

Venture Quays/Medina Valley Regeneration

‘East Cowes Columbine Building (and surrounding area) Proposal/Campaign’:

East Cowes Arts & Culture Group:

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We, the ‘East Cowes Arts & Culture Group’ are looking for expressions of interest and support from the IWC and stakeholders, which will enable us to initiate conversations with the V&A museum and/or other international galleries/museums, and potential partners. The following is an alternative to the proposed residential re-development of the Columbine building and surrounding area in East Cowes not to replace industrial business.

The Project Proposal:

We would like to propose for consideration, that the magnificent industrial Columbine Building on East Cowes historic waterfront, is used as an arts/ cultural community resource as part of the V&A museum group. This particular historic building has immense potential for use as a National/International gallery/ museum, e.g. as a centre for design, culture, art, industry, education and events, as part of the Medina Valley regeneration.

The marine industry currently housed within the building, is in the process of moving to Kingston Marine park and the site has recently become



available due to a marina and housing developer pulling out, this now gives the East Cowes waterfront area the potential to be developed as a

culturally vibrant and attractive area for inward investment. Recently Red Funnel has relocated it's terminal which it needed for it's future growth, this has opened up the town to the prospect of huge progressive regeneration.



Examples of successful similar projects in coastal communities include Tate St Ives, the newly opened Tate Dundee and the Turner Gallery Margate.

Since opening in 2011, Turner Contemporary Margate has welcomed more than 2.8 million visitors to the gallery, bringing world-class art to Margate, offering unique learning opportunities, and putting over £67 million into the local economy. The gallery has



drawn audiences from throughout the UK and the world, attracting thousands of British and international tourists, with 39% of visitors citing the Turner Contemporary as their motivation for visiting Margate. (source: Turner Contemporary Gallery 13/7/18)

We feel that this prime waterfront opportunity could bring huge potential growth to East Cowes and the Isle of Wight, through not only the arts, tourism and education, but as part of the governments aims of moving cultural experiences outside of London and major cities, attracting high skilled businesses and turning around struggling coastal communities and economies.

Quote From the county press:

"It has been announced that following successful lobbying by the MP Bob Seely, Isle of Wight arts organisations will now receive "priority treatment" from Arts Council of England (ACE) to "develop their potential".

Response from Bob Seely:

"The announcement of the Island becoming a Priority Location for arts funding is really great news and I will now work with the many excellent organisations we have to develop plans to maximise the potential of the arts and museum scene.

"I'm delighted that the numerous round tables with ACE and arts groups across the Island this last year has paid a handsome reward and I thank the arts council for this announcement.

"I believe the Island's artistic heritage is currently under utilised and there is a huge area of potential for the Isle of Wight to develop and link up with other organisations like London museums, theatres and galleries.

"Such work is important for regeneration, education and the public good, and it will increase the attraction for visitors who want to come to the Island."

Why the V&A?

The Victoria and Albert Museum was founded with a mission: to educate designers, manufacturers and the public in art and design. Its origins lie in the Great Exhibition of



1851 – the world's first international display of design and manufacturing. Following the Exhibition, its creator and champion, Prince Albert, saw the need to maintain and improve the standards of British industry to compete in the international marketplace. To this end, he urged that the profits of the Exhibition be used to develop a cultural district of museums and colleges in South

Kensington devoted to art and science education. The Museum was the first of these institutions and was founded in 1852.

A new V&A gallery/museum in East Cowes seems an obvious choice not only because of its historic links as the location of Victoria and Albert's much loved home Osborne House, but also because of its original purpose of celebrating design/industry and manufacturing of which there is such a wealth of history in East Cowes/Cowes and the Medina Valley.

The Columbine building looks out across the mouth of the Medina River towards Cowes where there is historically an extremely important International British design /fashion industry connection to Queen Victoria and the V&A museum:

John Redfern set up his tailoring business in Cowes High Street in 1846 producing high class haute couture for wealthy patrons. In 1892 they had branches in London, Paris, Nice, Cannes, Aix le Bains, New York, Chicago, Newport Rhode Island, Edinburgh, Manchester and, of course, Cowes. In their heyday Redfern was possibly the best known fashion house in the world with a clientele that included Queen Victoria and her daughters, Lily Langtry, Empresses of Germany and Russia – and the wealthy socialites of Europe and America. The influential Institut Français de la Mode places John Redfern firmly in the forefront of fashion: *“The legacy of John Redfern may actually define clothing in the 20th Century. The intellectual lineage of Redfern is monumental and exemplary of the entire history of 20th century clothing. John Redfern mentored Charles Poynter Redfern who, in turn, mentored Robert Piguet, who mentored Christian Dior – who led the line to Yves Saint Laurent”*.



The V&A museums fashion department in London has a fine collection of John Redfern and Sons garments including the above Riding Habit jacket designed and made in 1885 -1886 for May Primrose Littledale. The Redfern Collection is an important historical link between the V&A and the Isle of Wight's industrial and design heritage.

Why the Columbine Building East Cowes?



Columbine hanger at Venture Quays

Photo: Ronald Saunders via CC BY-SA 2.0

The Columbine Shed was built in 1935 by Saunders Roe who manufactured sea planes. The site, having been redundant since the end of 2002, was sold to the South East England Development Agency by GKN Aerospace in 2004. The Union Jack, said to be the largest in the world, was painted in 1977 to celebrate the Queen's silver jubilee.

The Columbine building provides a unique existing site and exterior apron at 45,552 sq ft with an eaves height of 12m & 12m x 24m access doors, two internal overhead cranes with lifting capacity of 16 tonnes - perfect for moving large scale artwork/sculpture/historic objects etc. It is an industrial building like Bankside Power station which became the Tate Modern now one of the most visited galleries in the World.

The majority of the infrastructure already exists or is in the process of being part of an overall regeneration plan, therefore costs are reduced and needed solely for redevelopment rather than a huge build budget from scratch. This is a magnificent industrial waterfront site and a vast space which is ideal for housing a gallery/museum and perfect for multi disciplinary art, design, performance, educational, leisure and cultural uses .

The Columbine Building with its iconic Union Jack doors that welcomes visitors to the island is part of a development site which includes Albany green and the adjacent Barracks which have been identified in the recent planning application as being ideal for an eatery, hotel, bar and restaurant. With this in mind the whole site is a very exciting project for a cultural/leisure experience and would be of interest to multiple investors and has great potential for local job creation, training and attracting new businesses to East Cowes.

The V&A East Cowes site would have the potential to add to, and benefit from the existing footfall of Osborne house which is one of the most visited heritage sites in the UK. It would be part of future growth linking to existing innovation sites that would generate a significant and sustainable economical benefit to not only East Cowes and the Medina valley but the Island as a whole.