

SHRA

Sovereign Harbour Residents Association



T. J. Hayns
UK Retail and Leisure Team
M&G Real Estate
London EC3M 5AG
By email

5 July 2020

Dear Mr Hayns,

Sovereign Harbour Retail Park, Eastbourne

Thank you for your email of March 9th. We noted that Eastbourne Borough Council (EBC) had put planning restrictions on the ex-cinema site which you felt made it difficult to let. The Residents' Association viewed this with concern, so we arranged a telecon with EBC's Interim Director of Planning. He argued that these were not blanket restrictions but that the Council wanted a named tenant with a business plan so they would be able to assess its impact on Eastbourne Town Centre. They would accept any reasonable tenant. We also understand from that telecon that EBC would be willing to allow the premises to be divided into smaller units.

Subsequently, we have had further discussions with local residents. It is clear that the local residents first preference would be for another cinema, and we would like to know what steps M&G have taken to market the site to cinema proprietors. Residents second preference would be to see the cinema site let to a new retailer to help boost the overall viability of the retail park. If a cinema or retail outlet proves impossible, then residents would like to see the site used for indoor sports or entertainment – somewhere for the young people to go. A garden centre has also been suggested. Others would like to see the site used for craft workshops or the like.

Of course, we realise that it depends on who comes forward, but we would like to know what steps M&G have taken to market the site and what obstacles they have found to letting it. We realise that the future of the retail sector is uncertain but that makes it even more important that the retail park in general, and the ex-cinema site in particular, are revitalised as soon as possible. We wondered whether it would be helpful to have a stakeholder meeting with residents, EBC Planning and M&G. The Interim Director of Planning has indicated that he is willing to take part in such a meeting. In your March email, you did mention a pre application meeting with EBC and wondered whether that had now taken place ?

Susan Kerrison

Chair
SHRA