

MATTER 5

PART I - ISSUE 5.7: FOCUS AREA 7 - Site Allocations CLB1 and CLB2

5.7.1 I believe site allocations CLB1 and CLB2 are neither legally sound nor legally compliant, as they would allow multi-storey blocks that would seriously harm both the historic environment and the potential for regeneration (Please, also refer to my Statement on Matter 2 – Rep2142, especially the Nicholas Antram quotes in 2.4.9). CLB1 should not be allocated. CLB2 should retain the Taxi Office as it is an integral part of the Victorian fabric of the station and, if any new development is to be allowed on the rest of the site, it should be restricted to single-storey, flat-roofed development.

5.7.2 Currently St Leonards Warrior Square Station and the fine Victorian townscape that embraces it, are a wonderful and appropriate place to arrive at, or depart from, when visiting historic St Leonards with all its fine architectural gems and attractions. The station is the focal point of what are fine views of the topological bowl in which it sits.

5.7.3 The Alpha site is an important site in the Kings Road Conservation Area. 1-3 Chapel Park Rd are in a prominent position in the immediate setting of the Conservation Area. In his 2007 draft Appraisal Nicholas Antram identifies 1-3 Chapel Park as being of townscape merit (see P33) and recommends their inclusion in the adjacent conservation area (see P50) as along with 6-7 Ellenslea Rd they **‘are particularly prominently sited and overlook and are visible from the area around Warrior Square station.’** 1-3 Chapel Road is now immediately adjacent to the Kings Road Conservation Area on three sides as 6-8 Ellenslea Rd were subsequently included in the KRCA, but 1-3 Chapel Park Rd illogically were not.

5.7.4 In recent years a lot of public investment and effort has gone into improving the Kings Rd, William Tress’s elegant Italianate station and the Southwater area. Central St Leonards and the station area are now becoming increasingly desirable places to live and set up business. Many people who work in the Arts have moved into the area and have probably chosen to do so in large part due the quality and character of the fine townscape.

5.7.5 CLB1 and CLB2 would allow two multi-storey blocks on these sensitive sites. These would seriously degrade the unique period character and appearance of the station area and the Kings Road Conservation Area. They would dominate and be seriously detrimental to a number of fine views both to and from; the station, St Johns Rd, the London Rd and elsewhere.

5.7.6 They would make the area less attractive to visitors, residents and private investors and, therefore, inevitably have a negative impact on the economic and social vitality of Central St Leonards town centre and the borough as a whole. As Central St Leonards is the most deprived (as well as by far the most densely populated) ward in East Sussex and the Borough is amongst the most deprived in the country, multi-storey blocks that these allocations would allow are the last thing that is needed.

5.7.7 True regeneration is occurring largely as a result of the improvements made so far, that have enhanced the unique period character and appearance of this area. If

care is taken to continue to nurture, not harm, this special area I'm sure it will have a bright future. Things could really blossom with all the publicity the borough will get when Hastings Pier is once again ready for visitors, but only if Nicholas Antram's expert advice is heeded. On page 47 of his 2007 draft St Leonards Conservation Area Appraisal he writes:

Much has been achieved in improving King's Road and it is important that this acts as a catalyst for further improvements which enhance the unique period character of the area to engender confidence in further investment and to build on the strong image and character of this unique street.

5.7.8 It would be a tragedy if inappropriate development destroyed the chance of this priority area fulfilling its potential.

5.7.9 In addition, when the Council consulted on site allocation CLB2 in the DMP versions in 2013 and 2014, it was for an indicative capacity of 30 residential units with retail space on the ground floor. However it appears to be the case that the Council actually support proposals for a 7-storey block with retail space on the ground floor and 47 residential units. In **Central St Leonards Renewal Area – Proposed Extension of Timeframe October 2013** which I believe has been adopted by the Council, **Appendix 9: Central St Leonards Renewal Area: Delivery Plan Progress @31 March 2013** on p68 refers to the project for the development of the Alpha Café site being for 47 homes. This accords with the proposal for the site for a 7-storey block with retail space on the ground floor and 47 residential units, presented on pages 48-51 of the **Central St Leonards Regeneration Framework October 2005**, which on page 25 states:

This proposal will provide a new high quality development in the core of the town centre improving the immediate environment adjacent to the station and reinforcing this part of the town as 'a point of arrival'.

5.7.10 Also with regard to site allocation CLB1 – 1-3 Chapel Park Rd, it appears to be the case that this site which is steeply sloping and in very close proximity to the railway tunnel, has a history of land instability. Apparently sometime around 2004-5, number 1 Chapel Park Rd had to undergo major structural works necessitated by subsidence and the owners of the property received an SRB grant from the Southwater Area Renewal Project, which one would think HBC would have a record of. Although no land stability reports appear to have been submitted, two outline applications regarding scale and form of the development, HS/OA/08/00121 and HS/OA/13/00577, were recommended for approval by the planning authority and were granted planning permission.

5.7.11 The 2008 application for outline planning permission appears to have been granted in the absence of any consultee comments from Network Rail/Rail Track. In 2013 planning permission was granted in the absence of addressing Network Rail's serious concerns, even though this means that Network Rail would not accept any liability for any resultant tunnel incident.

PART II

5.7.12 Suggested paragraphs to be included in Focus Area 7 - Our Vision for Central St Leonards and Bohemia:

To the East lies the former convent and its grounds - a unique collection heritage assets including grade II and II* listed buildings. The Victorian Society stated in 2011, ‘The site as a whole is important due to the quality of the former listed buildings and their well-preserved state in their original setting.’

A number of these heritage assets have deteriorated since the current owners purchased the site in 1977 and are now in need of repair. The Council wants to see the listed buildings, the Italianate East Wing and other heritage assets conserved and their potential for heritage-led regeneration fully realised.