

No 'City'- on-sea' for Brighton

Ellen Bennett

Brighton council has rejected Allies & Morrison's plans for a 42-storey tower in the city centre, saying it is "not looking for a new City of London on the coast".

The skyscraper, designed for the Beetham Organisation, was rejected unanimously by Brighton & Hove City Council's planning committee last week, on officers' advice. Proposed for a city centre site near the station, it included 160 homes and a four-star Radisson SAS hotel.

The council, which will decide planning applications for tall buildings by signature architects such as Frank Gehry, Piers Gough and Wilkinson Eyre in the near future, said that the tower would have created a "windy and inhospitable microclimate".

Roger Dowty, the council's design and conservation team manager, said that it did not fit in with the tall building strategy published by Brighton council in

January 2004 because it was in the wrong location and would have had a negative impact on nearby listed buildings.

"The tall building guidance was not about sending out the message that we are now becoming a skyscraper city," he said. "We have some superb historic areas and a very important seafront and want to preserve and enhance those. We are not looking for a new City of London on the coast, but we are keen to raise densities in those areas that are best able to sustain them."

Dowty added that the council has refused more applications for more tall buildings than it has approved since the introduction of the tall building strategy.

CZWG partner Piers Gough said he was not worried by the decision on the Allies & Morrison tower, adding: "Our building is in an area [Hove] that was invited for tall building consideration. There are very, very different circumstances."

Leaked document reveals Scottish 'anti-green plans'

Scottish ministers are planning a move that would allow unpopular and ecologically damaging projects to go ahead by radically centralising planning power, environmentalists claimed this week.

Friends of the Earth Scotland said on Tuesday that it had seen confidential Cabinet papers proposing that the public would have almost no right to object to major developments such as airports, nuclear power stations and waste sites. The proposals include introducing new national planning frameworks without formal public consultation, and national priorities being set by the Cabinet without parliamentary approval.

Director of Keppie Architecture, Andrew Pinkerton, predicted a strong backlash if the forthcoming white paper did reflect the leaked documents. "It does not seem right that ministers should take away democratic rights in the planning system," he said. "There will be a strong lobby against it because it takes away the community's right to challenge decisions. If power is centralised, architects will be concerned that ministers are properly briefed."

A spokesman for the Scottish Executive said: "No decisions have been made. We are determined to balance the rights of communities with more efficient planning."



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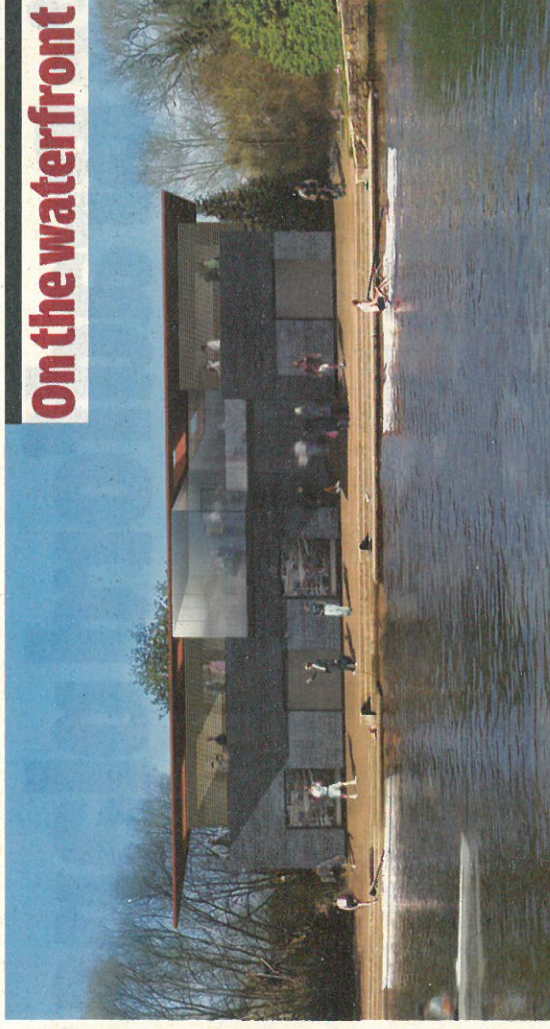
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IN BRIEF

● **House in order** The new government must radically rethink housing policy, the Federation of Master Builders said this week. Director general Ian Davis said: "There are around 700,000 empty homes, kept out of use by VAT law, which charges [for] refurbishment, but allows new property to be built VAT free."

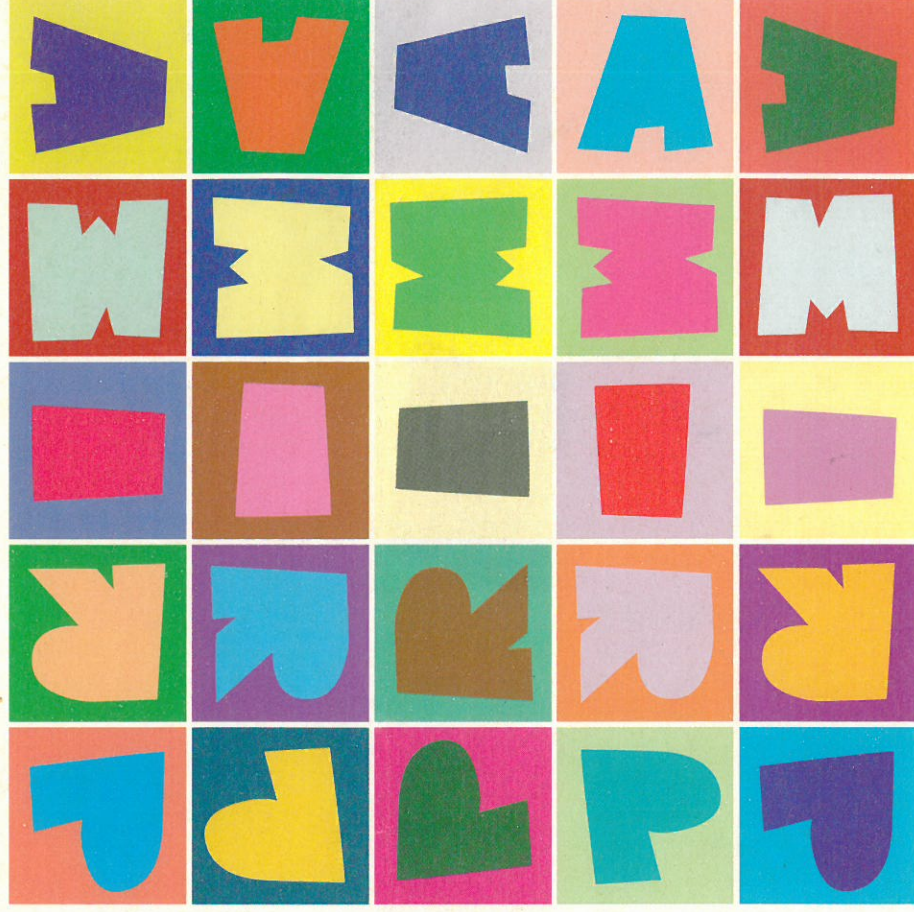
● **PFI for HKS** Ryder HKS has been appointed to design five new schools in Redcar and Cleveland in the council's own PFI project worth £155 million. The five developments, which include rebuilding a technology college and merging two primary schools are expected to be completed next year.



On the waterfront

A £1.8m boathouse for University College Oxford designed by Belsize Architects in London has been submitted for planning permission. The boathouse, to replace the original 1881 building which burned down six years ago, has been the subject of nearly a year's consultation because the land is both in the greenbelt and on a flood plain. The practice, which won a competition to design the boathouse last July, has also had to consider wildlife conservation on the sensitive riverside site. The building includes three boat bays, a repair bay, changing facilities, a gym, a clubroom and six student study bedrooms.

design Alan Fletcher | Julia Aldridge | Bruce Nilsson



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