

MATTER 5: PART 1 – ISSUE 5.7: FOCUS AREA 7

5.7.1 I believe **Site Allocations - CLB1:1-3 Chapel Park Road and CLB2:Taxi Office/B.R. Social Club, St Johns Rd** would be neither legally sound nor legally compliant, because it would be seriously detrimental to Kings Rd Conservation area. In particular it would make this unique historic area less attractive to tourists and others. Also as Central St Leonards is by far the most densely populated and deprived ward in East Sussex, landmark multi-storey blocks such as these would have a major negative social and economic impact on the whole area.

5.7.2 It is essential that the taxi office [the original coal office] should remain, as part of the original station - it just works. For some strange reason they want to demolish the wonderful flat roofed art deco style Alpha café - it is something very special to this part of the Conservation area in the station forecourt, serving travellers and many residents from 6 AM till after lunch with excellent reasonably priced food. It is socially beneficial with people from all walks of life intermingling here and its outside seating gives it great vitality.

5.7.3 The one thing that is needed is a small public toilet [not attached to a landmark multi story block]. The station building on the left which does not seem to be used at the moment could house this, also it would be the perfect information office etc. The site of the Railway social club should become an extension of the excellent playground which is used fully by many children from carless and gardenless families many of whom live in HMO's. At the moment it is used for art installations, but a better need would be fulfilled if it were used as an additional area for older children and adults with outdoor table tennis table, pull up bars, etc. At the moment they play on the younger ones equipment which is not good for either - I'm sure the new equipment could be obtained in various ways, with some enthusiastic fund raising. All these contribute to community spirit and would help to promote healthy living.

5.7.4 The 1869 lattice-work bridge over the line could also be in danger of being replaced by a South of France style bridge. An architect's drawing of this was shown at a residents meeting where people were generally unaware of the plans for this site. Afterwards when I asked the architect if knew about the landmark multi story block might built on this site – he did because he assured me it would be an excellent design.

5.7.5 Warrior Square Railway Station 1851, Italianate in style, was designed by William Tress - architect of most of the stations on the line to Tunbridge Wells. The conservation officer was certain that it was listed, but when she checked she discovered that it wasn't.

5.7.6 Many wonderful townscape views would be wrecked by these allocations including the following views identified by Nicholas Antram in his draft 2007 Conservation Area Appraisal:

- The slopes to Warrior Square Station provide a contrasting open interlude in the built up frontage and striking views across the valley and to the railway station and tunnel entrance and the terraces on St John's Road stepping up the hill. (p23)

- (regarding St John's Road- buildings of townscape merit and views) **Nos.1-16(consec). 1880s. The Railway Hotel turns the corner with a curved bay and turret. Rusticated stucco ground floor with round-arched windows. Red brick above with stucco dressings, giant pilasters, aedicules to first floor windows and bracketed eaves. Nos.3-15 step up th hill with a striking run of projecting pedimented bays, each floor different and an array of chimneystacks. The curve of the street at the upper end is reflected in a stepping back of the houses, with No.16 having its principal elevation facing up the hill, forming a visual; stop to views down. An imaginative and different design for a sloping site. Prominent in views from London Road and Station Approach.(p35)**

5.7.7 The case of 1-3 Chapel Park Rd is strange. Firstly why was it omitted from the Conservation area, when Nicholas Antram recommended they should be given conservation area status as they have townscape merit and are in a very prominent location. Then when it was firstly granted outline planning permission in 2008 apparently hardly anyone realised it was happening. Also it seems the person who was planning to speak against the application didn't find out it was going to committee, until it was too late. In 2013 the planning committee granted permission even though Network Rail's serious concerns had not been addressed. This was even though Network Rail had warned HBC that they would not accept any liability for any resultant tunnel incident in the absence Network Rail being satisfied that the serious concerns they had raised had been addressed BEFORE planning permission being granted.

5.7.8 The building of two landmark multi-story blocks would be utterly disastrous to the future of central St, Leonards and therefore it would have a completely detrimental effect on any idea for future heritage tourism and therefore the whole borough; especially as it is being increasingly recognised as a desirable place to live, work and visit. Now that the distinct and fascinating personality of the area is being allowed to emerge and assert itself, it would be insane to smother it at birth, by deforming the only truly heritage station, [others by William Tress are valued and listed]. There is strong evidence that some of the houses are being bought and loved by their new owners, which is beginning to alter the feel of things.