



Save Dreamland Campaign

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FAO: Mr Doug Brown

Dear Mr Brown

Dreamland Planning Brief

I am writing to set out the Campaign's formal response to the Dreamland Planning Brief, which was published for public consultation on 3 September 2007.

The Save Dreamland Campaign was launched in 2003 to ensure a long-term future for the Dreamland Amusement Park and its 87-year-old Scenic Railway. The Campaign is now speaking on behalf of over 13,000 people, including local residents, businesses and organisations such as the Margate Historical Society, Margate Civic Society, the Isle of Thanet Hotel and Guest House Association and SAVE Britain's Heritage.

We enclose a completed survey form, and we expand on the points in the form below. As the paragraphs and pages are not numbered, we have referenced our comments using the chapter headings/subheadings. Our comments are as follows:

Policy Chapter

Fourth paragraph: as the site contains some of Margate's most recognisable listed buildings, there should be a reference here to the Local Plan's overall approach to the protection of listed buildings.

Site Specific Policies

Third paragraph: We support the first sentence, which states that *"the retention of more than half of the site as an amusement park, retaining an operational scenic railway, with supporting enabling development as part of a comprehensive scheme, controlled by a section 106 agreement relating to parallel development and other requirements discussed below, would achieve compliance with part 1 of the policy."* Whilst our strong preference is for significantly more than half the site to be retained in amusement park use to ensure that any other redevelopment is "limited", as required by Policy T8, this Campaign is

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able to support this approach as long as more than half the site is retained **“as an amusement park”**, without allowing non-amusement park uses to creep in.

The term “amusement park” is clearly defined in Part 28 of the General Permitted Development Order 1995 as

“‘amusement park’ means an enclosed area of open land, or any part of a seaside pier, which is principally used (other than by way of a temporary use) as a funfair or otherwise for the purposes of providing public entertainment by means of mechanical amusements and side-shows; but, where part only of an enclosed area is commonly so used as a funfair or for such public entertainment, only the part so used shall be regarded as an amusement park”.

There is a great deal of precedent that demonstrates that areas without mechanical rides and sideshows do not fall within the definition of an ‘amusement park’, even when these other uses are within the “enclosed area of open land”. However, in the case of Dreamland, we consider that the Cinema building has such a strong historic and functional relationship with the amusement park (including acting as its entrance building), that the Dreamland Cinema should fall within the 51%+ calculation. Ensuring that an amusement park remains the dominant use of the site will assist in protecting the setting of the listed Scenic Railway, a setting that could be severely damaged by inappropriate uses.

Fourth paragraph: There is potential for misunderstanding in the first sentence as it refers to an ***“amusement based destination”*** on the ***“majority”*** of the site. We assume that this means that, on the assumption that there is an amusement park on 50% or more of the site, that a large part of the remainder of the site should have complementary uses, such as commercial leisure, tourism or heritage/craft/tourism retailing. We suggest that the term ***“amusement park destination”*** is used instead, as the document needs to be clear that the Council expects there to be an amusement park on more than 50% of the site.

Margate Masterplan

We are concerned at the prominence given to the Margate Masterplan in this Brief. This document was severely criticised by many organisations during the consultation as a deeply flawed document, a point acknowledged by the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector. I do not recall any revisions to the Masterplan following the public consultation, or any attempt to address points raised by objectors, in line with good practice. Whilst it is acceptable to make reference to the Masterplan’s existence, in our view this should just be as a sub-heading within the Policy Chapter, and there should be recognition of the level of objection and that the document was not adopted (presumably due to its serious flaws). It is currently given far too much prominence.

Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities to Grasp: ***“The creation of an all year round major leisure attraction that acknowledges the seaside resort heritage of the location”***. The word ***“leisure”*** should be replaced with ***“tourist”***, to differentiate the facilities at Dreamland from those which visitors to Margate could reasonably expect to find in their home towns. It is important that the Dreamland site continues to offer something different, as this is one of Margate’s unique selling points.

Constraints to Resolve: The need for the amusement park to be secured during the hours when it is closed to the public should be added as a constraint. This will be essential if a high-quality amusement park attraction of national and international significance is to be developed on the Dreamland site.

Site Integration

We support this proposal, including the drawing showing how the site can be integrated, as this allows for permeability whilst also recognising the need for the amusement park to be secured.

On Site Development

The Campaign supports this section of the document, and the Council's aspirations for the site broadly match our own. We are also pleased to see that the fourth paragraph confirms that the Scenic Railway and Dreamland Cinema would fall within the "amusement park" area.

Fifth paragraph: Specialist retail, food and drink would also be expected within an amusement park, so can fall within the 51%+, but this should remain ancillary. The document should make that clear.

It should also be made clear that there is potential for more significant retail development on the Dreamland/Arlington site (particularly as enabling development), but outside the amusement park area, as long as this development does not undermine Margate Town Centre.

Seventh paragraph: This contradicts earlier statements that the "amusement park" will occupy more than 50% of the site area, as it refers to a car park falling within this calculation. It has been held on appeal that car parking that is not ancillary to an amusement park does not form part of the amusement park. This paragraph calls into question the content of the survey form, which clearly states that the "amusement park must cover more than 50% of the site area". Furthermore, the car parking would not be designed to solely serve the amusement park – we assume that the car park will be for general use. It would therefore be disingenuous (and certainly not within the requirements of Local Plan Policy T8) to include this within the calculation. This should therefore be excluded from the 51%+ calculation. It is, however, very important that a significant area of parking is retained within, or immediately adjacent to, the Dreamland site.

Eleventh paragraph: We strongly support this paragraph: ***"Development phasing to enable an economic solution that retains an amusement attraction before, during and post development"***.

We support the drawing that accompanies this section, with one exception. The key should replace "Leisure/amusement park" with "amusement park", as this would potentially allow alternative uses into the area of land that has been designated for amusement park use, and contradicts statements elsewhere in the document. It would also be very difficult to comply with the first part of Policy T8 if there was anything other than ancillary leisure within the amusement park, as the introduction of other leisure uses could potentially push the amusement park element to below 50%. It may also have implications on the setting of the Scenic Railway.

Funding

First paragraph: Replace ***"amusement/leisure facility"*** with ***"amusement park facility"*** or, again, there is the potential for misunderstanding (and conflict with the questions on the survey form).

It is also essential that this document makes it clear to prospective developers that there will be an expectation that a Section 106 agreement will be used to fund the investment in the amusement park, in line with Policy T8, which allows

“development of a limited part of the park as part of a comprehensive scheme to upgrade the park only if it can be demonstrated that this will secure the parks future viability.” Policy T8 also states that it requires ***“a legal agreement to ensure park investment and new development run in parallel.”*** This is a significant omission. It is the role of this document to ensure this is made clear to ensure that any development complies with the Local Plan.

It should also be made clear within the funding section that, in line with PPS3 and Circular 5/05, provision of affordable housing on this site is subject to viability. This is because Policy T8 in the adopted development plan has a specific requirement to fund the amusement park. This would be a priority call on funds in this location. This is to ensure that any development is viable and to ensure that potential private sector investment is not lost.

Consultations

Can we request that the Save Dreamland Campaign and/or the Dreamland Trust be listed within the organisations to be consulted in relation to the brief and any subsequent planning applications?

As a final general point, many of the figures in the document do not include legends and are therefore somewhat confusing.

I trust that the above comments are helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely
For the Save Dreamland Campaign

Nick Laister
Campaign Leader

Enc. Completed Survey Form

cc. Sandy Ezekiel, TDC
Derek Harding, Margate Renewal Partnership