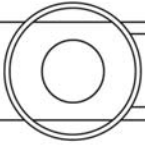


**Submissions of RTW Town Forum Members to the Planning Application:
“Demolition of former Bandstand in Calverley Ground”**



ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS TOWN FORUM

To: planningcomments@tunbridgewells.gov.uk
Andrew Taylor (Development Control);
Mel Henley (Parks Manager);
Jonathan MacDonald (Director of Regeneration & Sustainability)

Subject: 10/00591/CAC - Calverley Grounds Bandstand

Comment to Planning Application 10/00591/CAC

– Calverley Grounds - Demolition of Bandstand

It is difficult for me to understand, that so much Council time, not to count the time of other consultees, is being wasted to satisfy one singular body, campaigning for its retention, without a clear commitment of raising the full amount of necessary funds for an adequate replacement within a set time limit.

Back in 2005, I was approached by the Heritage Officer and the Parks Manager of that time regarding the possible future of the bandstand, as it had been reported as a ‘grot sport’ to the RTW Town Forum.

There were as well submissions to the ‘Leader’s Blog’ (2007-2008) when consultations took place. Only a few seemed to be interested; the responses of those writing in were for removal.

I know the history of the present bandstand, which is not an original, but ‘a cobbled together’ from leftover pieces of a very huge bandstand/pavilion. Even in its glorious past, according to reports of that time, it was not a successful operation!

This stone structure with a garden-shed roof IS a deterrent to this beautifully maintained park in the town centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells. It is as a grot spot a mini Cinema site where the same people use the same arguments that, if a replacement is not ready to go up, the grot spot should stay. It brings this area down in the same way as the cinema site brings down its surroundings. This is not a known planning policy nor can it be an acceptable Council strategy.

The bandstand in its present state is a deterrent in the RTW Conservation Area, which has been declared - at Risk - by English Heritage in 2009; it is a health and safety risk; it is not fit to be restored and due to the lack of any third party financial commitment, it should be finally removed.

I would oppose any urban-like ‘net-structures’, but feel that the proposed ‘landscaped’ auditorium approach with flexible arrangements fits pretty well.

Daniel Bech - 14.03.2010

Royal Tunbridge Wells Civic Society

Mr M Henley
Parks Manager

23 March 2010

Dear Mel

Ref. Application 10/00591: Demolition of Bandstand

Thanks for your letter and for our useful discussion last week. Your letter has been discussed by our Executive, and we share your wish to make progress. The members wish me to spell out our position as a basis for future discussions.

We want to support the Council in developing proposals acceptable to the community, and we welcome your aim of producing a comprehensive plan for Calverley Grounds, with wide public consultation. You say this will involve reviewing the nature and location of a performance area, and I considered with you alternative locations for this at our meeting. You indicated one, near the foot of the new steps, that I think would be an acceptable alternative to the present.

We also agreed there was no case for more than one performance area, and that restrictive covenants, and practical limits on numbers and a charging cordon would severely restrict the form of a replacement. Moreover the Society believes this park needs a permanent landscape feature which complements the topography and planting, and is visible from a distance. We feel the architect's feasibility designs by no means meet any of these requirements – while very large, and implying large performances, they do not constitute a permanent landscape feature.

A `bandstand` of similar dimensions to the existing would be more appropriate, and could be made to accommodate a range of performance needs. We do not seek to recreate the former design, which seems over-elaborate and liable to vandalism. We also do not seek a structure exclusively dedicated to band music, and are in touch with organisations interested in a multi-use stage. This is a model that has been adopted in many other towns, and there are sources of funding available to help achieve it. Our previous discussions with the Council were based on our mutual wish to achieve this.

The Council has now refused access for our expert to the present structure to see what use could be made of it, but we accept that further extensive reconstruction would not be justified. However the cost of minor repair and painting would probably be much less than the cost of demolition and landscaping of the site. It is clear that alternative uses for the site will not be implemented within five years, and accordingly we don't understand the Council's wish to demolish the structure immediately.

We agree that few of its components warrant preservation, given that it was rebuilt with substitute materials after the bombing. Only the facing of the base I think remains of interest for possible re-use. You suggested laying this aside for storage until it could be incorporated in a new structure; we would like to consider this offer in the light of our future discussions.

With the above qualifications, and on the basis that there will be formal discussions between us about a replacement before any steps are taken to create an alternative performance area, we regret the demolition of the present bandstand but do not seek to object formally.

Yours sincerely
Alastair Tod
Chairman