

New England Quarter, Brighton

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Produced by

URBED
26 Gray's Inn Road
London WC1X 8HP

t. 020 7831 9986
f. 020 7831 2466

e-mail. n.falk@urbed.co.uk
website. www.urbed.co.uk

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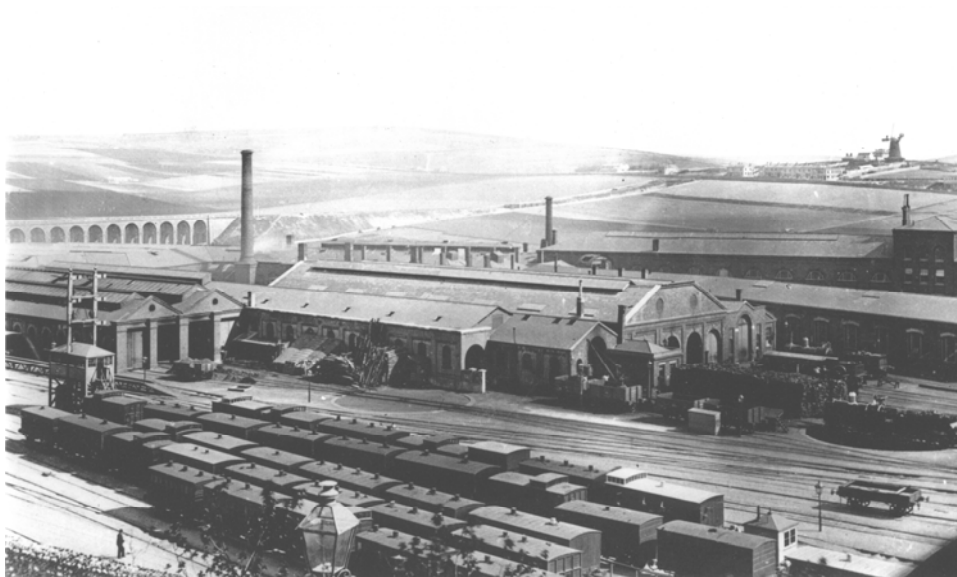


New England Quarter, Brighton: Mixed use development of former railway land

1. Summary

The development of the old Brighton Station goods yard, after decades of dereliction, is one of the largest schemes on railway land to take place outside London. The scheme provides 355 new homes, 30% of which are social (including a number of 'eco homes') with a Sainsbury's store under one of the blocks plus other retail units, a major college, training and community centres, two 250 bed hotels (one 3 star and one 4 star) and a replacement station car park.

Why regeneration was needed¹ The New England Quarter (NEQ) comprises 8.75 hectares of land, originally the locomotive works for the LB&SCR, and then the goods yard for Brighton Station until 1968, since when it has been mostly semi derelict.



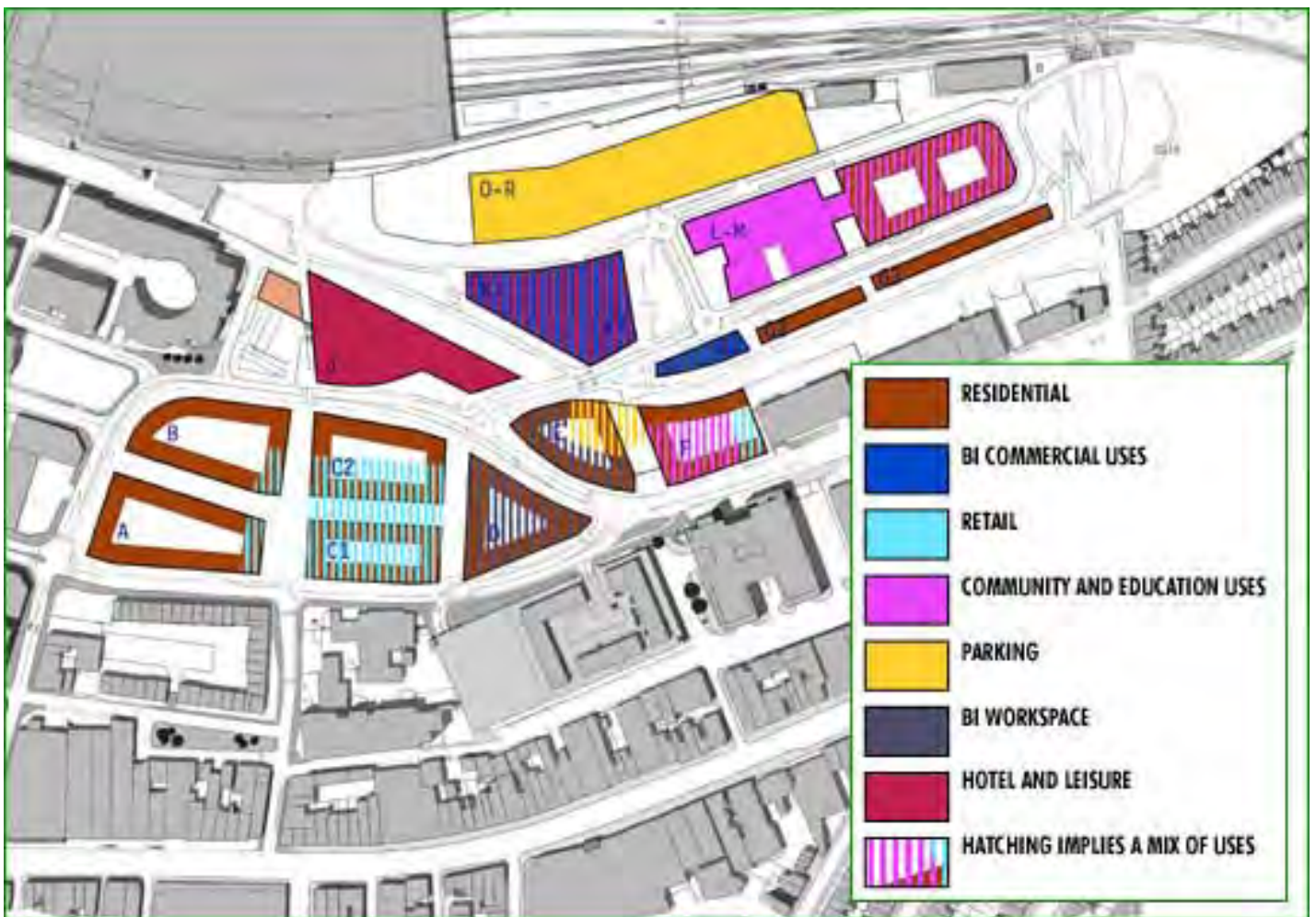
Railway goods yard looking east taken in 1960's (note viaduct on left side which can be seen from the new development)

The site had become a barrier between the Station, London Road and North Laine areas of the City and Network Rail required a transport interchange as part of the development. Several schemes had been promoted in the intervening years but all had failed including a Sainsbury's superstore application in 1998. Work on the planning application for the current scheme started in 1998, was approved in February 2003;

¹ Taken from New England Quarter (NEQ) *Brighton RICS Awards 2008* a Submission by Quoin Estates and Developments Ltd (QED)

construction started June 2004 and by summer 2008 was largely complete and occupied. The 16 acre site is on a steep slope, and the first phase involved building a new road, and decking over the station car park to release more space for development.

The scheme created a mixed use masterplan with 20 different blocks, regenerated a derelict and difficult site through the catalyst of a Sainsbury's supermarket, and integrated a high density mixed use scheme with adjoining listed buildings, creating a fitting gateway for an area that was an eyesore. It has provided an economic and environmental boost to a seaside town without any subsidy, and has largely overcome initial community objections.



Above: landuse plan of New England Quarter

2. Concept development

After the original scheme was turned down in 1997, URBED were asked to come up with a different approach, and they produced the masterplan and Design Statement, which governs what is being built. Consultation showed the importance of a strong link with London Road, and of providing as much housing as possible. URBED were keen to maximize the potential of a site next to the station (which had been restored at a cost of £26 million), which is one of the reasons for incorporating two hotels next to what will become the main arrival platform from London.



Above: an aerial view of the planned New England Quarter

The Planning Process In November 1999 the local authority held a community planning weekend to develop a brief for the site and set up a working group following a bitter and acrimonious battle to prevent a supermarket dominating the site. The planning brief was approved in October 2000, informed by a series of consultation workshops in December 2000 and again in February 2001.²

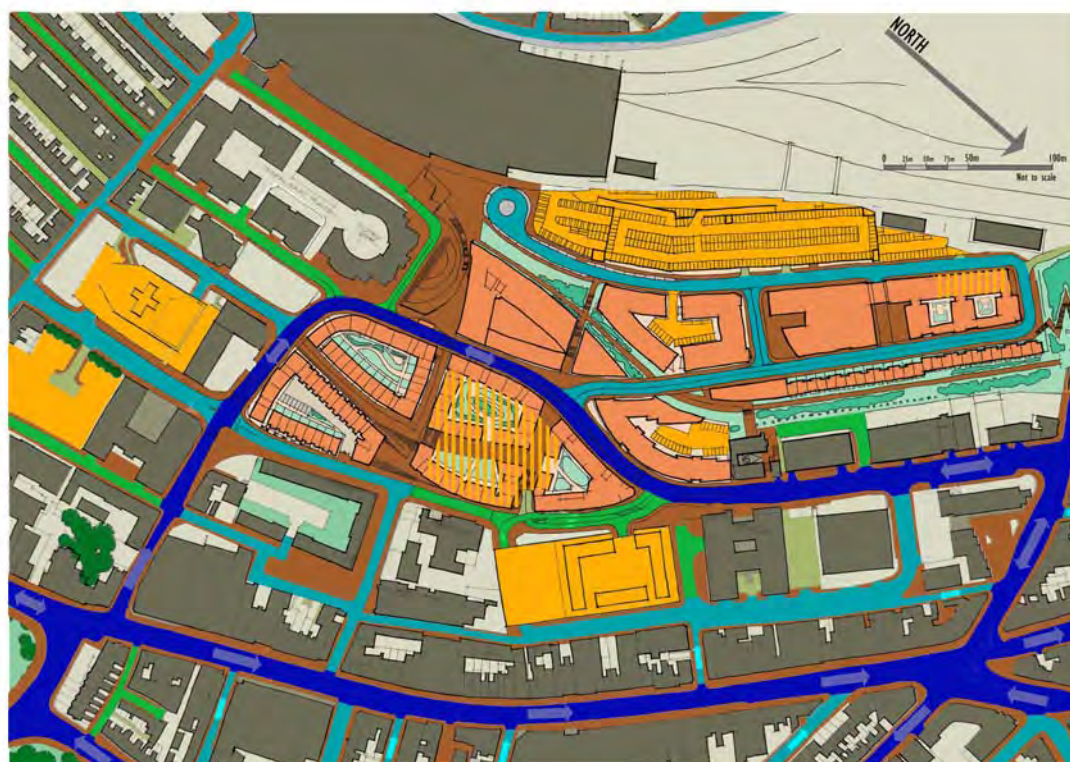
² Paragraph taken from Nicholas Falk and PRP, 'Project Description' in *The Callcutt Review*, 3.0 Project Case Studies, 3.3. Project C, Mixed use scheme adjacent to transport interchange in south coast town (New England Quarter, Brighton), page 16.



Above: original Masterplan, Autumn 199

A site wide development brief was adopted by Brighton & Hove City Council in 2000, calling for an “exemplar development”. A planning application was submitted in July 2001 and approved in September 2003 after extensive public consultation. In 2002, Planning Permission for a 8.75 ha new mixed use quarter on a steeply sloping and prominent site was finally granted after 18 months intense consultation and design work. In 2006 the first phase of high density housing above a food store was completed. The scheme includes the UK’s first 172no. zero carbon homes, granted before climate change made this imperative. The Planning Committee Chair saw the marketing benefit, stating: “This will put our city and our country on the international environment map.”³

³ Paragraph taken from *The Callcutt Review*.



Above: access plans for New England Quarter

Key principles This is one of the first Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods, applying the principles of high densities next to a highly accessible transport node, low levels of parking for the housing, and a traffic free environment, and extra measures to save energy. The guiding principles of the masterplan that were hammered out with the stakeholders were agreed as follows:

- 30% of a minimum of 355no. new homes (comprising apartments, ‘warehouse flats’ and town houses) to be affordable
- Around 150no. to eco-friendly homes, (being developed by Crest Nicholson and Bioregional) with scope for community facilities
- A terrace of eco-town houses developed by QED
- 150,000ft² European headquarters complex for Bellerby’s College, a subsidiary of DMGT Plc, enhancing educational and teaching facilities in Brighton
- 30,000 ft² (2,800m²) office building and 20,000 ft² (1,858m²) of space for small businesses
- 25,000 ft² (2,323m²) new Sainsbury’s supermarket with a 194-space car park together with three shop units for other traders
- Community centre for the Black Minority Ethnic Community Partnership along with a further 6,500ft² of unallocated community/commercial space in Blocks C and D

- A green corridor and Site of Nature Conservation Importance
- Jury's Inn gained planning permission for the development of a new three star hotel
- Proposals are being brought forward for Blocks E, F and G⁴
- Beetham Group proposed the development of a 40 storey luxury hotel, and their proposal was turned down, as being out of scale.

3. Finance

The project is estimated to cost over £250 million. The scheme was developed in partnership with Network Rail (then Railtrack Properties) and the initial funding came from Sainsbury's Developments and local developer (QED). Funding for construction came from individual occupiers and developers, including Osborn Securities for a new Jury's Inn hotel, Pinnacle (an offshoot of Associated Newspapers) for the new Bellerby's College, Barratt for the initial residential accommodation, and a range of others who will be involved in later phases.

The bespoke masterplan approach gave certainty to both developer and council whilst still allowing design freedom on individual sites within the masterplan framework. The scheme needed a high value 'pump primer' to be created out of low value basement space to fund the initial enabling works. This was created by putting the supermarket in the 'basement' of blocks C and D which 'hid' the service yard and unsightly elevations. Without this the scheme would not have been viable. A 'Green procurement' strategy was adopted for each block.⁵

4. Design challenges and solutions⁶

- Continuity of a station car park was required during construction phase. This was achieved with an innovative temporary access ramp and active management.
- Careful analysis of townscape, strong attention to urban design and architecture meant that visibility from adjoining conservation areas and listed buildings (Station and St. Bartholomew's church) could be dealt with.
- To resolve the difficult level differences across the site a new street was created. This had a pedestrian route pattern that worked with levels and respected the history of the site.
- Reliance on the car was reduced by creating 'car free' development as far as possible.
- Accessibility to public transport was improved by creating pedestrian and cycle routes through the site along with providing only minimal car parking provision.
- London Road Shopping centre was supported through the improvement of linkages to the centre, improved public realm and through the funding for a new town centre manager.

⁴ Paragraph taken from *The Callcutt Review*.

⁵ Paragraph taken from *Brighton RICS Awards 2008*

⁶ Parts of section taken from *Brighton RICS Awards 2008*

- The need to achieve a fully mixed use development bringing diversity and vitality to the area was met by stacking uses vertically as well as horizontally. This subsequently freed up land for public spaces and routes.
- The aspirations and needs of the local community were accommodated during the planning stage by working in partnership with the council, organising community planning weekends, exhibitions and public meetings, and, for example, have resulted in an attractive open space and wildlife area.
- A manageable legal structure for the mixed use scheme was the result of splitting the site into freehold packets divided vertically bounded by new streets, and then by dividing long leaseholds horizontally.

One surprise was when the developer of the major hotel site next to the station put in an application by noted architects Allies and Morrison for a forty storey tower. This has roused considerable local controversy, but has won support from English Heritage, CABA (the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment), before being turned down, after a public enquiry.

5. Environmental considerations⁷

The scheme is widely regarded as being ‘cutting edge’ in applying innovative principles. Hence the original intentions of installing a Combined Heat and Power system were foiled due to local opposition to the siting of the plant on a roundabout.

- The 40% carbon emission savings target has been mostly exceeded.
- The requirement for Ecohomes ‘very good’ rating on residential elements and BREEAM ‘very good’ for commercial buildings has been met.
- There is now a Car Club for residential occupiers.
- Virtually car free housing has been created and parking for commercial elements is heavily reduced.



Above right: The Greenway in New England Quarter

⁷ Section taken from *Brighton RICS Awards 2008*

6. Regeneration and Community Benefits⁸

The development has transformed this derelict brownfield site and will, when fully occupied, provide a vibrant new urban quarter fully integrated with the existing townscape.

- A minimum 30% social housing provision is pepper potted throughout the scheme. (Which has never been done before locally.)
- A town centre manager has been funded to assist regeneration of the adjoining London Road.
- There is now strong pedestrian permeability through the scheme to adjoining areas, particularly links to the station, which will be improved further when the site next to the station (temporary car park at present) is developed.
- The design of each block by different architects allows individual quality design.
- The development is anticipated to provide over 1,000 jobs, contribute substantially to the local economy and act as a catalyst to regenerate the surrounding area.
- Community benefits include two Community Centres, provision of improved playground facilities for the adjoining school and improvements to public realm.
- The scheme sold relatively fast, even with an economic downturn.
- The Victorian Railway heritage has been integrated into the scheme, including public art using local artists.

7. Lessons Learned⁹

The development took longer than expected. This is because despite the benefits, the scheme became a political hot potato due to its proximity to a recently regenerated area (the North Laines) and with a large environmental lobby who were opposed to the idea of a Sainsbury store.

- Last minute (and unexpected) objections were made by English Heritage to the massing of the scheme which would affect views of a listed church from the railway.
- Changes in personnel at both office and councillor level, as people who understood and supported the scheme left, to be replaced by those who were new to it and who distrusted developers.
- The difficulties in going from the overall vision to detailed approval were complicated by the intensification of some of the elements, including the surprise application to build a 40 storey hotel tower next to the listed station.
- The Council required new detailed applications to be submitted on all sites, with 40% affordable as the new Council policy, which played havoc with scheme viabilities.

⁸ Section taken from *Brighton RICS Awards 2008*

⁹ Section taken from *The Callcutt Review*

- More ecohomes were needed to make this part of the project viable due to higher costs (£150 as opposed to £120 per sq ft) and also the requirement that 30% of the Bioregional homes should be affordable.
- The Council were heavily involved in detailed design, changing what the architects had proposed.
- Changes in building regulations over the course of the scheme increased costs and again required changes.
- The Council were strict on the interpretation of Section 106 obligations, particularly timescales, where a more flexible approach would have produced better results.

8. Conclusions

The scheme offers a number of benefits for Brighton. It is bringing a very large brownfield site back into use, and in ways that will provide the city with a fitting gateway. It is making the most of the station location, through a mix of uses. It will expand the range of housing, thus reducing some of the pressures on the housing market. The mix of uses, including the new college, will help inject new life into London Road. The modern architecture will help conceal some post war eyesores, and should compliment the popular neighbouring Laines.

The renaissance of the New England Quarter, named after New England Street which runs through it, will continue the process of renaissance which has made Brighton one of England's fastest growing cities. The hotels will appeal to the market for meetings and conferences. The development should be a renaissance landmark and will bring new visitors to the city. It will also help further diversify the city's economy.

Taken from 'Building for life' *NewStart Magazine*, January 2009, p.42

Case study: City Point, Brighton.

Created from former railway sheds, the City Point development could not get any closer to Brighton's main train station. With commuting times to London of less than one hour, the mixed-use housing scheme is clearly aimed at those working in the capital.

One of the principles for this development is that it is car-free, 'a brave decisions' according to Cabe. Parking is only available for disabled people and for shoppers on a short-stay basis.

The proximity of the scheme to the station and local shops are obviously important factors in reducing the need for car ownership, with residents able to take advantage of a local car club. There is a small but well-used public square opening up to a café and a supermarket, offering a place to sit and meet, while enjoying views across Brighton.

The project was challenging as it needed not only to provide high-density housing for a mix of tenants and owners, but also to create a new destination in Brighton. The development picked up this year's Building for Life award for the southeast region, with Cabe describing the mixed-use element of the scheme and its integration with the rest of the neighbourhood as key to its success.

Part of the wider redevelopment of New England Quarter City Point not only has a sense of community as part of Brighton but has also been successful in creating its own identity.

Chetwood Architects worked with URBED to create a mixed-use masterplan for the site.



Below: *The Meaning of Density*, taken from *Living Places: Urban Renaissance in the South East*, by URBED and the Bartlett School of Planning for the Government Office for the South East and Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, December 2000.

Image produced by the Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Older housing types...

Victorian Terraces
60-80 Dwellings/ha.
280 (average) Habitable Rooms/ha.

Garden Cities
30-40 Dwellings/ha.
165 Habitable Rooms/ha.

Recent developments...

Executive Homes
5-10 Dwellings/ha.
40 (average) Habitable Rooms/ha.

Suburban Semis
15-30 Dwellings/ha.
90 (average) Habitable Rooms/ha.

Alternative approaches...

Urban Villages
75-125 Dwellings/ha.
500 (average) Habitable Rooms/ha.

Infill in Historic Towns
80-140 Dwellings/ha.
500 (average) Habitable Rooms/ha.

Each inner box encloses one hectare (or 2.47 acres)