

All Party Initiative Takes Positive Approach to Harbour Completion

A consensus has been reached over future development at Sovereign Harbour to ensure new and improved community facilities are at the heart of any further building plans.

At a meeting chaired by Eastbourne MP Stephen Lloyd, attended by the leaders of both political groups, the three new Sovereign Ward Councillors, senior officers of the council and members of the Sovereign Harbour Residents Association (SHRA), there was strong commitment to ensuring any future development at Sovereign Harbour must be sustainable and in the best interest of residents.

At the meeting it was recognised that the original plans for the harbour were drawn up over 25 years ago; under today's planning system, similar applications submitted would have been dealt with very differently.

Consensus was reached that:

- Any plans must include, as an absolute priority, a purpose built community centre located at the heart of the harbour, children's play areas, several public open spaces, and the completion of the promenade from Atlantic Drive to the harbour arm.
- The development of the Sovereign Harbour Waterfront and marina as tourist destinations, and the creation of "clean jobs" by developing a business park on the commercial sites, were also considered to be vital, not only for the benefit of the local community, but for Eastbourne in general.
- A strictly limited amount of sympathetically located residential development, of the appropriate mix, could be accommodated, subject to the normal planning process and considerations.
- A Community Centre of an appropriate size would be delivered before any residential development was started while other community facilities must also be provided.

A public exhibition of a plan to illustrate the preferred locations of the community facilities will be held at the Sovereign Harbour Yacht Club from 4pm to 7pm on Monday 22 August to give everyone the opportunity to express their views. Residents will be invited to complete a questionnaire about the scheme.

SHRA Chairman, Rick Runalls, said: "It has taken a lot of heart searching for the SHRA committee to endorse this solution, but we concluded that we now have the prospect of seeing the harbour development completed with many of the facilities that residents need. The alternative is more wasted years, with little guarantee of greater success. I hope that residents will grasp this opportunity, which we believe will strengthen our community."

Stephen Lloyd MP said: "I'm delighted with the strength of the new partnership between the SHRA and both the political parties on EBC. We have all taken a significant step forward in the work to deliver much needed community facilities in Sovereign Harbour. My thanks go to everyone involved for their constructive contributions to this process."

EBC Leader, Cllr David Tutt, said: "It is my belief that we can only make progress on the issues which are important for Harbour residents by all parties coming together to agree the way forward. I am grateful to everyone involved in this initiative for the time and effort that they have given to ensure that we move forward together."

EBC Conservative Group Leader, Cllr David Elkin, said: “Community facilities for the Harbour are long overdue and at this late stage in the Harbour’s development, it is imperative we take this opportunity to ensure their delivery. Working together we can make things happen.”

EBC Chief Executive, Robert Cottrill, said: “I am delighted that we are now making positive progress towards a sustainable solution. We are determined to seize upon this new momentum and, by working in partnership with the SHRA, pave the way for facilities to serve generations to come.”

Notes to editors:

In 2006, following the refusal of planning applications for further residential development, a cross party motion was unanimously agreed by Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC) calling for the creation of a Master Plan for the completion of the Sovereign Harbour development that would incorporate all of the remaining development land, but would include no further residential development.

Five years on, with no plan having been produced, Sovereign Harbour residents attending the Neighbourhood 14 consultation event on the draft Local Development Framework, in very large numbers, expressed their concerns about the unsustainability of their community.

Recognising the strength of feeling within the community, Stephen Lloyd MP convened a meeting to address the issues and seek a way forward. The meeting, attended by the leaders of both political groups, senior officers of the council and members of the Sovereign Harbour Residents Association (SHRA) found sufficient common ground to warrant further discussions. A further meeting was arranged, chaired by Stephen Lloyd and independently facilitated; the original group was extended to include the three new Sovereign Ward Councillors.

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