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John Remblance meets more council resistance to his efforts to energise Southend seafront's rebirth

SEASIDE REGENERATION

Southend City Council is once again standing in the way of **John Remblance's** plans to revitalise the seafront, with new proposals to convert a loss-making pub into a takeaway meeting with resistance from the authority's planning committee.

John Remblance's latest plans to revitalise Southend seafront have met with further resistance from Southend City Council just weeks after the authority refused retrospective permission for two of the amusement operator's other venues.

Proposals to convert The Cornucopia into a takeaway were turned down by the council's planning committee this week, despite Remblance being forced to close the historic pub in 2023 after it made a "significant loss."

"Plans have been refused by Southend Council over concerns it could cause harm to the character and appearance of the building - despite Mr Remblance promising to leave the outside of the pub untouched," reported The Echo.

"Remblance purchased the pub, dating back to 1854, in 2022 and carried out a £13,000 revamp but closed the pub last year after it failed to make a profit. As part of his plan, he aimed to offer a 'healthy alternative' to the



seafront fish and chips on offer by selling chicken and salad."

The council refused the application after stating "insufficient information" had been submitted to detail how a change of use would not be materially harmful to the locally listed building.

"It is pleasing that the owner doesn't wish to change any of the aesthetics of the building, and it's paramount we save this heritage instead of building

more ghostly and 'modern' buildings," said councillor Colin Campbell.

It's not a good look for a council that has overseen the financial decimation of the city's major landmark, the world's longest pier. But there was a peace offering of sorts from the authority.

Concluding its rejection, an olive branch was waved for the Esplanade champion John Remblance: "While the planning application has not been deemed to be accept-

able under current framework", the councillor said, "I would be pleased to see a new application submitted - that is acceptable under policy and protects its character."

It has been an extremely frustrating start to 2024 for Remblance who has seen council opposition to three of his projects designed to revive the seafront promenade. Last month, the council ordered Remblance's Star Amusements to dismantle

hoardings on his Circus Circus arcade and Scoops 37 ice cream parlour, after refusing retrospective planning permission on the grounds that the signs were "inappropriate" for the area.

However, a spokesperson for Star Amusements observed "there are a number of council led schemes that appear to be ongoing which will also be submitted retrospectively in the coming months," including a "huge new illuminated digital advertising screen" being erected on Victoria Plaza.

"I am not sure how our signage is any different nor deemed to harm the commercial character of Southend seafront."

It appears there is a significant divide as to what is harming the commercial character of Southend seafront more: John Remblance's plans to revive properties on the Esplanade or the council's obstruction to those endeavours. The answer, most would probably agree, is the one which is stopping investment on the city's seafront.

Council lacking cornucopia

Southend Echo reported...
"Plans have been refused by Southend Council over concerns it could cause harm to the character and appearance of the building - despite Mr Remblance promising to leave the outside of the pub untouched..."

Industry continues to press Commission to adopt independent recommendations for GSGB

GAMBLING SURVEY

A meeting of the cross-sector Scrutiny Group has been called to action the industry's next steps to ensure the Gambling Commission applies the seven recommendations presented by the Independent Assessor for the new methodology for the Gambling Survey for Great Britain.

The call is a timely one: it follows a fortnight of key events and intensive media reports where the test statistics from recent trials of the new methodology have been cited - against the guidance

of the Commission themselves.

The new methodology currently re-evaluates problem gambling data at a rate 6-8 fold higher than the average recorded in circa 24 surveys conducted by the Commission over the last 6 years.

The transformation of the calculus for the GSGB has already hit an obstacle - most importantly from the independent assessor appointed by the Commission, Dr Patrick Sturgis. In his report, the LSE professor warned that the figures should be treated with "due caution" and lodged seven recommendations - four of which he considered of "the highest priority" - to

ensure the GSGB has credibility.

The industry's Scrutiny Group last met at ICE in February and subsequent representations have been lodged with the Commission and DCMS.

Charlotte Meller, General Manager at the Gambling Business Group, said: "The industry is pressing the Commission to address the independent assessor's concerns and apply the seven recommendations. It's crucial that the GSGB delivers accurate, credible and trustworthy data, and Professor Sturgis' recommendations can only help ensure that."