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Happy New Year to all our readers

After years of discussion and consultation, the Government has announced the date for the implementation of the 'Home Information Pack' scheme (also referred to as the Sellers Packs) - 1st June 2007

This will be the biggest shake up of the way in which people buy and sell property that this country has seen for many years. It will mean that any property sold after this date will have to have a 'Home Information Pack' in place that includes amongst other things, the ownership of the property, details of the title and title number, searches, planning history, guarantees, building regulation consents etc, along with a home condition report and an energy efficiency rating. The pack will have to be completed and be available before a property goes onto the market.

The home condition report will not be a survey but a specific report on the condition of the property. Each aspect of the property will be graded on a 1-3 rating and could include a summary/comment box - nothing more.

Finally, energy efficiency rating.

I personally think that in time buyers will find this aspect of the report quite interesting and by default will make sellers far more aware of how 'green' their property is. For example, if two similar properties are on the market in the same street, one with a good energy rating and other with a poor rating, the one with the good rating will be far more desirable and could well command a higher price. It will be the cheaper house to run with smaller fuel bills etc. Conversely the house with the poor energy rating will not be as desirable and the higher running costs could well make it less saleable.

There are interesting times ahead and we will keep you up-to-date as more information becomes available.

Market Trends

Last year really can be described as a year of two halves. The beginning of 2005 was slow with a lack of confidence, reductions in price and huge stocks of properties providing buyers with plenty of choice.

The second half of the year saw a complete reverse of the market. There was renewed confidence, decreasing stocks of property for sale and a stabilisation of prices. In fact the last quarter was extremely busy and my agency had the best November ever for sales agreed.

2006 started with a bang with many sales being agreed - even on the first day back in January - and many new properties coming onto the market. I believe 2006 will be a good year for the property market with high levels of activity. We may see some price increases over the spring and summer months. However, if there are I think they will be very gradual.

What's on!

Some local events scheduled during the next few months

- 01/02 Jan **St Petersburg Ballet Theatre**
Sleeping Beauty - Dome
- 08 Jan **Record Fair** - Brighton Centre
- 14 Jan **Brighton & Hove Albion vs. Leeds United** - Withdean
- 16/21 Jan **Saturday Night Fever** - Theatre Royal
- 28 Jan **WA Mozart** - Birthday Concert - 7.30pm. St Bartholomew's Church
- 04 Feb **One Night of Queen** - Gary Mullen & The Works - Brighton Centre
- 10, 11 & 12 Feb **Creative Stitches** - Brighton Centre
- 13 Feb **James Blunt** - Brighton Centre
- 17, 18 & 19 Feb **Modelworld** - Brighton Centre
- 19 Feb **Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra** - Mozart 2006
The Symphonies: First to Last - Dome
- 06 Mar **An Audience with Jimmy Greaves + Special Guest.** Hove Centre
- 18 Mar **Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra** - Mozart 2006
The Tribute: Mozart's Messiah - Dome

Please note: It is advisable to check dates, times and venue before travelling as each event is planned well in advance.

Nobody does it better than the Jubilee

Brighton's landmark Jubilee Library has won a major architecture prize

Story courtesy of
The Brighton & Hove Leader

The eco-friendly library beat 14 other schemes to scoop the Prime Minister's Award for Better Public Buildings.

The contest celebrates any scheme that helps build a better life for a community, recognising excellence in design quality and funding methods of public building schemes.

Presenting the award, Tessa Jowell MP, culture, media and sport secretary, said: "The Jubilee Library is a stunning piece of architecture that enhances its location, its environment and its community."

Judges said the 4,000sqm Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project scored particularly well on sustainability.

Designed by London-based Bennetts Associates and Lomax Cassidy & Edwards of Queens Road, Brighton, the library is designed to achieve the top national environmental rating. It uses eco-friendly materials and recycled rainwater, sunshine and sea breezes provide much of the heating, lighting and ventilation.

The judges said: "This PFI project has given Brighton a long-awaited facility which has been designed and delivered with great flair." Since it opened last March, visitor and book borrowing figures have tripled from numbers at the temporary facility in Vantage Point, Brighton.

Sue John, chair of the council's culture committee, said: "This is very rewarding because the prize is not just about the building but how well it serves its purpose and improves the lives of residents."

The prize is part of the British Construction Industry Awards. It is sponsored by the Government-backed Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, and the Office of Government Commerce. However, the library missed out on the £20,000 RIBA Stirling Prize despite being a joint favourite to win. It was one of only six buildings in Europe to be shortlisted for the prize, seen as the Oscar of British architecture. The judges' vote went to the Scottish Parliament building.

Stories of towers and high anxiety down the years

by Adam Trimmingham
 Courtesy of the Brighton & Hove Leader

Brighton is buzzing with opposition to the tower block planned for the Marina by architect Jim Eyre. Meanwhile much of Hove is hopping about Frank Gehry's twin towers for the King Alfred site. But was there much opposition to the first wave of tower blocks erected in the 1960s by architects far less eminent than Eyre and Gehry? The answer is an emphatic Yes.

Until the 60s, the nearest building to a skyscraper was Embassy Court on the border of Brighton and Hove. But by 1960, it was plain that Brighton would be sure to accept towers. Sir Hugh Casson, an eminent architect of the era, was called in by the council to

to the Regency Society. Many people objected to the ugly Bedford Hotel, insensitively designed after fire destroyed the fine old Victorian building in 1964. The Society particularly disliked Cavendish House, a 15-storey block of flats on King's Road on the site of a Regency building. It also deplored the materials used in these flats such as black bricks as being wrong for Brighton and were backed up in this by historian Clifford Musgrave, director of the Royal Pavilion. But the buildings went up and the trend towards towers seemed unstoppable. It culminated in Sussex Heights, which at about 330ft is still the tallest tower in Brighton. The council itself decided to build high rise council flats to replace some of the last remaining slums. Perhaps the most unfortunate were those in Albion Hill. Not only did they replace housing which would be in high demand today but they also obscured views of the Royal Pavilion. The tallest council tower was Theobald House near the station, named after Stanley Theobald who chaired the housing committee. But the worst blocks were Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge, also named after councillors. Stuck up in an isolated position at Hollingdean, they suffered from almost every disease known to high buildings and cost enormous sums in remedial work. Over in Hove there was a plan for a tower block on part of the King Alfred site but this was rejected after a public inquiry. Eventually the craze died

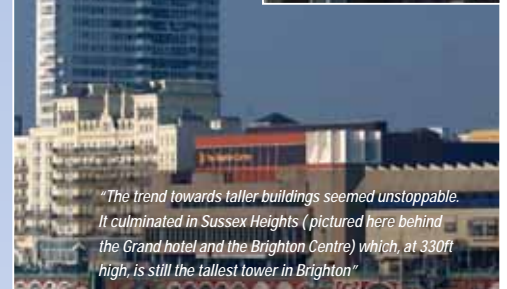
down but not before one last scare. In 1972, developers wanted to pull down Brighton Station and replace it with a modern development. This so enraged conservationists led by Selma Montford that they formed their own organisation called the Brighton Society. There doubtless Mrs Montford has been going strong ever since her famous victory over

give advice. He suggested some restraint on skyscrapers but effectively gave the green light for town centre towers in his recommendations. These included a stipulation that no seafront building should exceed 160ft in height and that any taller blocks should be put at the back of them. This did not please the conservationists who at that time mainly belonged

this scheme. The climate began to change as both Brighton and Hove councils appointed dedicated planning officers. Previously planning had been under the aegis of borough engineers. Both Ken Fines in Brighton and Michael Ray in Hove successfully advised councillors that listed buildings should remain and that no more high towers should be built.



Frank Gehry, Sir Hugh Casson and Jim Eyre



"The trend towards taller buildings seemed unstoppable. It culminated in Sussex Heights (pictured here behind the Grand hotel and the Brighton Centre) which, at 330ft high, is still the tallest tower in Brighton"

Pictured above: Theobald House, Embassy Court and Cavendish House



Selma Montford, still leading the Brighton Society after a famous victory to save Brighton Station in 1972

That advice was heeded for the best part of 40 years but now Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott has said councils such as Brighton and Hove should look towards the sky to solve their housing problems. The Gehry and Eyre towers may or may not be built but the likelihood is that soon, somewhere in the city, the first towers since the 1960s will soon be started.



Albion Hill in 1960

Did you know?

Woodingdean

It is generally accepted that the name Woodingdean, (Kelly's 1890 Directory) evolved from its association with Woodingdean (i.e. wooded valley) Farm which was situated in the south end of what is now Ovingdean.

Perhaps the earliest farming settlement to be identified in the area was situated in Wick Bottom, adjacent to Woodingdean Lawn Memorial Park, off Warren Road. It was here that the Wick Farm, later Warren Farm was situated.

Woodendean House, which stood in what is now Ovingdean Close, was built in the 1830s by a Mr Lennard. By the late 1800s it was known as Woodingdean

House. Notable owners include Mrs Vander Elst, who lived there from 1929 - 1939, 'the richest woman in Brighton'. She had three Rolls Royce motor cars and fifteen servants!

Another notable owner was Thomas Henry Sargeant, a Brighton 'gent' - better known as Max Miller. He owned the house from 1939-45 and 'cheekily' changed its name to Woodland Grange regardless of the fact that it certainly never was a grange.

Charles 2nd is reputed to have passed down Downsway in 1651 enroute to his escape to France. For some years Downsway was called King Charles 2nd Avenue.

In 1888 a local man discovered artifacts including pottery and coins at the top of Falmer Road. The site is thought to be a small roman settlement.

BRIGHTON - NEWS IN BRIEF

Falmer school could get millions

Falmer school could get a multi-million pound investment as the city's first academy, under plans recently discussed.

The school's governors and council's education committee have decided to consult on options for the future strategic development of the school. One option could lead to it becoming an academy in 2008.

Jon Aisbitt, a local resident and businessman has offered major financial support with £2m towards the new academy. This would in turn attract from £10m to £25m of extra investment from the government to provide a state-of-the-art school building.

Other options include Falmer School either staying the same as it is or applying to become a school specialising in enterprise and business.

As an independently-funded school, Falmer would be free to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of the individual pupils but would continue to be subject to government Ofsted inspections.

A consultation in the coming months will lead to a feasibility study during the 2006 Spring and Summer terms. If this is successful, a funding agreement would then be submitted to the government and if approved, work on design could start in September 2006.

Council director of Children, Families and Schools David Hawker said: "This is the right time for the school to be considering options for the future. The sponsorship, and cash injection from the government, could provide newly refurbished accommodation, state-of-the-art facilities and help attract further high quality staff. Links with the universities would provide new learning opportunities for students and staff."

Head teacher Stuart McLaughlin said: "I am hugely excited about the future prospects for Falmer. We have gone from strength to strength in recent years and it is crucial that we build on this success to secure a bright future for the school."

Minimising disruption around Floral Clock

Disruption to residents caused by roadworks around the Floral Clock area of Hove over the coming months is being kept to a minimum thanks to the city council planning ahead jointly with Southern Water.

The council's work to improve crossing facilities, reduce traffic speeds and make the area more attractive is already underway and work on the main part of the scheme started in January.

Meanwhile Southern Water have brought forward a water mains renewal project for the area - including an upgrade for the fire hydrant networks - so that work can go on at the same time.

When all the work is finished in about six months' time residents will have a more attractive, safer and accessible environment, as well as a modern water service.

History on our doorstep



by Robert Nemeth
Courtesy of Latest Homes

Hanover Crescent

Amon Henry Wilds, perhaps Brighton's greatest architect, was employed by an entrepreneur called Henry Brooker in 1814 to create Hanover Crescent, a series of grand linked houses, built to look like eight large villas. On closer inspection, six of these contain three houses, one contains two, and the last contains four, making a total of twenty-four Grade II listed houses. The buildings do not form a unified composition although they do share features such as shell motifs, bow fronts and Wilds' characteristic Ammonite pilasters. The crescent was completed around 1822, the year in which the Level was formally laid out to the west.

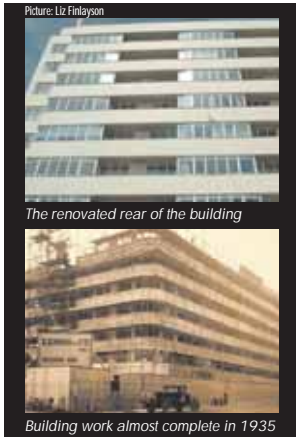
All of the buildings have two storeys with a lower ground floor and some have attic rooms (some added unsympathetically). The two single-storey buildings that flank the crescent (North and South Lodges) are also listed, as is the brick-edged flint garden wall. Interestingly, the Brighton Improvement Act of 1884 led to the garden being taken over by Brighton Corporation. Famous former residents include novelist Horace Smith who lived at No. 10 in 1826-40, and Sir Rowland Hill, the originator of the penny post and chairman of the London and Brighton Railway Company who lived at No. 11 in 1844-6. Wilds also designed Park Crescent, on the north

side of the Level, which is another pleasing architectural composition and certainly a future column topic.

Hanover ward was first designated in 1894 and covered the area between Lewes Road, Elm Grove, Queen's Park Road and Southover Street. Fortunately, the very attractive terraces of small rendered properties with rectangular windows have escaped the massive development that has taken place across the city. This densely-populated area was developed from about 1860 although the nearby Percy Almshouses, at the bottom of Elm Grove, were erected in 1795. The ward is now called Hanover & Elm Grove and has expanded to include land up to Bear Road and Brighton General Hospital. Hanover was designated a 'general improvement area' in 1969-76 and has become a very fashionable place to live.

As the crescent is separated from the road by mature gardens and a wall, it really is possible to imagine being in Regency Brighton, though the traffic noise and parked modern cars do give the game away slightly. One of these exquisite villas was recently put on the market for £1.1 million. It looks like I had better get saving!





The modernist's dream with a new lease of life

By Adam Tringham. Courtesy of The Brighton & Hove Leader

There has been almost universal praise last year for the fine restoration of Embassy Court, the distinctive block of flats on Brighton seafront. This follows real fears ten years ago that the modernist building near the border with Hove would have to be demolished because of its poor condition. All the adulation makes it easy to forget the fuss there was in 1935 when Embassy Court was built.

Historian Clifford Musgrave in his book *Life in Brighton* said it was built in "the brutal monolithic concrete manner of the time." Musgrave called it the first major challenge to the supremacy of the late-Georgian architecture on the seafront. He believed it to be an affront both in scale and character to the nearby Regency buildings in Hove. Musgrave said many people would not have objected to the building of Embassy Court elsewhere in Brighton. What upset them was the building of such a tall building right next to the historic Brunswick estate, its strong horizontal lines clashing with the vertical pillars of the Regency houses. Even today, when viewed from the west, the back of Embassy Court is not a pretty sight as it soars several storeys above Brunswick Terrace. But there were many who thought Embassy Court was the shape of things to come. Among them was Sir Herbert Carden, often described as the maker of modern Brighton. In that same year of 1935, he suggested the whole seafront should be demolished from Kemp Town to Hove and replaced with new structures in the style of Embassy Court. This did not happen and the only other large seafront building of any note in the same style was Marine Gate in Kemp Town, built just before the Second World War in 1939. Embassy Court was designed by Wells Coates, an idealistic designer who had become an architect in 1928. Born in 1895, Wells Coates believed strongly in modernist architecture. He designed furniture and fittings to match his creations. But he and his modernist colleagues were doomed to be disappointed. Although their

buildings were commended, commissions for them were few and far between. Wells Coates died in Vancouver in 1958. His most famous flats at Lawn Road in London were popular with intellectuals before the war but were eventually taken over by Camden Council. Among the residents there was writer Agatha Christie while down in Brighton, journalist and playwright Keith Waterhouse was probably the best known resident of Embassy Court.



Agatha Christie



Keith Waterhouse

But more than ten years ago, Waterhouse decided Brighton was becoming sleazy and Embassy Court decrepit. He decamped to Bath. The concrete used in a pioneering way by Wells Coates did not last well and rusty metal caused it to crack. There was also a series of disputes about the ownership of the building. Although councillors and conservationists were determined to rescue Embassy Court, the disputes made this difficult. It was not until the residents got together and won a series of court cases that work on restoration became possible. They formed a company called Bluestorm which authorised the multi-million pound project now largely completed. Embassy Court looks better this summer than at anytime since it was built 60 years ago.

Maximising your sale prospects

The vast array of property-related TV programmes proliferating our screens is certainly an indication of our appetite for home improvement. Presumably this has something to do with pride of ownership and making the most out of an Englishman's castle.

However, once they come to sell, many people are understandably more focused on the next property than they are on the one they are leaving, and it is surprising how many properties we see offered for sale where the vendor has not taken advantage of some simple things that can be done to increase their chances of selling whilst maximising their price.

Bear in mind that we are not just selling bricks and mortar, but an aspirational lifestyle, as most people purchase a better property than the one they are leaving.

A recent survey among estate agents identified key aspects of property presentation that they regard as important to get right when selling. 77% said that decluttering the interior was among their top three tips, 68% included a thorough interior clean, 48% highlighted the need to tidy the garden, 40% suggested neutral decoration, 35% recommended a fresh coat of exterior paint, and 24% felt a new kitchen or bathroom was important.

Interestingly, gadgets, technology and security features ranked very low, with less than 1% of agents citing these as important, presumably as these are things that can easily be added at a later date as required.

It is interesting to note that the above figures overwhelmingly point to the need to create a strong first visual impression, and this concurs with our own findings that whilst buyers do not always know precisely what they want, they certainly know it when they see it.

Woodingdean Youth Football Club



Maslen Estate Agents are proud to sponsor Woodingdean Youth Football Club again this year. The under 10's team made up of 20 players, all from the East Brighton area, have performed fantastically this season retaining their crown as champions of the league, and are still unbeaten. Could we be looking at future members of the 2012 Olympic squad? Good luck for the coming year.