



HAYWARDS HEATH & DISTRICT LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

AN ALTERNATIVE VISION FOR HAYWARDS HEATH 'STATION QUARTER'

OUR VISION

Haywards Heath Liberal Democrats want to see real regeneration of our town. For too long there has been under-investment and this shows in the lack of arts and leisure facilities and the poor quality of our public buildings and spaces. We want to take the current opportunity of investment to create a vibrant, thriving town with facilities to rival its peers such as Horsham.

We have examined the successive proposals for redevelopment of Haywards Heath produced by Thornfield. They do not yet offer what local people tell us they want. In particular they do not offer arts and leisure facilities and they will aggravate the current traffic congestion around the station. They do offer 700 flats in 7 and 9-storey blocks but there is no evidence that this is what local people need. It is disappointing that the current plans being promoted relate only to the 'Station Quarter'.

We think that a much more exciting plan is possible and that we could create a vibrant arts and leisure centre, improve the quality of the station and its surroundings, reduce traffic congestion and provide good parking. We consider that all new development should be to the highest environmental standards and include state of the art data and telecommunication links.

Our suggestions for how to approach this are set out in detail below.

Significant assets belonging to the council taxpayers of Mid Sussex are to be invested in the development. It is essential that significant benefit to the community results from that investment. There is almost no financial information in the public domain relating to the proposals so our comments at this stage are limited to the benefits in terms of facilities.

OVERVIEW

The main planks of our proposal are: -

- Move the MSDC offices to an **existing office building** in the district
- Use part of the Oaklands site to create an **arts and leisure facility with multi-screen cinema, town museum** and improved facilities to those currently provided by Clair Hall
- Consider whether, together with Sainsbury, better use could be made of that site and look into the options for **redeveloping the site west of the railway line** where the County Court is at present
- Ensure that the **station has entrances on both sides of the railway line**, an efficient and accessible integrated **public transport** (including taxi) interchange, sufficient **parking for the commuter need** and that the **booking office and platforms are easily accessible** to all
- Carry out a **full traffic study** across the whole town to ensure that traffic flows are eased rather than aggravated by the development
- Carry out a **housing needs analysis** and build houses to meet the identified needs of the community
- Ensure that Age Concern has replacement accommodation in a location that it considers suitable of at least the size and standard of its current premises
- Ensure that proper infrastructure is in place before any new development is completed
- Consult local residents giving them the material needed for them to make an informed decision about the proposal.

OUR PROPOSALS IN DETAIL

1. Oaklands site

It is generally accepted that the MSDC offices at Oaklands are not appropriate for the needs of the Council. Thornfield's plan proposes that new offices are built on the station site with a replacement for Clair Hall included in the building. We believe that there is another option. There are several high quality vacant office buildings in Mid Sussex that could, with suitable refurbishment offer excellent accommodation for the staff and for Council meetings. The cost to council taxpayers is likely to be significantly less than the annual rent MSDC would pay to Thornfield for occupying new offices at the station.

We suggest that this option be followed as it offers the MSDC the option of an immediate move without the cost and delay of a new build, while at the same time releasing much of the Oakland site for development. Part of that site can then be developed into a vibrant centre for the community. If our plan is adopted, it will provide an arts centre, multi-screen cinema, town museum and improved facilities over those currently offered by Clair Hall. It will include adequate car parking and good public transport facilities. Retaining the current position of Haywards Heath Town Hall and the library would sit well with our proposals.

In any event there must be no demolition of Clair Hall before a new and improved facility is available to the community.

2. Land west of the railway line

An evaluation should be made of the potential use of the area to the west and north of the station. This includes the Sainsbury site and that currently occupied by the County Court. Particular attention should be paid to making full use of sites that are currently under-utilised. This will also help to address the issue of reducing traffic flow under the railway line which is currently a bottleneck.

3. Haywards Heath station

Thornfield's current proposals include the provision of a new booking office at the end of Clair Road. This in turn will require that access to the platforms is by means of a footbridge over the lines. Thornfield's plans also show less space for taxis and buses and an increased distance from the drop-off point to the booking hall.

It is our view that all these developments will make the station less accessible for all and especially for those who are disabled, with small children or bulky or heavy luggage. Even the fittest commuter will have a significantly greater distance up one flight of stairs, along the bridge and down another to reach the platforms. We think that the pedestrian accessibility to the booking hall and platforms from the current station entrance is excellent. Its appearance, however, is not but this should be addressed by a refurbishment programme.

The general appearance of the station forecourt, the bus interchange, and taxi and car access should be improved. The site north Market Place should be evaluated in this context.

There is an essential requirement for adequate parking for commuter needs at the station. Thornfield's proposal includes 1,000 commuter car parking spaces. There are currently 915 spaces. Thornfield also proposes to build 700 flats but only to provide 585 parking spaces.

4. Traffic

A transport/traffic study of all areas affected by Thornfield's plan must be undertaken immediately. Access from both the east and west must be of prime concern. A travel and parking needs survey must be included in the study with particular regard to the requirements of commuters, new dwellings, Haywards Heath residents and residents from surrounding villages visiting, working and shopping in the town.

This work should be used to draw up an integrated transport plan. Facilitating reduced dependence on private car travel should be given a high priority. The plan should include: -

- pedestrian access, including access for people with reduced or limited mobility
- safe cycle routes and sufficient cycle parking shelters
- park and recharge bays for electric vehicles
- adequate parking for motorcycles
- an integrated public transport hub
- short-term vehicle hire facility.

There should be no building on Dolphin Road as development would affect the visual amenity of Muster Green and seriously compromise traffic flow within and through the town.

5. Housing

A housing needs analysis for Haywards Heath must be undertaken before any plan is finalised at any site. This must include both affordable and ordinary housing requirements based on:-

- the number of people requiring accommodation
- the size of each family unit (single, double, family size and potential family size)
- high quality outdoor communal and play space must be included in each development.

Thornfield's current proposal includes only 10% affordable housing. MSDC's planning policy requires 30% and there must be no exemption from this policy.

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6. Infrastructure

Full infrastructure studies for the proposed plans must be undertaken before the plans are finalised. All necessary infrastructure should be in place before any new development is completed.

7. Consultation

Proper consultation points with residents and those who use or visit Haywards Heath from the surrounding areas and villages is an absolute requirement. Proper consultation must take place before proceeding with any aspect of the Masterplan and must include:-

- The public provision of sufficient information at an appropriate level of detail to enable local people to make an informed decision about the merits of the proposals
- Full public displays of plans, feasibility studies and surveys open from 9 am to 9 pm
- Public displays manned at all times by Council staff and Thornfield's representatives capable of responding to queries
- Comment sheets available at all public displays rather than limited questionnaires
- Monthly progress reports issued to the press and available to residents at Council Offices, Clair Hall, the Dolphin Centre and Library
- Quarterly report in Mid Sussex Matters
- Open stakeholder meetings to all who wish to attend and ensure that those with a potential interest including residents' associations, representatives from surrounding villages, commuters and other interested groups are kept fully informed of the time place and agenda of those meetings
- A full public meeting to be held as soon as sufficient progress has been made in addressing the points above.

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