

DEVELOPMENT: Controversial tower block at Gunwharf Quays will transform city's skyline

Lipstick makes up last part of harbour puzzle

by Neil Evans
Political reporter

THE Portsmouth skyline is to be transformed by a controversial flats scheme featuring a landmark tower described as a 'lipstick'.

The dramatic final stage of the Gunwharf Quays development will cost £120m and will continue the city's trend for maritime-inspired architecture.

At its centrepiece will be the 29-storey residential 'lipstick' tower which will be modelled on a large funnel.

Architects say it will represent steam while the nearby Spinnaker - due to open later this year - represents sail.

The scheme will see the soaring tower joined by two further blocks of six to 13 storeys, with an open area piazza next to the current canal.

And the massive development will have 307 flats and three floors of parking underneath with space for 310 cars.

Meanwhile, on the site of the former officers mess known as 'Ariadne,' there will be a seven-storey building with space for 176 flats - including 126 for people in 'key' jobs, such as nurses, police and firemen.

Luxury apartments in the new development will cost up to £500,000 and the scheme will also boast 9,237 sq ft of restaurant and shop space.

City planning officer Paul Newbold said the scheme would give the city 'something to be proud of'.

And Labour councillor Andrew Silvester, who first described the tower as 'the lipstick', added: 'This is the final part of the jigsaw.'

'Gunwharf has already won awards and once this is built, hopefully it will continue to do so'.

The planning application from developers Berkeley was given the all-clear when presented to the city's development control committee. Work could start as early as mid-summer 2004 and con-



An artist's impression of how the lipstick-style tower block at Gunwharf Quays will change the skyline in Portsmouth

Building watchdogs praise scheme but residents demanded rethink

THE project has received praise from both English Heritage and CABE - the Commission for Architecture and the Building Environment. Both groups are also looking into whether the Tricorn should be saved.

But the project has not been without

controversy and the original design for one of the blocks was rejected last year.

Residents groups and other campaigners have sent written protests to the council and also made deputations at the meeting where they urged a rethink.

There are concerns over the amount of traffic that might be produced, especially as the area is so close to the ferry port.

But fresh plans for the Ariadne site now look more conventional and two storeys lighter compared to the scheme rejected by the council last year.

struction will continue over four years.

But several people living nearby complained about the proposals - and of 31 residents consulted by their local councillors, only two said they approved.

Two councillors voted against the plans at the meeting.

Tory Cllr Stephen Weymss

said: 'We are seeing an example of planning creep.'

'It will cause too many traffic problems and it is too overbearing.'

Fellow Conservative Cllr Lee Hunt said: 'Portsmouth is an island and we cannot just build more and more homes, particularly in one of the most densely-populated parts of the city.'

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