

*Draft of document to go to Bexley Council expressing the views of Erith Town Forum on how regeneration in Erith should be taken forward*

Erith cannot accommodate 700 more dwellings. Other parts of the borough must take their share. Erith already has too many blocks of flats. It would be disastrous to build more; the nail in the coffin of community cohesion in Erith. If a study were done we are sure it would show that the community is made up of families of three four and five who need family houses with gardens. Town houses perhaps on three floors would provide much more suitable accommodation and make it easier to develop a sustainable community rather than the itinerant groups currently moving in and out of many of the flats recently built in the area. This lack of community has brought with it crime and anti-social behaviour which did not previously exist on the same scale in the area.

Green park facilities near the river continue to be a must for the community together with the further development and encouragement of river sporting and business activities. Once again Forum members look to Bexley Council to recognise that the river ought to be the centre of attraction for the town. More attention should be given to its care and maintenance in order to make the shore an attractive place for visitors. Information about passing river traffic, as used to be the case, would again attract visitors to the town with the consequent impact on the retail businesses now open.

During both attempts to get the Erith Western Gateway marketed, a hotel has featured on the list of buildings to go up. Does Erith need a hotel? Clearly those who work in the industry do not see the viability because on neither occasion has a hotel chain come forward to take up the offer. Maybe it's time to think again and look at the Walnut Tree Road site for other purposes. Small/large office units or perhaps small scale assembly type industry? Cheaper rents than other areas of Bexley but with good transport links to other parts of the borough and direct to Woolwich DLR to Docklands and the City and West End. Lack of disabled access to Erith Station might then be addressed at the same time. If planners continue to consider a hotel viable then perhaps a different site perhaps directly on the A206 might be considered.

Is the area designated as "Erith Western Gateway" the appropriate area for regeneration? This question has been asked many times. Many feel that certainly the Riverside gardens should only be considered for redesign as a park area. Whether Bosworth House and Carrack House should be included has been questioned. The top of Pier Road certainly does need to be included.

The scope for more retail units will only be a reality if we see the empty units already in the town taken up and trading successfully. Clearly more work still needs to be done to attract many of those missing shops that the community need, e.g. another bank, launderette, high quality restaurant which opens in the evening, and of course, the long promised return of a regular market.

Attracting more people to come, work and live in the area brings an obligation to make sure community facilities exist for them. Soft play areas, very popular for everyday use and children's parties, small children's outside adventure park,

skateboard area, ball court. Europa Gym presently offers so many activities to hundreds of children throughout the borough and purpose built accommodation for Europa would be a very big plus for Erith. Can they wait that long? That is the question.

The Carnegie building must be conserved, made accessible to all and could be used as a conference centre, exhibition space, accommodation for small and large parties, meetings etc. These are ways to allow the building to pay for its own upkeep. Erith Museum needs a permanent home and the Carnegie building is the obvious choice but if financial constraints mean the Carnegie cannot be used for this purpose then what about the Regeneration Unit's present home in the old Police building on the river?

There is consensus that Bexley Road should be once again two-way from the Fish roundabout. Many of the units of Riverside Shopping Centre lose custom because of the one-way system. Inappropriate parking charges are also blamed. Consideration should also be given to an underpass under the Fish roundabout from Bronze Age Way straight on to Queens Road. The necessity for this will be increased with the building of the Pro Logis interchange in Slade Green and the Incinerator in Belvedere, both of which will considerably increase the number of lorries using Queens Road and Bronze Age Way.

Finally it is fair to say that together with the passion for the Riverside green space, the type of housing to be built in Erith is the prime concern of the community and it was, therefore, interesting to read that a recent Government report openly criticised developers for designing dwellings with room sizes clearly not large enough to accommodate even the most modest needs of the proposed occupants in order no doubt to maximise numbers. The private offer was compared with social housing, which has to comply with government and local authority standards and consequently the properties offer much more appropriate size rooms. Perhaps it is time that the government and local authorities apply the same standards for dwellings built for private sale.