) - draft proposal to the LEP on behalf of the Valley Gardens Forum

Dear Mike

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me late on Friday. It was good to hear that you are personally engaged with the issues around Valley Gardens - as a pedestrian, driver and cyclist who would like to see positive changes to the confused existing road system in Brighton city centre.

Everyone agrees that planning errors thirty years ago need correction - so long as limited public resources allow. As you put it, this time, any changes need to be considered and executed properly as new mistakes are unlikely to be corrected for a further generation. If that means taking time in order to properly consult - then so be it. Valley Gardens has been a problem for successive administrations of all parties and along the way, this consensus appears to have got lost. It may be resource intensive and messier than the City Council is used to, but major schemes like Valley Gardens 3 - which will shape Brighton and Hove for decades need iterative planning with extensive, sensitive and timely consultation.

The '[Valley Gardens Forum](#)' is a group of central Brighton residents, public sector organisations and businesses, large & small, sharing concerns about the City Council's current plans. The group includes residents, the two main city centre surgeries, the combined taxi trade, Brighton Palace Pier, The Royal Albion Hotel, The North Laine Traders Association, Seafront Traders Association, The Lanes Traders Group, The Spiegeltent and the organisers of all major outdoor events in the Valley Gardens area, the city's largest two English Language Colleges, several independent Brighton Restaurants, pubs, music venues and KIBS sector employers - surveyors, solicitors, radio producers, graphic designers, record labels, estate agents, digital start ups and more. The Valley Gardens redevelopment was originally conceived as a way of enhancing access to the city centre with a shared ambition to improve the environment and enhance the local economy. The outline scheme was widely discussed and had been broadly accepted by the community. A more detailed 'Phase 3' developed by consultants with council officers and presented three months ago, shatters that consensus.

Nobody would argue that Brighton doesn't have a problem with traffic congestion and resulting air and noise pollution. However, the Council's current plans would make this demonstrably worse. In fact, it presents a deliberate policy of making it more difficult to visit a city dependent on its visitor and services economy. There is no evidence in the current Council approved 'business case' - being presented to the LEP at your meeting on the 22nd of January, that the big picture and the broadest range of impacts on the economy, local environment and people's livelihoods have been considered at all. At a time when local services are starved of resources and existing public infrastructure is not being adequately maintained, Brighton & Hove City Council also need to win the argument that £8m of public money should be devoted to the scheme in the first place.

There's a very real risk that by deliberately making driving into Brighton more problematic without providing a viable alternative, there'll be less visitors to the centre and also less locals from outlying suburbs and beyond too. **36% of out of town visitors arrive in Brighton in a private vehicle - spending around £300m (out of a total of £837m) per annum. Over 21,000 local jobs are supported by the tourist economy. Assuming a modest 5% drop in visitor numbers as an unintended consequence of reducing vehicle numbers - that would result in a £15m annual hit to the economy with job losses inevitable.** This statistic doesn't even factor the likely transfer of jobs to neighbouring towns in Sussex as local residents in outlying districts of Brighton choose to drive and shop in Crawley, Eastbourne or Worthing as opposed to our own City Centre.

As there is no requirement for Coast2Capital LEP funding to be drawn down this financial year, there is definitely enough time for the Council to reconsider and do the job of consulting and subsequent iterative design properly. Beyond the question of access to homes, public sector and commercial premises, there's the overarching issue of environmental and economic damage that the current scheme will cause if not revised. Getting Valley Gardens right - relying a little less on computer models and a little more upon the wider community will create a legacy to be proud of. Getting it wrong could break the City, destroying thousands of people's livelihoods. The Valley Gardens Forum's intention is to gather together representatives across the widest group of stakeholders with the expectation that all parties will learn from each other and value the resulting compromise. **If this process requires a pause for open consultation, then it's surely worth it.**

Your suggestion that we should prepare our own commentary on plans for the final phase of the Valley Gardens scheme is welcomed. **There is helpfully, a consensus within the group around the three main substantive flaws in the Council's current scheme - and ways in which to remedy all of these.**

Apparently 44 different models were under consideration by planners and consultants during 2018. Of these, four were eventually put before councillors the 9th of October with one favoured scheme. All four are attached - together with our suggested "version 5" - which we consider gets closest to achieving the strategic objectives set out in the 'Full Independent Business Final Report - Valley Gardens' commissioned by Coast 2 Capital and delivered by Parsons Brinkerhoff on the 17th February 2015.

More detailed commentary and plans will follow further input from members of the Valley Gardens Forum and on the basis that the Council share modelling data and other files that we have requested. In the meantime, I'd be most grateful for your further thoughts about this note and our request that Brighton & Hove City Council be encouraged to resubmit the Business case itself following full consultation with key stakeholders in the city.

Best regards

Daniel

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Valley Gardens Forum - draft suggested amendments to Valley Gardens phase 3

Old Steine west side bus lane

- The Council's favoured Option 1 suggests merging all traffic on to the east side of the Old Steine.
- Options 2, 3, 4 and our proposed version 5 all keep shared taxis and buses in a dedicated west side lane and a contiguous connection from North Street to the rest of the city.

- Version 5 also runs the dedicated cycle lane along the west side and through Pool Valley including a new 'cycle station' area.

Retaining a revamped Aquarium Roundabout and creating a 'Kemptown Gateway'

- The Council's favoured Option 1 suggests replacing the roundabout with a T Junction.
- Version 5 remodels the existing roundabout and creates a safe separate link to and from the Old Steine on to the seafront for cyclists and pedestrians. In addition, pedestrians are routed through attractions and shopping areas to the east and west side rather than in the line of road traffic.

Retaining two way traffic on Madeira Drive

- Although formally 'out of scope' The Council's Favoured Option 1 makes Madeira Drive one way.
- Version 5 retains two way traffic with a (weekend peak time only) signalised entry back on to the remodelled Aquarium Roundabout.

In our Version 5, loading, access and parking for local businesses around the Old Steine and lower St James's Street, two city surgeries and the city's largest English language college is retained on the east side of the Old Steine. National Express Coach pick up and setting down moved out of Pool Valley on the south side of The Old Steine - their drivers' rest over is transferred to within 10-15 minutes drive away, for example, the end of Madeira Drive. A new 'bike station' facility takes it's place in Pool Valley linking a direct cycle path to the seafront. Parking is also retained for businesses on the south west corner.

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